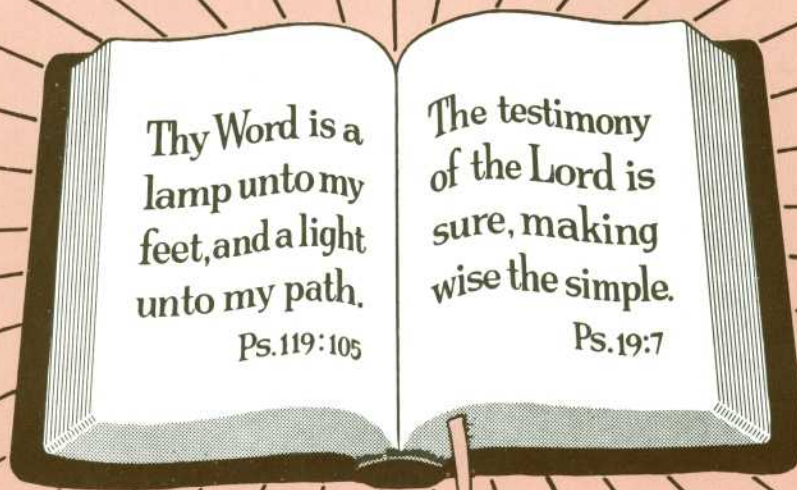


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**"Who Did It?"**

Why We Need Thanksgiving

An Honest Man

It's Never Time to Quit

## “I Did It—MY Way!”

A PHILOSOPHY so dominant in this “now” generation, it is really not that modern. “Do your own thing” reaches clear back to the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve did as they pleased and partook of fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in spite of God’s command to the contrary: “Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). They partook, but the pleasure was costly: it brought them curses instead of the multitude of blessings they could have had. We realize, of course, that Adam and Eve were symbolic representatives of all of God’s servants in every age. This only makes their act the more timeless—it is affliction which we can expect to encounter in every age. “I”—whoever “I” am—will always be wanting “my” way.

The philosophy of “I did it *my* way” appeared again when Nadab and Abihu offered “strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not” (Lev. 10:1). We do not know the exact nature of the offense, but that is immaterial. The point is that they did it *their* way and not God’s. And they lost their lives for it.

The “I-did-it-my-way” philosophy was active again when Saul thought his judgment superior to that of Samuel. The time arrived when the burnt offering was scheduled to be made, and Samuel was late. Surely it was all right for Saul to go ahead and make it—after all, wasn’t he the *king*?

We all know the outcome. He was condemned. But *why* did he do it? Why was having his own way so essential? Couldn’t he trust God’s own prophet to satisfy God’s requirements for sacrifice? Couldn’t he put up with a few hours’ delay or inconvenience?

But if we have any insight into ourselves and our own human nature, we may safely conclude that Saul’s problem was not all a matter of satisfying God’s requirements, or a slight inconvenience caused by Samuel’s tardiness. There was underneath, in the back of Saul’s mind, an idea that performing the

prophet’s duty would enhance his own prestige in the sight of the people. This made “doing it my way” an opportunity!—in Saul’s eyes.

But God was displeased.

Only a short time later Saul was ordered to utterly destroy “the sinners the Amalekites.” Again he preferred to do it *his* way—his reason, he pitifully explained, was to satisfy the demands of the people. Again the untold truth was there—the desire to be “Saul the Great” in the sight of his people. So he spared the best of the herds, “to sacrifice unto the Lord.” But again he was condemned. God didn’t want sacrifice, He wanted *obedience*. And He wanted it done *God’s* way, not Saul’s.

History is replete with the disastrous consequences of having our own way. Whether it be a case of setting up our own post besides the Lord’s, putting ourselves in the place of Him, exalting our own standard of rightness, making our own rules for the game, the result is always the same: ruin.

As dedicated Christians, it is up to each of us as individuals to always exalt God’s way above our own, God’s opinion above our own, and God’s will ahead of our own. It is even our duty when there is a question of knowing God’s way, God’s opinion, or God’s will, to be willing to give up the right to our own way, opinion, or will, however right it may seem, for the judgment of one more experienced in the ways of God. And it is always our duty to reject completely the ego-centered philosophy and spirit of our age that gives us the right to “do our own thing.” In the words of the apostle Paul, “Ye are not your own . . . ye are bought with a price.”

Jesus did not fall for the “do your own thing” philosophy. He said, “I came . . . not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). And He did. “I do always those things that please him [the Father],” He could say. And all who would follow Jesus must follow also in this, not determining

(Continued on page 10)

## Megiddo means

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible quotations

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows:

**NEB**—New English Bible

**NIV**—New International Version

**NAS**—New American Standard

**RSV**—Revised Standard Version

**TLB**—The Living Bible

**TEV**—Today's English Version

**JB**—The Jerusalem Bible, Reader's Edition

**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

**Williams**—The New Testament, A Translation in the Language of the People

**Rotherham**—The Emphasized Old Testament

The use of selected references from various versions of the Bible does not necessarily imply publisher endorsement of the versions in their entirety.

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## *A Thanksgiving Message*

# Who Did It?

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 65*

**T**HERE IS always something intriguing about finding out "Who did it." It may be part of a childhood game; again it may be a serious question that is due serious investigation. Who did it? Who was responsible? We wait breathlessly as the story unfolds and from time to time make judgments as to the possible guilty person. We are not always sure until the very last—sometimes not even then.

In our topic today, "Who Did It?" means "To whom shall we give the credit?" How deep and heartfelt is our consciousness of our need for God and how proper is our estimate of ourselves and our own strength? How willing are we to relinquish any claim to seeking honor for ourselves and give all to God? Then too, there is the ever present question: Am I giving God all the glory that is His due? What does God expect of me? What should I be doing with what He has entrusted to me? Do I always feel "Thine is the glory", or is there also a bit of "MINE is the glory"?

Instinctively we like to take the credit for what happens. We take keen joy in peeling away the mystery of life and claiming credit for ourselves. We are quick to point out when we did it!—that is, when things are good, successful and full of respectability. When things go wrong, well that is another matter. Then we are more ready to blame others. But for today we would like to center our concerns on the temptation to take to ourselves all the credit for our achievements and our successes.

### **Time to Review**

Thanksgiving season is a perfect time for this kind of self-review and self-evaluation. It is a time to realize that we did not do all of "it," whatever "it" may be. To be truly thankful is to be aware of the many forces that combine to make our lives what they are.

To be thankful is to express the thought that whatever we have or whatever we have done, we did not do it all by ourselves. To be thankful is to acknowledge that we have been blessed by others and that we have been blessed by God; thus we need others, and above all, we need God. To be thankful is to underline the fact that we did not do it all by ourselves. A current religious thinker wrote that thanksgiving is "an acknowledgment of the fact that man did not create himself, that nothing belongs to him. . . . What he has is given to him. Every serious giving of thanks implies an acknowledgment of one's finitude."

Finitude is a word not overly familiar, yet does it not suggest our natural mortal situation in all our smallness and limitation, finite creatures that we are? The word has not a single definition that applies in the immortal sphere. But among mortals, how appropriate!

How appropriate, yet how easily we are tempted to exalt ourselves, poor little creatures of dust that we are. We smile at the woodpecker who gave a mighty peck to the great tree just as lightning struck, and when the giant oak came crashing down, said, "Look what I did!" But there is danger, great danger, that when our blessings multiply and the work of our hands prospers, we will think just as proudly—and vainly—as the poor woodpecker, "Look at what I did." We so easily remember our *small* part and forget the *great* debt we owe to God for our blessings, for our lives, for our being what we are.

At some moments we may sorely crave the satisfaction of blessing ourselves in the work of our own hands, but what is the end of such self-seeking? Who of us wishes to emulate the great King Nebuchadnezzar who said, "Is not this great Babylon which I have built?" For, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, God will "punish the fruit of the arrogant



heart. . . . For he has said, 'By the power of my hand by my wisdom I did this, for I have understanding; and I removed the boundaries of the peoples, and plundered their treasures, and like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants, and my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest, and as one gathers abandoned eggs, I gathered all the earth; and there was not one that flapped its wing or opened its beak or chirped'" (Isa. 10:12-14, NAS).

But hear the reply of the Lord: "Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it? Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it? That would be like a club wielding those who lift it, or like a rod lifting him who is not wood" (v. 15).

### **The Divine Warning**

Many are the passages of Scripture which stimulate our thinking and remind us of our natural instinct to take undue credit to ourselves and forget God. A sermon by Moses, recorded in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, has been preserved especially for our learning, we who like those who have gone before us, tend to think too much of ourselves and too little of our great and matchless Creator. These words were spoken when the nation of Israel was standing on the brink of Jordan, ready to enter the land of Promise. It was a time for admonition, warning, rebuke. Too, too easily would they forget the lessons learned in the wilderness.

"Beware" was the key word in Moses' message. "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day" (Deut. 8:11). "Beware that thou forget not," for well Moses knew—and well God knew—that they *would* forget. The time would come—indeed, was not far distant—when the children of Israel would forget by what means they reached the Land of Promise. They would forget the God who had led them, fed them, guided them, supported them. When would this happen? When they should begin to prosper, when their barns began to fill and their herds began to multiply and all was well with them.

"Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; . . . and thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou

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## **Thanksgiving is a time to realize that we did not do all of "it," whatever "it" may be.**

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shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:11-14, 17-18). Or, as phrased in the Jerusalem Bible, "Beware of saying in your heart, 'My own strength and the might of my own hand won this power for me.'"

One translation sharpens the whole matter in these words: "Beware lest ye think ye did it."

### **A Grateful Attitude**

A grateful attitude toward God and a proper acknowledgement of His "all-doing," omnipotent power, has been a problem far beyond the borders of ancient Israel. It is a problem that faces us. For said the apostle Paul in his great epistle as he addressed "every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).

Have we examined our own hearts to see how it is with us? Thanksgiving is a serious matter, for as long as we take credit to ourselves, as long as we say "We did it" and do not recognize the tremendous debt we owe to God, we cannot be truly thankful. Are we able to maintain a truly thankful spirit in everything we do? Are we able to say honestly, in the fear of God, that we are more concerned that God gets all the credit due to Him than that we get all the credit due to us? Are we willing to remain unrewarded for the time, if need be, if only we can qualify for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory?

God seems to know the clay of which we are made. He had blessed Israel, given them all they needed to sustain them for the last forty years, yet He foresaw that when they were established in the Land of Promise, they would so soon begin commending themselves for what they had accomplished themselves, instead of honoring God.

### **"Lest . . ."**

"Lest ye think ye did it." Have we ever been guilty of this, instead of giving glory to God? Gratitude to God is one of the greatest evidences of humility.

Gratitude and humility are virtues that walk hand in hand all the way into the Kingdom of God—in fact, they cannot be separated.

The apostle Paul, writing to the overconfident and over-exalted in the church of Corinth—and to us—was well aware of this human shortcoming. He wrote: “Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (I Cor. 4:7).

A father was recalling to his young son a few exciting experiences he had had while in the army. With as much description as he thought the child could comprehend, he told of his great deeds of valor, his long marches and sleepless nights, how hard and bravely he had fought, what distinguished service he had given—until suddenly the son interrupted his

father’s tale of valor with this simple question: “But Daddy, what were the *rest* of the soldiers for?” From the father’s description, it sounded like he was a one-man army!

But however distorted the picture painted, we know that no one-man army ever won a war. And however glorious the exalted feelings we may entertain of our own worthfulness, God knows. There is no need to commend ourselves. Perhaps we *have* done well. Perhaps we *have* rendered distinguished service in behalf of the Lord’s cause. Still the question of Paul remains: “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?” What did we use to render that service but the health, the strength, and the ability given us by God—which was only our rightful duty to use? In fact, if we had not used our God-given ability and rendered the service, condemnation would

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## Let Us Pray . . .

Our Lord and our Creator, unto whom belongeth all things; who giveth wisdom to the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding; we worship Thee. Father, we come to know the blessed touch of Thy sustaining Hand. Wilt Thou speak to us this morning through Thy Word, and impress us anew with our responsibility as Thy servants. Thou hast spoken, and we must obey. Thine it is to command, and ours to humbly listen.

Many, O Lord our God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward. We are grateful to Thee for good minds by which we may grasp Thy knowledge and truth. We are grateful for free will, enabling us to choose a higher direction in life. We are grateful for memory, whereby we can cherish the holy and the profound. We are grateful also for imagination by which we can picture our ideals and be stimulated to achieve them. Through insight we can analyze and learn from our experiences. Through conscience prayerfully sharpened and trained, we can choose the good and reject the counterfeit.

Lord, we are deeply grateful that we have within us the potential to develop such noble characters as Thou wilt choose to perpetuate in Thy Kingdom. Grant us the diligence to use wisely each capability, gladly surrendering everything of the fleeting present that Thou dost forbid that we may lay hold on that which is eternal.

We realize with deep humility, our Father, our many sins and failings. We are not worthy of the least of all Thy benefits to us. And to add sin to sin, we have sought credit for ourselves, forgetting that without Thee we would not even be. What have we that we did not receive? Nothing at all.

Help us to realize our total dependence on Thee. May we never be so foolish as to say, even in thought, “Look what I have done,” or think that our own hands have brought us the blessings that we enjoy. All cometh of Thee, and when we give Thee service we are but returning that which is already Thine. Help us, then, to see ourselves as Thou dost see us. And as we realize our weakness and our utter dependence upon Thee, may we feel shame in having taken so carelessly our duty to Thee, when Thou hast set before us such magnificent rewards.

Lord, be Thou our joy, our peace, our strength, our life, our light. Teach us the springs of true greatness: self-sacrifice, self-denial, self-renunciation. Help us to realize that the further we outreach ourselves, the nearer we draw to Thee. May we never thwart Thy divine purpose within us by our own willful and stubborn rebellion, but wilt Thou preserve us holily and unblameably until the day of Christ.

And now, O Lord, wilt Thou bless all who are earnestly striving to learn and live Thy law; and help us follow ever more closely in the way that Thou hast appointed. O God, Thou art our strength; in Thee we shall do valiantly—today and tomorrow, and through all coming tomorrows. In Thy name and power we pray. Amen.

be ours for not doing what we *could* have done.

In no case are we justified in commending ourselves. If we had not rendered that bit of service and God wanted it done, it lies not one iota beyond His ability to have found another to do it. When we say "I did it" and take the credit to ourselves, we disqualify ourselves for the blessing that would have been ours for the service, for God will find another to take our crown.

Whatever our age or stage in life, whatever our responsibilities, whatever we are able or not able to do for God and His Kingdom, God knows, and we must trust Him to bless and reward accordingly. Never are we right in taking credit to ourselves. It is our part to obey; God's to reward.

### **Be Like Daniel**

The prophet Daniel is a striking contrast to the ungrateful "I did it" complex. Hear the king asking him what he was able to do in interpreting the King's dream, and hear him reply nobly, meekly, humbly in these God-exalting words that heaven rejoiced to hear: "as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. . . . There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days" (Dan. 2:26-30). Daniel was too great a man to take the credit to himself; to him, God's honor was supremely important. He knew that if Daniel honored God, as every mortal should, God would take care of whatever belonged to Daniel.

Still, we are not by nature like Daniel. We have an instinctive desire to give ourselves credit. Thank-giving comes to remind us that we need help. No one of us is self-sufficient, either for this world or for the world to come. We need God. We need also to recognize those means through which God has worked in our behalf. And we need to feel and to acknowledge this—with gratitude.

### **Appreciating Our Ancestors**

We need to give credit to those who have lived before us, who made possible the many blessings we enjoy. Little credit can we take for making, designing or imagining the multitude of common items we use every day. What about the automobiles we drive, the fabric in the clothes we wear, the homes we live in, with their countless conveniences and comforts; simple items like pencils, pins, paper, and plastics.

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## **"Beware lest ye think ye did it."**

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How many of these would we have if we depended on our own skills, if we had to say of everything we had, "I did it"?

Our ancestors and the work they accomplished are very much a part of our lives. We owe them a great debt of thanks.

We owe them again for the degree of health that is ours. Of course, how we care for our health is often very important in whether we live a long and healthy life. There is no substitute for good health habits. However, we are not totally responsible for the health of our bodies. There are often misfortunes beyond our control. Also, a certain amount depends on heredity, and this we owe to our ancestors.

To our ancestors we are indebted, too, for our country. We are indeed fortunate in that regard. Our ancestors left comfortable homes to brave the Atlantic in frail crafts to settle in a wilderness, to cut the trees, till the ground, plant their crops and fashion here a new and wonderful way of life. The land they settled, the Constitution they framed, the nation they created, the battles they fought to preserve the nation—all of these, and more, they did on our behalf. We did not do it. We can only give them credit. Like the officer talking to St. Paul, our forefathers can claim: "With a great price obtained I this freedom." And so they did. We have *inherited* the treasure, priceless and unique. We did not do it. *They* did.

We need also to remember our ancestors in the faith, those fathers and mothers in spiritual Israel who were for us the means to a life of purpose, meaning and destiny. We dare not think, even for a fleeting moment, that we *did* it. Left to ourselves, we would still be wandering, aimless, and without hope. But praise God! Because of their efforts in our behalf, we know the way to a better world. We need not be forever hampered by the limitations of mortality—because of those God-sent, dedicated men and women who showed us the way. And let us never fail to appreciate him who was God's own instrument in these last days to bring forth the "precious from the vile," to separate the divine gold from the dross of centuries of superstition, to deliver a people from the darkness of error; neither let us forget his followers who were God's means of conveying the message to us—how we should thank God for these

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## **Gratitude and humility are virtues that walk hand in hand all the way into the Kingdom of God.**

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ancestors. Without them, who of us could hope for anything beyond this life?

### **Appreciating Our Circumstances**

We need also to appreciate the circumstances in our favor. The fact that we are in the right place at the right time for our spiritual benefit is more than chance. If we are among those who truly love Him and are called according to His purposes, our circumstances are evidences of God working through natural means for our good.

A writer once asked one very successful businessman how he happened to make the decision that led to his success. His answer was simply: "I was just there. They asked me if I would do it. I recognized a good thing when I saw it, and told them I would. Launching the venture was pure chance. After that it was all hard work." Events in this world and in the lives of those not bound to God's purposes are pure chance; events in the lives of Christians are opportunities which by the help of God may be used to fashion us for eternal usefulness.

Should we not also appreciate the circumstances we enjoy? Things inanimate have played an important part of our lives—sometimes to our detriment, but more often to our benefit. Did we ever think what the chances were that we would be born in the U.S.A.? There are just a few other nations where we could have been born and have the opportunity to serve God that is ours. Calculate the chances of being born in China, or in India, or Africa, and they are phenomenal. Just what did we do to deserve the benefit of being born in this free land?

An appreciative American has written: "I have never been desperately hungry. I have never been a refugee. I have never been a prisoner. The secret police have never knocked on our door. No lepers roam the streets of our village. I have always lived within a few minutes of a doctor. In our town I have never heard the guns of approaching armies. I have never seen enemy troops occupy our town. No one died in our community this year of starvation."

Is it not reason enough to thank God?

Recall the words of the Sacred Page once again: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" "Beware, lest ye think ye did it."

We are indebted, too, for our ideals, those marvelous lights of purpose that keep us on a definite path and out of trouble. The course we have chosen is no chance route. Principles and ideals have guided us to the point where we stand, and we need to give credit to that fact. These same principles and ideals shall continue to guide us all the way into the Kingdom of God, if we will let them. How thankful we can be for these high ideals!

### **Appreciating Our Heritage**

We are also indebted to Christian brothers and sisters right here and now, those who are willing to listen when we need understanding; who rejoice when we rejoice, and weep when we weep; who admonish when we need strengthening, and warn us when they see us in danger; who reprove us when we are going wrong and restore us when we have fallen; who show us genuine love and Christian brotherly kindness, and encourage and strengthen us in the Lord. How can we be thankful enough for these lifelines of hope!

Indeed, we have inherited great traditions. Ours is a Christian heritage beyond our fathoming. To realize that we hold in our hands the veritable Word of the God of heaven, a thorough furnisher unto all good works; a map that can show us the way to a full salvation. How can we count or measure the times our Christian heritage has helped us—to make the right decisions, to choose the right course, to follow the right examples, to take the right stand or the right attitude? Our heritage is indeed priceless.

Our Christian culture is also a storehouse of ancient wisdom of how to deal fairly and honestly with each other. It instructs us in practical solution to all of life's everyday problems. Who can improve on the ancient prophet who said, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" We have been guided by the holy and righteous commandments of God, which summarize in this the greatest of all: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength" (Mark. 12:29-30). Should we not be thankful—so thankful that we will show our thankfulness by a fuller consecration of ourselves to God?



Of course we have not kept all these great traditions and principles flawlessly, but thank God for the continued opportunities that they yet bring into our lives, and the possibilities of moral and spiritual expansion they set before us. What could be greater, more exalting, more inspiring? And what could be more rewarding than the glory and honor they will bring, power to be and do through all the cycles of eternity? Surely it is the call of the centuries and the ages. How we ought to listen!

Our nation today has largely abandoned its principles and ideals. One by one they have thrown them overboard, so to speak, to lighten the ship. They have become satisfied with that which is low, and forgotten the high ideals of the founding fathers.

### **Danger: Low Aim**

Let us be doubly watchful that the problem of low aim never touches us, we who name the name of Christ and are joined to the covenant of promise. Let us be watchful lest we esteem too lightly—or even throw overboard—that which may prove our lifeline. Our trouble is not that we do not know, but that we too often do not esteem sufficiently, that we do not believe seriously, that we do not apply earnestly. And if we allow this to happen to us, when we come to the end of our day of opportunity we shall find that we forgot the things that really mattered, that we sidestepped the challenge and opportunity that might have opened for us a door into Eternity. For when that time arrives, we shall have to face the fact: that the fault lies wholly with us, not with the Divine arranging of our lives. God did His part—amply!

This thanksgiving season let us thank God anew for our deliverance from the low ideals around and within us. Now is the time to remember the ideals and principles which guided our fathers in the past, to give credit to these ideals, and to pray that we may learn to keep them. And again comes the warning, "Beware, lest ye think ye did it."

And to whom do we give thanks, when we remember our ancestors, our fathers and mothers in the faith, the circumstances that surround our lives and all the blessings that we may combine to form a character for the ages? We thank God!

How can we be thankful without giving credit to what God has done?

### **God Has Blessed My Life**

As people professing to belong to God, we believe that God has a hand in the affairs of mankind. His

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## **How can we measure the times our Christian heritage has helped us?**

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hand may seem to be temporarily thwarted and ignored and frustrated, but God does have a plan and He does have a way and His way cannot be frustrated forever. His plan *will* be consummated.

The author of Deuteronomy pointed out the patience of God with the Hebrew people. He mentioned first the forty years in the wilderness and the times of testing when the Hebrew people complained and would have gone back to the flesh pots of Egypt. "Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you." It is a passage filled with the activity of God in the lives of people—corrective activity, constructive activity, glorious activity. Should we not be thankful? Should we not marvel that He even recognizes us, much more that He is working out His purpose in our lives?

This is what makes the difference between the believer and the unbeliever. The unbeliever is convinced that life goes on blindly, that life is purely chance and fate, and that there is no initiative by another. The believer affirms that God has a plan and a way and makes every effort to work His purpose out. And when He sees fit, He does intervene in the affairs of life and our lives.

When we remember our ancestors, when we remember our fathers and mothers in the faith, when we remember our ideals, our circumstances, and even our very lives, we are talking about only one source to which we can give credit: God. All is God's activity. All these events are working out His purposes for us. This is the meaning of Paul's words in Romans: "In everything God works for good to them that love him." In other words, we have to be in relationship with God to enable God to have His way with us. This is what belief in God is all about. It is letting Him take over the directing of our lives—in the words of Proverbs, "in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). God will work, but we must resign to God our consent, our will—our all.

Who here cannot say, "God has blessed my life?" Is there one among us who has not some special

cause for gratitude? It was more than chance and fate that we are what we are, that we are where we are, that we have what we have. It is God rescuing us from the darkness of this world that we may be part of His Kingdom and glory—if we will only submit to His governing of our lives.

Thanksgiving is a time when we acknowledge our finitude, when we say thank you, for we have not done it all ourselves. We cannot take the credit. The final credit belongs to God, and He will give us our portion in due time. In the meanwhile let us heed this admonition from the apostle Paul: "In everything give thanks to God," knowing indeed that "Great is our Lord and greatly to be praised."

Let us have the humility to relinquish our natural claim on any credit for ourselves and give all to God. Then in the age to come He will abundantly recompense.

For truly, what have we that we did not receive? Nothing, save perhaps our sins and failings; and these we must dispense with. And then, for all that remains, we can truly thank God through ages upon ages upon ages of joy. For what power have we to do anything *eternal* for ourselves?

So let us thank God now, humbly, gratefully, "lest ye think ye did it!" MM

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## "I Did It—My Way!"

*(Continued from page 2)*

their lives by their own wishes or whims but letting Him lead.

Doing our own thing, going our own way, following our own ideas, is the surest route to spiritual failure. It is like the fellow who boasted of being a "self-made" man, whose wife said he was a horrible example of unskilled labor.

"It is the road to the kingdom *not* to seek our own way," said an earnest and wise life-seeker of our own day. This principle echoes the Master of men who said, "Follow Me," not "do your own thing."

When we stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, we will be only too glad to be able to say, "I gave up MY way—for YOURS." MM

*Mature persons take disappointments as  
God's appointments.*

# The Shadow of the Great Rock

*Sweet is the solace of Thy love,  
My heavenly Friend to me,  
While through the hidden way of faith  
I journey on with Thee,  
Learning by quiet thankfulness  
As a dear child to be.*

*Though from the shadow of Thy peace  
My feet would often stray,  
Thy mercy follows all my steps,  
And will not turn away;  
Yea, Thou wilt comfort me at last  
If true to Thee I stay.*

*No other comforter I need  
If Thou O Lord, be mine;  
Thy rod will bring my spirit low,  
Thy fire my heart refine,  
And cause me pain that none may feel  
By other love than Thine.*

*Then in the secret of my soul,  
Though hosts my peace invade,  
Though through a waste and weary land  
My lonely way be made,  
Thou, even Thou, wilt comfort me;  
I need not be afraid.*

*O there is nothing in the world  
To weigh against Thy will;  
E'en in the dark times I dread most  
Thy covenant fulfill;  
And when the pleasant morning dawns  
I'll find Thee with me still.*

*Still in the solitary place  
I would awhile abide,  
Till with the solace of Thy love  
My soul is satisfied,  
And all my hopes of happiness  
Stay calmly at Thy side.*

*On Thy compassion I repose  
In weakness and distress;  
I will not ask for greater ease  
Lest I should love Thee less.  
It is a blessed thing for me  
To feel Thy tenderness.*

## And Still She Speaks

Extracts from sermons, discussions, talks, comments  
by Rev. Maud Hembree (1853-1935).



We must "meditate upon these things; give [ourselves] wholly to them; that [our] profiting may appear to all." Do not allow the cares and pleasures of this life to come in and take your mind off what is all-important—and keep you from increasing your faith to resist evil.

It is extremely easy to see someone else's faults, but a great work to see our own besetments, see our own selfishness, our own pride. Pride ever lurks in the human heart. You must learn to see yourself, take off the "green goggles" and see if you are liking those things that will lead to life eternal.

Jesus says, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." Not watch for Christ to come through the air but watch self. All we have to watch is ourselves, what we are thinking, doing and saying, how we are redeeming the time or whether we are idling it away.

God in His mercy and goodness has sent the glorious light of His truth to us. Our actions will show whether it has been in vain. If we are negligent, if we are all taken up with the things of this life, it will be in vain. If our minds are all on ourselves and business and we forget God, then it will be in vain to us.

The things God commands us to forsake—what miserable things they are! And what glorious things He commands us to add, virtues that will bring a hundredfold of peace and happiness now and eternal life in the future! That is why Jesus said we get the hundredfold now in this life as well as the promise of eternal life.

If you put away all selfishness, envy, and strife, you will be happy. Do not let those evil feelings have room in your minds. Fill your mind with right thoughts and crowd out the evil.

You want to be careful what you read. Some people are born with a craving for reading. Do not get in the habit of reading trash and stories. Be careful about going to the library; be careful what you choose. Be sure it is the best.

We gain the victory over self by watchfulness and self-control. Every one of us will have something that will be a temptation to us as long as life lasts or until Elijah comes; but if we resist, it is not sin.

Apart from getting ready myself, of all earthly things I can do the greatest is to defend the Bible.

We can rejoice if Christ does seem to tarry. We can rejoice that we are being given more time and opportunity.

If you are tempted to be angry, grit your teeth and hold on to yourself—conquer it so that if someone reviles you, you will keep your patience. It is not sin to be tempted, but to give way to the temptation is sin.

When we pray, we must not tell God what we want. We must learn to ask Him to give us what we need, whether trials, disappointments or whatever. We do not know what we need. We must learn to ask Him to give us what His mighty, all-seeing eye knows we need.

We have to get the old shoes off and have our "Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" so we can tread the way with ease. As long as we wear the old shoes of the flesh, we cannot travel, we cannot lay aside the weights and besetting sins, cannot surmount the obstacles; but when we get the old shoes off we can see the obstacles and can tread the way with ease.

# Why We Need Thanksgiving

**Y**OU CAN get along without it—only if you can get along without God.

In 250 years America has amassed great resources, but we've also built a complex economic and social system beyond belief. As a result we grapple with mind-boggling problems.

We are learning that we still need God's blessing on our harvest, that character can crumble, to our chagrin; that man cannot live by bread alone.

We need to come back to real thanksgiving. For thankfulness to God—real thankfulness—might become a long and crucial step back toward the vital truths our nation has almost forgotten.

Why should we be thankful to God this fall of 1983? Because it is His due.

It's a fact. All we are and have is from His hand—our health and strength, our food and shelter, our very blood and breath, our time, both now and for eternity.

In Revelation, chapters 4 and 5, we catch a glimpse of praise around the throne of Heaven. First we hear a song that has never yet been fully sung on earth: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

Let that sink in. God is worthy of our thanks because He is our Maker. We are not our own; we belong to Him.

The rampant feeling today is that every man's life is his own. But the Bible says this is not true. "... for thy pleasure they are and were created."

We are creatures. God is the Creator. The human mind will twist and turn to avoid facing the difference, but the fact remains.

God is also our Provider and Sustainer. We have no other course. Life's necessities, as well as all its

extras, come from Him. The Pilgrims knew this well. Do we?

But God is more. Our Creator God is also our Deliverer. The Psalmist sums it up in a few words: "For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. 116:8-9). And the ultimate in deliverance He offers is this: He will "swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 25:8). Think what this means—no more death, no more sorrow anywhere on earth.

God deserves our thanks. He is a faithful Creator, Defender, and Sustainer. He has given us this present life; and, if we do on our part, He will give us that which will be eternal. Should we not say also with David, "I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116:17-18)?

Wherever and whenever men have valued their relationship with God, they have offered their thanks. Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and David gave thanks to God. As their eyes were opened to discern the beauty of God's holiness, His love and perfections, they responded with thanksgiving.

Christ Himself gave thanks again and again to the Father. Peter and the disciples gave thanks. Paul gave thanks. Old Testament believers were commanded to "Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High" (Ps. 50:14). New Testament believers have the same command: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thess. 5:18).

However, there is at least one other important

reason why we should be thankful to God. To acknowledge His goodness is to see Him as He is and to take our rightful places as His wholly dependent subjects, to remember that "we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." It is His to command, and ours to obey.

When we are thankful, we see God's love and goodness. We are able to discern His judgments. We are humble, submissive, obedient, receptive to His will.

To be unthankful, on the contrary, is to declare our independence of God, to cut ourselves off from Him, to say, "I know a few things for myself; my way is better." Unthankfulness blinds us. An unthankful person may not even realize that God is in the picture.

An unthankful nation is an unthinking nation, and its people are in mortal peril.

America's deepest problems are rooted in blindness to God's goodness and power. Her problems are the products of unthankfulness. Where God is pushed out, fear comes in—for a nation or for an individual. "There were they in great fear, where no fear was," says the Psalmist David (Ps. 53:5). Of whom is he speaking? Of the fool who has said in his heart, "There is no God" (verse 1).

God is with those who are with Him. "I love them," He says, "that love me" (Prov. 8:17). The men who give up God will find, in time, that God gives them up.

The Bible exposes the root of spiritual darkness in our world today. "Because that, when they [mankind] knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened . . . for this cause God gave them up . . ." (Romans 1:21, 26). And as if to make the circumstance doubly clear, verse 28 goes on, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind"—He rejected them as unworthy of His mercy.

The price of unthankfulness is high. You cannot ignore God's rights, God's sovereignty, God's loving-kindness without losing touch with God—on whom your life depends.

Can a nation slip into darkness because it is unthankful? It can. Since the Pilgrim era, our nation has drifted further and further into spiritual poverty. Even in dire straits, the Pilgrims were rich—because

they had faith in God. They looked to Him for help and provisions.

Not so today. Men have lost their basic trust in God. Putting their trust in men, they have laid aside the Bible, not only in the educational process but in the home and public life. Small wonder our nation has lost its concept of sin and that violence and bloodshed are part of modern life.

Again and again the rights of men have been affirmed at the cost of maintaining the rights of God. Our birthright of godliness has been sold for the pottage of humanistic thinking.

If God were speaking to our nation today, He might say as He did to Israel: "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

Where have we missed the way? We've made the fatal error of thinking we can be wise and good without God's help—that we can be great and happy and obtain salvation on our own terms. We as individuals must be alerted and warned, lest we be caught up in the ingratitude of our times. There is no better place to begin than to look up in gratitude this Thanksgiving season and renew our faith in God.

What should we be thankful for?

First, for the needs of life.

Do we give thanks before each meal? Jesus did. Again and again we read that He lifted His eyes toward heaven and offered thanks before the simplest meal. We should be thankful every day, not just now and then.

We should be thankful, too, for our knowledge of God and His saving truth. Let us take time this Thanksgiving to list what we have received through God's mercy: a new hope, a new outlook on life, and the prospect of eternal rewards (I John 2:25). What greater blessings could mortals share!

With God in the picture, life has new purpose and meaning. We can think not merely of our years on earth but of our place in God's eternal plan and purpose. We can—if we will—have a place in the universe to come, a role throughout eternity.

Isaiah exclaims of those who would one day encounter Christ, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined" (Isa. 9:2).

*(Continued on page 24)*





NOW sing we a song for the harvest:  
 Thanksgiving and honour and praise,  
 For all that the bountiful Giver  
 Hath given to gladden our days;

For grasses of upland and lowland,  
 For fruits of the garden and field,  
 For gold which the mine and the furrow  
 To miner and husbandman yield.

And thanks for the harvest of beauty  
 For that which the hands cannot hold;  
 The harvest eyes only can gather,  
 And only our hearts can enfold.

We reap it on mountain and moorland;  
 We glean it from meadow and lea;  
 We garner it in from the cloudland;  
 We bind it in sheaves from the sea.

But now we sing deeper and higher,  
 Of harvests that eye cannot see;  
 They ripen on mountains of duty,  
 Are reaped by the brave and the free.

And they have been gathered and garnered,  
 Some golden with honour and gain,  
 And some, as with heart's-blood, are ruddy,  
 The harvests of sorrow and pain.

O Thou who art Lord of the harvest,  
 The Giver who gladdens our days,  
 Our hearts are forever repeating  
 Thanksgiving and honour and praise.

*O CHRIST, Thou art the great heightener,  
 heightening all our skills for higher purposes.*

## *Morning Prayer*

*NOW that the daylight fills the sky,  
 We lift our hearts to God on high,  
 That He, in all we do or say,  
 Would keep us free from harm today.*

*May He restrain our tongues from strife,  
 And shield from anger's din our life  
 And guard with watchful care our eyes  
 From earth's absorbing vanities.*

*O may our inmost hearts be pure,  
 From thoughts of folly kept secure;  
 And pride of sinful flesh subdued  
 By gratitude for daily food.*

*So we, when this day's work is o'er,  
 And shades of night return once more,  
 Our path of trial safely trod,  
 Shall give the glory to our God.*

*OBSTACLES are what you see when  
 you take your eyes off the goal.*

*OH, this life is but a vapor  
 Which the rising sun dispels;  
 Just a lovely fading flower,  
 Soon to wither, Scripture tells.*

*Shall we labor for the present,  
 Just for joys that fade away,  
 Which can never bring salvation  
 In the coming glorious day?*

*PRAISE, O praise, our God and King,  
Loud our adorations ring;  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure;*

*Praise Him that He made the sun  
Day by day his course to run:  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure;*

*And the silver moon by night,  
Shining with her gentle light;  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

*Praise Him that He gave the rain  
To mature the swelling grain;  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure;*

*And hath bid the fruitful field  
Crops of precious increase yield;  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

*Praise Him for our harvest-store,  
He hath filled the garner-floor;  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure;*

*And for richer food than this,  
Pledge of everlasting bliss;  
For His mercies still endure  
Ever faithful, ever sure.*

*Glory to our Bounteous King;  
Glory let creation sing;  
Glory to the Father, He  
For ever was, for aye shall be!*

*Memo to me:  
OTHERS LIVE HERE, TOO*



*MY God, I thank Thee, Who hast made  
The earth so bright,  
So full of splendour and of joy,  
Beauty and light;  
So many glorious things are here,  
Noble and right.*

*I thank Thee, too, that Thou hast made  
Joy to abound;  
So many gentle thoughts and deeds  
Circling us round,  
That in the darkest spot of earth  
Some love is found.*

*I thank Thee more that all our joy  
Is touched with pain;  
That shadows fall on brightest hours;  
That thorns remain;  
So that earth's bliss may be our guide,  
And not our chain.*

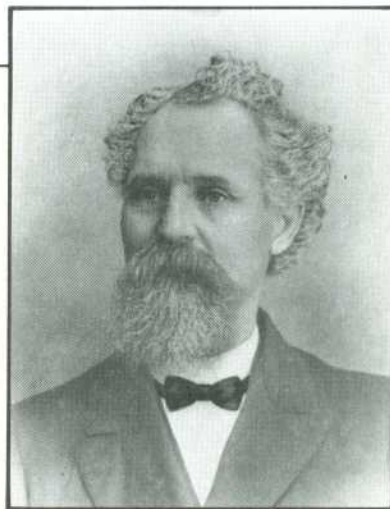
*I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast kept  
The best in store;  
We have enough, yet not too much  
To long for more:  
A yearning for a deeper peace  
Not known before.*

*I thank Thee, Lord, that here our souls,  
Though amply blest,  
Can never find, although they seek,  
A perfect rest;  
Nor ever shall, until they learn  
God's way is best.*



*The Life and Work of  
Rev. L. J. Nichols*

# An Honest Man



*"One who was faithful to his God, and loved his fellowmen."*

## Chapter One The Early Years

LEMUEL Truesdale Nichols was a Briton, of good English and Welsh stock. When in the early Nineteenth Century the greener fields of the New World beckoned, he became an American. The year of his emigration and his subsequent movements for some years are unknown, save that in New York State he took for his second wife Emmeline Dunbar, American born of Scotch ancestry, a direct descendant of the ancient clan whose stronghold was Dunbar Castle on the Firth of Forth. At a later date we find them settled in the State of Indiana, which was then fairly well populated for a State so far west.

In their humble home in the town of Elkhart, they had not the faintest idea that they were actors in a drama of the ages, whose Director was the Eternal Himself. To them the son born on October 1, 1844, was, of course, adorable, but of no greater significance than the two sons and daughters who preceded him. Another child to love and cherish, another mouth to fill. Their selection of a name for the new arrival was an example of what fond parents sometimes do to helpless children. Following a custom which has had a degree of popularity for many years, he was given no name except the initials of his father, L. T. Perhaps they did not realize that for the rest of his life he would be patiently explaining that L. T. stood for L. T., nothing more. But then—what's in a name? By any other, he would have been as great.

The Forties were among the great years of winning the American West. The California gold rush was in full swing, and the land-hungry pioneers of the East were beginning to flood westward to the virgin plains and mountains. Lemuel and Emmeline Nichols were caught up in this restless tide of migration. Indiana was far from crowded, but just beyond beckoned the vision of greener pastures and better things, the spirit that was building America. The Far West was too far, and the intervening prairies were a no-man's land filled with savages; to the northwest lay the frontier—yes, frontier—State of Wisconsin, and its wooded valleys seemed to promise more for the future. So in

1849, when L. T. was five years old, they journeyed thither by covered wagon. A heavily timbered farm near Lomira was purchased, the family established themselves in the rude log cabin which stood in the clearing, and the stern task of taming the wilderness began.

At this time Wisconsin was truly a wilderness, with a population of less than 300,000 in all its 56,000 square miles. Statehood had been attained only a year before. In the words of L. T. Nichols himself:

"The wild Indians were all around us in the daytime; and bears, wildcats, panthers and deer around us at night. I shall never forget that life. I do not wish to return to it, but I am glad my lot was cast in such surroundings. We did not have the frivolities of the world that we now have. There were no cities. We had the quiet of the woods, with our blessed Bible; and when the time came for recreation we did not have to go off to get it; we sat quietly by the fire with Mother and read our Bible, asking questions."

More than once he related that when going out into the dark to fetch wood he saw eyes glaring from the shadows. Often he fled indoors in stark terror when a wildcat screamed in the night. Of comforts and conveniences they had practically none. In fact, when they first settled in the wilds, their cabin had no fireplace and all cooking had to be done outdoors. Their principal food was that short-season crop which has tided over so many pioneer families—the lowly turnip. In that virgin soil turnips grew to enormous size, sometimes filling a water pail, and turnips it was, day after day, like it or not. Fortunately, Emmeline Nichols possessed the youthful spirit and inward joy which enabled her to make these primitive conditions a sort of picnic for her brood. Lemuel, too, was a cheerful

man, always looking on the bright side in spite of poverty and ill health. There was little gloom about the Nichols farmstead, be the hearth ever so bare and the surrounding forest ever so somber and filled with unknown dangers.

It is interesting to reflect on the state of the nation at this time, less than a century and a half ago. It is a measure of the rapid growth of our country in a material way. The mechanical age was in its childhood as the expression of inventive genius gathered momentum throughout the world. Electricity, that versatile slave

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### **I look back to my boyhood days when I thought Mother was teaching me right . . ."**

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of modern times, had few practical uses. The internal-combustion engine was unknown. Steam was coming into its own, the steamboat being 42 years old and the locomotive about the same, but in a very crude form. Aviation was confined to a few balloons, very frail and perilous. The telegraph had been demonstrated successfully only twelve years before, 1837, and the telephone was undreamed of. Mail in the frontier provinces beyond the railroads was carried on horseback. A sea voyage to Europe was a matter of weeks or months; to California by the fastest clipper took nearly 90 days. To the Pacific Coast by wagon train meant six months of privation and peril. Men traveled much as they did in the days of the Pharaohs. The vast Plains, the Rockies, and much of the Mid-west

were Indian country and buffalo pastures. It can truly be said that young L. T. Nichols grew up with the country.

Emmeline Nichols was a woman of strong character, and her influence played an immeasurable part in molding the life of her son. Of high principles, deeply religious, a singer and speaker of ability, she easily became a leader in the meetings, which in the absence of churches were usually held in the log schoolhouse. At the fireside she did what she believed to be her duty toward her children, and did it well. Her faith was of the Christian or "Campbellite" persuasion, and, knowing no other, she diligently instilled its principles by song and story into the minds of her offspring.

There came a day when little L. T. was old enough to go to Sunday School. In his Sunday best, which meant clean homespun, straw hat made at home from hand-plaited rye straw, and barefooted, he trotted happily by his mother's side to the rude schoolhouse. But first he must be coached in his lesson.

"My son," said she, "you must learn this little lesson to say to your teacher. Who was the first man?"

With childish innocence came the ready answer:

"Papa."

"No, no, my son," with a suppressed smile, "the teacher will laugh at you. You must say, Adam. Now, who was the first woman?"

"Mama"—hopefully but not so confidently.

"No, no; you must say, Eve."

Thus began his early education in the long series of religious errors which he must in later years unlearn, laboriously, painfully, yet gloriously. But thus began also his inner love of and reverence for the Word of God and his appreciation for the higher values of life. As he wrote in later years, looking back,

"We find the teachings of this wide world in opposition to the teachings of the Bible. I look back to my boyhood days when I thought Mother was teaching me right; she was teaching the same as the ministers, and I thought they were right. I thought they were sincere and could prove what they taught. But—"

When he was ten years old an incident took place. Trivial, some

thought it was so if they said so. So when we got there, we kept watching that old chimney. There was a hole at the bottom and an archway over it, and they told us he would come out there. So we listened and pretty soon we heard a noise. We heard him coming down the chimney! Soon we saw some old boots come in sight, all covered with long hair. Soon he crawled out, and we saw the pack on his back. We all

said to myself, 'Well, maybe these preachers are not right in everything. I have found they are not right in reference to Santa Claus, and maybe they are not right in some other things. And Father and Mother cannot be right, for they are taught by these preachers. I guess I will go and read the Bible and see.' And I found they were wrong in everything."

In his childish yet precocious mind was born a firm resolution, one which remained with and guided him all the days of his life. Never would he believe a doctrine of religion without proof from the Bible he had been taught to love and revere but which was as yet a closed Book to him. Deacon Graves set a mighty and momentous work in motion that pagan Christmas Eve.

His confidence in the sincerity of the "shepherds" was further strained by the behavior of an old circuit rider who periodically held services in the schoolhouse. Before the time for service to begin, this minister would quietly tuck his sermon into the large pulpit Bible. Each time he opened the service, he would spread his hands heavenward and say, "Let us pray," and in the course of his lengthy petition he would invariably say,

"O Lord, send Thy Holy Spirit to enlighten Thy servant, for he knoweth not what to say to this people."

Young L.T. questioned. Was it truthful? Was it honest? Was it even manly?

When on one occasion some mischievous boys stole his sermon, the last sentence of his prayer was literally and lamentably true—he indeed "knew not what to say to this people!"

On the Wisconsin frontier, all education followed the familiar American pioneer pattern. For a

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### **Never would he believe a doctrine of religion without proof from the Bible he had been taught to love and revere.**

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would call it, but it marked the awakening of his questioning and investigative powers. Again quoting his own words:

"This incident served to open my eyes to some extent. And I don't know but that it was the very thing that started me thinking.

"I was ten years old, and Christmas—or what I supposed to be Christmas—was coming. Mother said, 'Hang up your stocking, for Santa Claus is coming around tonight. He comes once a year, and he is coming tonight; and he will leave you some presents. Sometimes he leaves apples, sometimes candy, sometimes jumping jacks, sometimes dolls.'

"Well, I thought the apples would be pretty good. And then we were going to have a Christmas tree over in the church. It was the first time I ever saw one in my life. Santa Claus was to come down the chimney, so they had a great big chimney built for the old fellow to come down. Papa told me it was so, and Mamma told me it was so, and I

saw him and he was really Santa Claus. He was an old-looking fellow; he looked as though he must have been living for ages, we thought. He began jumping around and going through clownish pranks. But pretty soon he stumbled, and his false face—with his great big nose that you could take hold of with both hands, which had been growing for a thousand years—the whole thing dropped off, and I saw it was old Deacon Graves!"

For young L. T. Nichols, things were never the same after that night. His confidence had been betrayed. His parents, his teacher, even the preacher had seriously taught him the Santa Claus fable. To quote his own statement:

"I said, 'Why Father! you are not teaching me the truth; old Santa Claus is only old Deacon Graves.' And I said to myself, 'What are these preachers teaching us lies for?' And I began to cogitate and meditate on it; and I went to my Bible and I could not find anything about Santa Claus in the Bible. I



time there were no schoolhouses, and when the first school was organized there were still none. Emmeline Nichols, as a woman of superior education and natural leadership, was chosen to teach the children of the scattered families, and a room in her home was set apart as a classroom. Here L. T. began his formal education, the years of which were few enough; but, to use his own words in later years, "I have never stopped going to school." Like every great and successful man, he made life his university, and kept his mind perpetually young.

When the school outgrew the Nichols home, the new log schoolhouse became the cultural and social center of the frontier community, its church and place of entertainment as well as of education. Some of the teachers were good, some decidedly incompetent. One used to have her pupils take a nap—for the sake of getting one herself; some of the boys decided that was too dull, so slipped out the window and went squirrel hunting.

One teacher he was not permitted to forget. Mary Eastman was a young woman of much more than average intelligence and ability, and she, too, had a share in molding his young character. Her influence on him was small, however, compared with his influence on her later years, when she came to see him as a God-sent teacher and became one of his most loyal and consistent followers.

In these formative years his deeply religious nature was constantly pressing to the fore, but he was by no means a neurotic or eccentric child. His was a normal, healthy boyhood, full of life and action, yet rich with a constantly growing reverence for the Creator and His revealed Word. Before he reached his teens he became aware that

## The Gem of Truth

*Truth is the gem for which we seek,  
Oh, tell us, where can it be found?  
For this we search, and pray, and weep  
That truth may in our hearts abound.*

*We want the truth on ev'ry point,  
We want it, too, to practice by,  
Divine in nature, 'tis the best,  
For truth will ever stand the test.*

*Seize then the truth where'er 'tis found,  
On heathen or on Christian ground,  
Among your friends, among your foes,  
The plant's divine where'er it grows.*

—by L. T. Nichols

religion, to be successful, must be something more than academic. His parents had taught him the value of right habits, and in that rude country he had plenty of opportunity to see the other kind. Secretly, without parental urging, when he was just eleven years of age, he made a solemn vow to his God that he would never touch liquor or tobacco, never would he commit an immoral or dishonest act, never should profanity or obscenity defile his lips. To his dying day that boyhood compact remained unbroken.

His disenchantment with the "preachers" and established religion grew rapidly as he approached teen-age. One time, as he recalled later, he had come home with his mother after listening to "the preacher," this time a long-faced, sanctimonious sort. "What that preacher said," he told his mother, "I just cannot swallow. I don't see how God could be just, if He is like that. He must be a crazy man." Another time he said, "I think your God must be a chicken, for he has a gizzard instead of a heart. He could not have a heart and bring all

these aches and pains upon people just because Adam and Eve ate an apple years and years ago. I can't believe such things."

When he was still very young, his eldest brother died—an event that aroused in him a dread of the tomb which he never lost, and a strong desire for future life. More and more questions concerning the Divine Plan arose in his expanding mind; more and more the established creeds failed to satisfy; more and more he turned to the Bible for the answers. The Bible was his constant, familiar friend and companion. Far from being sensitive or abashed by this early piety, he longed to have others share the knowledge he found on its pages, and at the age of thirteen he was regularly carrying it to school. At recess and noon, while most of the boys and girls were at noisy play, he might be seen in a corner of the school yard with a few of the more curious about him, talking of the thoughts of the Almighty.

One time a minister gave him a personal challenge—"Here comes Elder Nichols, with his Bible under

his arm! You keep away from him, he is dangerous," was the warning. "He tells you that you have no immortal soul. Beware of him!"

Young L.T. had said there was no immortal soul, not having been able to find anything about an "immortal soul" in the Bible. But the ministers must be getting it from *somewhere*. Surely, somewhere between the two covers there was *some* mention of it. If there was

and discovery. But following what God had said was not one steady, plotted work from beginning to end, nor did the truth suddenly burst out in one glorious blaze of light. It was a gradual process as slowly, through busy days and sleepless nights of study, analysis and research, by the single-minded efforts of an honest man searching, groping, praying for the light, and accepting it as it came.

would save my money and use it for some good purpose. I would save until I owned the shingles over my head, and if I had any left I would spend it for others. I saw things that caused me to turn my desires from the things of this world."

By the time L. T. was seventeen, he was a man in stature, doing a man's work in the support of his mother and invalid father as well as a baby sister, Ella, born in 1858 (who was destined to play a leading part in his career). Hours of labor were long and the work arduous, but he was a veritable dynamo of energy. Men who watched him lead the mowers in the hayfields muttered that he was a reaper in himself. Yet daily toil was never permitted to blunt his finer sensibilities or obscure the conviction that there was something more vital than eating and sleeping, working and earning.

More than ever the Bible became his counselor. As his knowledge of the Scriptures increased, his faith in established religion as he found it decreased proportionately. More and more it became obvious that the leaders of the people were preaching error in place of truth. The doctrine of inherent immortality he could find nowhere in the Book—yet all believed it. The theory of instant salvation without works was both unreasonable and unscriptural, yet universally accepted. The revolting dogmas of a burning hell and a literal devil to keep the fires alight had been instilled into his young mind at his mother's knee, confirmed by bloodcurdling pictures found right in the old family Bible. He was not long in discovering that the pictures were man-made, as was the whole damnable concept of a vengeful, bloody-mouthed deity. Into the scrap-heap these ideas went, with many another cherished belief—not all at once, of course,

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## More and more questions arose . . . more and more he turned to the Bible for the answers.

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a foundation for it, he wanted to stand on it.

So he went to work. He began at Genesis and read the five books of Moses, then he read Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther; then he came to Job and read it, and through the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon. Still no immortal soul. Then he read all through the Prophets, and on through the Gospels and the writings of the Apostles, and still, to his surprise, he did not find it.

Well, he thought, perhaps God would make up in Revelation for what He had left out of the other books. Probably he would find it there. And so he read Revelation with *special* care, right through to the last "Amen." And—to his amazement he *failed* to find it even *once*. Over and over he had found the words "soul" and "spirit," but not *once* were they said to be deathless, undying, or immortal. Now he was ready to answer any challenge on *that* score.

And so he went from point to point in his exciting course of study

Other scenes of early life impressed L.T. As he recalled another time, "To think of speaking against God—poor, puny creatures that we are! God is the Author of His Book, and who are we to Him? What have we done? We never fed all the poor, and yet—a woman gets a plume on her hat, a man gets a gold watch on, and a big ring set with a shining diamond on his finger, and they think they are big! What have they done? Spent their money in vain. I made up my mind when I was young that I would not spend a cent for foolish toys and frivolities. I



Emmeline Dunbar Nichols

but gradually. Willingness and even anxiety to exchange error, be it ever so respectable, for truth, marked the boy and set the shape of things to come.

As he saw with growing clarity the fraud and deception practiced in the name of religion, he rebelled. Not only that, but he refused to take it "lying down." At home and abroad he spoke out and struck a valiant blow for true religion, or as much of it as he knew. His mother, dismayed by this turn of events, could see nothing ahead but bleak infidelity for her dear boy if he continued in this course. Unable to answer his objections herself, she called in the minister, Elder North, who had no better success.

"No, Mother," said L.T. soberly after the interview, "I am not an infidel—not yet: unless you call it infidelity not to believe what the preacher says. If that is infidelity, I confess I am going into it, for to believe such foolishness a man must have no power to think. This is the age of science and reason, and I believe in thinking."

The "boy preacher," as he was called, had become something of a tradition in his neighborhood. Some oldsters, of course, shook their heads and prophesied early mental breakdown or worse; some were bitterly antagonistic as this "upstart" veered farther and farther from the beaten paths of dogma. More than one storm was precipitated by his youthful eagerness to "speak a word for Jesus." At the religious services and revivals, it was the custom at the close of the sermon to invite personal testimonies or exhortations, and this is where he came in. Calling upon the speakers to prove their assertions, he would proceed to prove the opposite from the pages of Holy Writ. The sound of the Gospel, even when supported by plain testimony, was strange and

unwelcome, and many were the attempts to silence the youth. One evangelist, in his presence, solemnly warned his hearers against "the devil who goes around with a black Bible under his arm." When this "devil" spoke in his own defense and the defense of truth, he was commanded by an old iron-sided deacon to sit down; but being within his rights and on public property, he refused to be still until he had

speech foreshadowed the revolutionary doctrine of perfection of character, which pleased the assembled clergymen not at all. He spoke up bravely: "The Lord means just what He says, and unless we keep His commandments, He will never save us." One minister thought that much too narrow, that the Lord would surely grant more latitude than *that* to "fly" in. He said, "I don't think the Lord meant

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### **He was an honest man searching, groping, praying for the light, and accepting it as it came.**

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finished. Again and again the enemy tried to sing him down, to heckle and interrupt him, but to no purpose; when the noise died down he was still on his feet. The lights were put out, but lamps were brought in by sympathizers.

Once an old man, in a towering rage, swung a heavy silver-headed cane over his head and shouted,

"You sit down or I'll knock you down!"

Before L. T. could reply, a brawny schoolmate interposed himself, shook a broad fist in the old man's face and cried,

"Old Harrington, you can't do that!"

And so it went, again and yet again.

On one occasion he stood forth in the midst of a convocation of twenty-seven ministers in LeRoy, Wisconsin, and audaciously yet modestly told them they were all on the wrong track; that the thoughts of man are vanity and "if we cannot read what we believe in the Bible, just let it alone."

Even in that early day his earnest

it as close as all that; God did not mean that we could not have some thoughts of our own; there is some leeway for us."

"Well," replied young L.T., "the very moment you let down the gap and say you need not keep every commandment, you need not keep any. If you open the way for one thought of man, you have let the whole train of evils in." Couldn't they see the point?—if they *wanted* to see?

Many, many years later, in Chicago he met the last survivor of the group. When he introduced himself, the old man said,

"Are you that boy? Are you L. T. Nichols?"

"Yes. . . . Do you remember that occasion?"

"Yes"—sadly—"you were right. I am the only one left, and I am an infidel. I have thrown all religion overboard."

While still in his teens, he was confronted with a temptation which, though strong, did not tempt him. An employer, marking his zeal and eloquence, offered him a salary of

\$1500 a year to fill the pulpit of his church. Times were hard. Lemuel Nichols, although a sick man, was mowing in the long, hot days of harvest for fifty cents a day; Emmeline was eking out a scanty income by sewing. L. T.'s own wages were very low. Fifteen hundred dollars looked like the door to affluence. Yet without hesitation he refused the offer, for he knew it would bind him to a system that he

But L. T. had other ideas. "No," he replied, "Mother, I would rather follow what God has said." To him the highest success was the quest for truth and salvation, and this success, he fully believed, he could attain by the help of God and his own earnest endeavor, without the handicap of "higher" education. His autobiography describes his reasonings in those years of development:

"While I longed for greater advan-

to welcome pain, privation, so that the sphere of human knowledge, the empire of human thought, be thereby extended. While the monarchs, and conquerors, and great ones of earth repose under stately monuments, towering heavenward, soon to crumble to dust, my great ambition was then and is now: to be worthy of having written over me the simple epitaph: 'One who was faithful to his God, and loved his fellow men.'

"I looked over the field of human thought to see by what means I could accomplish the greatest good, and I decided that of all the literature of earth the Bible contained the most knowledge that would benefit humanity for both this life and the one to come. On the very threshold of my investigations I was met with much to appall and bewilder even an older head. Over one thousand faiths in the land, all teaching different things, and all claiming to speak the words of an infallible God, the words of Holy Writ, yet that very Bible teaching that all its sayings are Yea and Amen, not Yea and Nay (II Cor. 1:19-20) and its followers must be perfectly joined together in the same mind, all speaking the same things (I Cor. 1:10).

"With such a state of affairs, I could not wonder that the world was turning infidel. I did not wonder that the inquirer after truth, bewildered by the confusion arising from jarring sects, began to doubt the infallibility of this blessed Word, and infidelity was adding thousands to its ranks. Either the Bible was Divine, the work of an infallible God, or the work of fallible man; there was no halfway ground upon which to stand. I met prominent infidels and I could not answer the charges brought against it. I saw that the wise of the world, the great teachers of the day, those trained in

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**"I looked over the field of human thought and decided that of all the literature of earth the Bible contained the most knowledge that would benefit humanity for both this life and the one to come."**

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was convinced was error. With clear eyes he saw that the hired servant must please the man whose bread he eats, so in his youth he resolved never to be shackled by money. Like Paul, he would preach the gospel without charge, being free to speak the truth as he found it in the Word, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear. Like his earlier vow of personal morality, this resolution stood unbroken throughout his life.

Emmeline Nichols, the constant support of her son, at one juncture grew weary of her son's fascinations and pleaded with him when he was on the brink of manhood—and infidelity. "My son," she begged, "There is something in you. Throw these ideas away and go to college and fit yourself to be something in this world." Poorer boys than he, and boys of less ability, had worked their way through the halls of learning and to the top of the ladder of success and fame.

tages and more time to devote to study, yet I was determined not to be discouraged by any obstacle. Such sentiments as expressed by Horace Greeley helped nerve me for the struggle: 'When those who have enjoyed rare opportunities and swayed vast numbers and have been borne through life on the shoulders of shouting multitudes shall have been laid at rest in golden coffins, to moulder forgotten—the stately marble their only monument—it will be found that some humble youth, *who neither inherited nor found but hewed out his opportunities*, has uttered the thought which shall render the age memorable—by extending the means of enlightenment and blessing to our race.'

Personal honor, worldly glory, earth's millions, were not the prize for which I labored. We need a loftier ideal to nerve us for heroic lives, to deem fame, riches, personal happiness but shadows, of which human good is the substance;



the theological schools of the land, could not meet them. I saw that the time-honored creeds of the day would not stand the test before the "bar of reason and evidence." If all others had failed, what could I do? I trembled at the magnitude of the undertaking. Thus passed days and weeks of anxious study, when often upon bended knees and with falling tears I prayed to God for light.

One day while carefully reading, my eye caught a striking testimony in Prov. 2:3-5: "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding, if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." How the reading of these testimonies impressed my mind! I must search as for hid treasures to ever find the knowledge of God. If that were so, what had covered it up? I sought for the answer, and found it in the sayings of Paul, the great Apostle to us Gentiles. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season; out of season: reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."—II Tim. 4:1-4. It was the fables mankind had been turned aside to that had covered up the truth, the sound doctrine; and Paul told us of it over eighteen hundred years ago, that we might be able to dig beneath the rubbish and find the hidden truth. How mighty seemed the undertaking, to dig beneath the rubbish of cen-

turies and find the gold!

"I knew that the world would only sneer at the thought of such a thing being possible; but others had been sneered at, and had succeeded for a far less prize. Where would we have been today had it not been for the spirit that animated a Columbus and led him on in the face of untold difficulties? He had to face the doubts of the skeptical, the sneers of the learned, the cavils of the cautious, and the opposition of nearly all; and then before him lay the dangers of an unexplored ocean. In the prosecution of his discoveries, difficulties did not discourage, nor did dangers appall him; and after the lapse of four hundred years, volumes could not express the wonderful results that have followed the discovery of this fair land of freedom.

"It has been truly said—'Every great cause for which heroes have bled and brave souls have suffered, has once been on coward tongues

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**"We need a loftier ideal to nerve us for heroic lives, so that the sphere of human knowledge can be thereby extended"**

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an impossibility.' Fox, of England, once said, 'No man ever went successfully through any great enterprise whose earnestness did not amount to enthusiasm. There are so many obstacles in the way of any great achievement, that none but the earnest and enthusiastic will persevere and hold on to its final

accomplishment. The irresolute, the timid, after a few efforts will give up in despair.' Sir Isaac Newton ascribed his success, 'not to superior genius, but to superior industry; to the habit and power he had acquired of holding his mind steadily and for a long time to an involved and difficult subject. The wisdom he gained, the knowledge he acquired, did not fall into his idle lap, a wind-fall from the clouds, but he reached it by self-denying toil, by midnight study, by bending all his powers in one direction, and keeping them thus bent.' The great reason of success in any undertaking in life is expressed by the one term—'Earnest devotion to a cause held dear.'

"I need not be discouraged because I stood alone. I remembered the words of the celebrated Edward Everett—'I repeat it, of the great benefactors of our race, the men who by wonderful inventions, remarkable discoveries, and extraordinary improvements, have conferred the greatest benefit on the human race, the most eminent service to their fellow men—by far the greater part have been men of humble origin, narrow fortunes, small advantages, and self-taught. Whoever has learned to read, possesses the key of knowledge, and can, whenever he pleases, not only unlock the portals of her temples, but penetrate to the inmost halls and most sacred cabinets.' If I could but learn to read aright I could grasp the key of knowledge that would open the door to the storehouse of truth and enable me to grasp her treasures—more precious than the rubies of earth, more to be desired than the gold of the Transvaal. (To be Continued) MM

**Great thoughts applied become great acts.**



## **"Never to Sink Below My Best"**

**I** once read a motto that we would do well to take for our own: "Never to sink below my best."

If life is only a day-to-day performing of routine duties, then we may sink into a policy of drifting. But if we perceive life as our route to the Kingdom of God, then life must always be at full tension and effort always at full pitch.

Perseverance is one of the greatest virtues. Most people can start well; almost every one can be fine in spasms. Most of us have great moments. In the moment of great effort everyone can run and not be weary. But the greatest achievement of all is to walk and not faint.

Our daily walk in this Christian way will tell how we are progressing. Victory comes only to the one who holds on. Life is never something that can be allowed to drift. One cannot shrink from the demands of duty. Only those who endure to the end will be saved; that is why we so need that essential virtue of perseverance.

—Contributed

**O World of love and beauty,  
O world of life and light,  
O child of law and duty  
Created in the night—**

**Roll ever onward, forward,  
From chaos, slime, and clod,  
Until thou art perfected,  
The city of our God.**

—Selected

## **What Is Your Life?**

**"WHAT IS your life?"** asks the Apostle James; and then, pondering its brevity, he answers his own question, "It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:14).

Too often we have overlooked the value of time. The Psalmist exclaimed: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." To go through life without God's Word to guide and direct our daily steps, to live without a high and holy purpose, is to find at the end of our earthly pilgrimage—nothing.

The often strange and varied circumstances of this life are tools lovingly provided to shape our human clay into the Divine likeness. "Behold, as clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel," says the Almighty through the prophet Jeremiah. We must expand our minds to recognize at all times the goodness of God amid the trials and testings that come to us during this process of being made over new. Too often we forget that trials must come to every Christian, regardless of wealth, station or circumstance. As time glides by, we steadily build up or let slip opportunities to secure eternal life.

Inasmuch as this present life is our most precious possession, should not the life to come, with its numberless blessings, glory and grandeur, be worth our spending all our time and energy in His service? We may be busy with our hands, performing temporal duties, but do not those temporal duties become a part of our heavenly service as each is rendered to the glory of God?

For the masses of humanity, these days are full of uncertainty, fear and concern. But to the follower of Christ these are momentous days, full of hope and increasing faith. As the signs of His coming glow brighter, may we put our trust wholly in that Power which can still the tempest, "In whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." He alone can give life.

MM

## **Why We Need Thanksgiving**

(Continued from page 13)

As Christians our blessings are innumerable; but let me mention this one: Be thankful that all the circumstances of life are in God's hands.

If we love God and keep His commandments, we can be sure that He will make all things work together for our good. This is the anchor promise of Romans 8:28; it will always hold.

Nothing God permits will be unplanned or pointless, no matter how it seems. Trials will come, but as we trust and thank Him in "all things," He will weave the tapestry of our life for His glory and our good.

It is not a question of how much we have right now. Some of the most joyous and thankful people have very little. Some of them carry heavy burdens. But they have discovered the secret of real trust in God. Small wonder they are renewed and strengthened; yes, even filled with joy, by things that only eyes upturned in thankfulness can see.

MM

## Concerning the High Cost of Living

**W**HAT ARE we doing with our time? Are we using it to the glory of God?

Proper living costs—it costs heavily in time and commitment. A few days ago I read a few paragraphs I would share with you: “The cost of living, that’s a phrase we use often, isn’t it? But thinking about it has prompted me to try and apply a Christian perspective to the term.

“The truth is, the cost of living has always been high, demanding more than many of us are prepared to pay. We spend enormous sums

of money on properties and possessions, most of which increase in value with the years, but we may not be nearly as proficient in acquiring spiritual resources. Since we must ultimately leave the material ones, their value finally drops to nothing. Our spiritual possessions—knowledge and love of God, faith in His purposes and inner peace amidst life’s many trials last for ever and are never more valuable than when our earthly days draw to a close.

“Many years ago God through the prophet Isaiah invited people who were hungry and thirsty for

spiritual food to find it in Him; He asks, ‘Why spend money and get what is not bread, why give the price of your labour and go unsatisfied? . . . Listen to my words, hear me and you shall have life’ (Isa. 55:1-3, NEB)

When Jesus talked about life He meant Life with a capital L. For Him it wasn’t a question of acquiring money and goods. It was a growth in understanding God and a trust in His living purposes, and He made an astounding offer, ‘I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall never be hungry and whoever believes in me shall never be thirsty’ (John 6:35, NEB).

“The cost of this sort of living always has been high, but I believe nothing has ever been more worthwhile.”  
—Contributed.

## Staying Power

**T**HERE IS nothing in this modern world to equal the value of old-fashioned dependability. Luke states the apostolic church “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts. 2:42). Rain, storm, poverty, or persecution could not stop them. These Christians had *staying power*.

Staying power brings us through most of life’s experiences. It takes no superior intelligence to quit. Any fool can do that.

A person may have a good mind and talent; but if he does not persevere, he is headed for failure. To him the grass usually looks greener elsewhere, although it rarely is. More often than not, the place of greatest opportunity is right where we are.

Many have found strength and encouragement in the faithfulness of God. On His faithfulness we can depend. We sing, “Great is thy faithfulness” (Lam. 3:23) and recite, “God is faithful” (I Cor. 10:13). The more we come to know Him, the more we serve Him, the more we give up our way for His, the more we will understand, possess and reflect His divine qualities, including faithfulness.

The apostle Paul reminds us, “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2).

Faithfulness is required, not recommended. God does not require us to be talented or wealthy or successful in this world but He does require us to be faithful.

Jesus said, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

Someone has said that “The greatest ability is dependability.” Again, “Don’t doubt in the dark what God revealed in the light.” It is so easy to give in when just a little more persevering would see us through.

Repeatedly, we are told to be faithful, to “stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13) and “stand fast in the Lord” (Phil. 4:1), to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3) and “be thou faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10). The servant in Jesus’ parable who was commended for his excellent stewardship received these words of commendation: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.” His faithfulness was the determining factor.

Anyone can start well, but God judges by our position at the end of life’s battle. This is why we are admonished, “Wherefore, take unto you the full armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Eph. 6:13, NASB).

Staying power makes a difference.

MM

## Guard Your Thought Life

You must guard your thought life. Evil thoughts, once fixed in the mind, are almost impossible to eradicate. Guard your thoughts well, for if they become your enemy, you will find them very difficult to overcome. Yes, it is important what a person thinks, for the whole character gradually takes on the hue and complexion of his secret musings and meditations. Scripture says "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." It is true if we live in an environment of sordid, petty, unspiritual thoughts, our character will become warped and shriveled.

**Search me, O God, my heart discern,  
Try me my inmost thoughts to learn,  
And help me, lest to sin I stray  
To guard my mind throughout this day.**

—Anon.

In a crowd or company, guard my tongue; in solitude, my thoughts.

Virginia

M. G.

## Daily Growing

How fragile our lives are! Truly the Lord can cut us off at any time. As the Apostle James said, Our life is but a vapor which appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Physical health is a wonderful blessing, and we should be thankful for it everyday. But we must remember that it is the state of our spiritual health which will decide our eternal destiny.

We must be daily growing into holiness. As Paul said to his faithful son Timothy, "Exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth for a little time, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:7-8). Again he wrote to Titus,

"Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works" (Titus 2:6-7). Let us continue to labor for the riches which will never perish.

Tennessee

S. K.

## Sound Faith Is Contagious

I am so glad I have found the real Truth. Those who have sound faith will be as a tree planted by a river of water. They will not wither and faint in the day of adversity.

Sound faith is contagious. We cannot be full of faith and good works without in some way affecting the people about us. Our faith inspires others to nobler deeds; our words encourage them; our deeds convince them of the better life God has in store for those who serve Him.

Let us do all we can to help one another's faith and this the more earnestly as we see the final Day drawing nearer. Let us cultivate our faith daily and keep it growing stronger and more radiant. Then our hope will be renewed; our vision will be made clear and charity will abound.

Georgia

S. J.

## My "Best"

I have been greatly impressed with the necessity of giving of my best service to the Lord while I still have life and a degree of health. Daily, momentary self-denial is a must, all the more now as we see how fast the day is approaching.

One of the seeming paradoxes of the Christian life is that when one spends enough time with God, in prayer and Bible study, he will have a strange sense of leisure and quietness in doing his regular tasks, and apparently more time.

When we are careful to be alone with God for a certain time every day—preferably the first thing in the morning—we find that other things fall into their rightful place and the work of the day goes more smoothly.

New Jersey

L. K.

## Believing and Pressing

We know and believe our Master is soon coming again, and we are determined that we shall press on to the high peak of the mountain of holiness God has set for us. God has spoken and we know that one day the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, with a people holding high Truth's Banner, who "have reached the summit of holiness mountain, there to await the Sunrise!" How wonderful it will be to be there, all our banners flying high, awaiting the first golden sunbeam of Zion's glad new Morning. What a joy to be there! May we think upon it and imagine the wonder of it, the grandeur of experience.

What bountiful goodness and inconceivable wonders God has in store for all His faithful children. "Oh, how great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them, that trust in Thee before the sons of men" (Ps. 31:19).

Australia

A. B.

## Along the Road

You all have been busy at work along the road that leads to life. Please keep on sending the *Megiddo Message*.

New York

W. S.

## It's Never Time to Quit

**A**S SERIOUS Christians seeking the full reward of life eternal, we need to give considerable thought to the equipment we need for a successful finish. What's more, we need to ponder the dangers of quitting, to be prepared for whatever test may come.

What makes a successful finish? What are the dangers of quitting? The following article points out some common hazards:

"Not enough is said or written today about finishing well.

"We hear plenty about setting goals, establishing priorities, developing plans. But what about the opposite end—the virtue of sticking with something until it's done? You know, being just as determined eight minutes into the fourth quarter as at the kickoff. Not losing heart even though the project has lost its appeal.

"I fear our generation has come dangerously near the 'I'm-getting-tired-so-let's-just-quit' mentality. And not just in the spiritual realm.

"Dieting is a discipline, so we stay fat. Finishing school is a hassle, so we bail out. Cultivating a close relationship is painful, so we back off. Getting a book written is demanding, so we stop short. Working out problems is a tiring struggle, so we walk away. Sticking with an occupation is tough, so we start looking elsewhere.

"But if we all quit shortly after beginning, where would we be?

"The famous pianist-composer Paderewski scheduled a performance at a great American concert hall. That evening's audience included a mother and her fidgety nine-year-old son. She had brought him—against his wishes—hoping that hearing Paderewski at the keyboard would inspire him to practice his piano lessons.

"As she turned to talk with friends, her son slipped away from her side, drawn to the ebony concert-grand and its leather tufted stool on the huge stage. Without much notice, he sat staring wide-eyed at the black and white keys. He placed his small, trembling fingers in the right location and began to play 'Chop Sticks.'

"The crowd hushed as hundreds of frowning faces turned in his direction. Irritated and embarrassed, they began to shout, 'Get that boy away from there!

Where's his mother? Somebody stop him!'

"Backstage, the master overheard it, grabbed his coat, and rushed onstage. Without a word, he stooped behind the boy, a hand around each side, and improvised a countermelody to the lad's monotonous tune.

"As the two played together, Paderewski whispered in the boy's ear, 'Keep going. Don't quit, son. Keep on playing.'

"So it is with us. We hammer away on projects that seem about as significant as 'Chop Sticks' in a concert hall. About the time we are ready to give up, the Master leans over and whispers, 'Now keep going. Don't quit.' He provides just the right touch at the right moment.

"You who read this may be a weary pilgrim whose road is long, whose hope is getting thin. Or someone who has a dream, but seeing it accomplished seems too long a wait.

"The master whispers: 'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up' (Gal. 6:9, NIV).

"Therefore . . . stand firm. Let nothing move you. . . . Your labor in the Lord is not in vain' (I Cor. 15:58, RSV).

"Be self-controlled and alert. . . . Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast' (I Pet. 5:8, 10, RSV).

"So many start the Christian life like a lightning flash—hot, fast, and dazzling. But how many are finishing the course with sustained enthusiasm and vigor?

"There are some, I realize, but why so few? Why do so many swell the ranks of the quitters?

"If I knew the answer, I'd shout it from the pulpit every Sunday. No, better than that, I'd stoop and whisper the answer to every discouraged person I meet. Before it's too late. Before he quits mastering Concerto in A Minor and settles for Chop Sticks."\*

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\*From *Moody Monthly*, May 1981, p.96, "Keep on Playing." By Charles Swindoll, from his book, "Make Up Your Mind" (Copyright 1981, Multomah Press, Portland, Oregon). Used by permission.

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