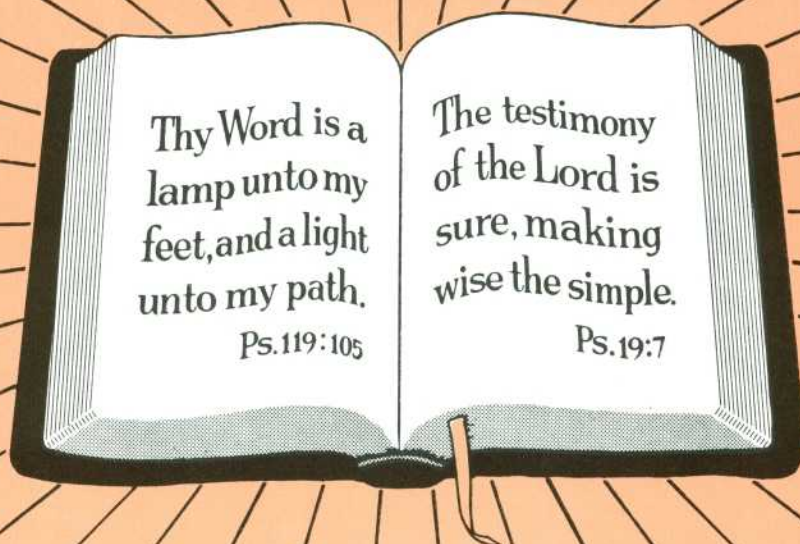


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Gratitude Without Gravy

When Sin Is Pardonable
In the Days of the Judges
Literal vs. Spiritual

Remember the God of the Valleys

IN I Kings 20 we read that the Syrian army was defeated by the soldiers of Ahab, King of Israel. The servants of Benhadad of Syria had reasoned this way: "The Israelites worship the god of the hills," they said, while thinking to themselves, "If we fight them in the valley we shall overcome them."

But the prophet of God said to Ahab, "Because the Syrians say I am a god of the hills but not the valleys, I will overcome them and we'll know who is God around here!" (See I Kings 20:28.)

There is a lesson hidden in this account. As Christians we are inclined to worship only the God of the hills. We think of Him only in terms of the high and exalted experiences of life, the mountain peaks, the heights of glory and heavenly inspiration. But He is also the God of life's valleys, the dark and trying days when the journey is long or painful.

Some of life's greatest victories are won in the valleys, not on the mountain tops. If we are hill Christians all the time, trying to travel from one hill to the next and avoid the valleys, we shall find that either we must stand still or postpone our journeying until such time as we are willing to negotiate the valleys. If we attempt to build tabernacles on the mountain peak as Peter wanted to do on the Mount of Transfiguration, we shall certainly be overcome by the enemy. We must know the God of the valleys as well as the God of the peaks.

Where there are mountains there must be valleys, and as Christians we must be prepared for both. For the Christian life is up and down, mountains of vision and valleys of testing. Sometimes the fiercest of the battle must be fought in the valley.

Job was a righteous man, sufficient for anything while prosperity smiled upon him in the hills of success. But when he sat in desolation—his family gone, possessions gone, health gone, and a wife saying, "Curse God and die"—he found himself getting acquainted with the God of the Valleys.

We need the faith of which we sing, that "faith that will not shrink though pressed by many a foe, that will not falter on the brink of poverty or woe; a faith that shines more bright and clear when tempests rage without, that when in danger knows no fear, in darkness feels no doubt." Those who claim to have never a doubt or fear, who walk in triumph without ever a defeat, who look with condescending scorn on less radiant souls playing in minor key, do not know the God of the valleys and are missing some of life's most enriching experiences. Somehow it is often the very people who boast of highest exaltation and loftiest ecstasies who go down quickly in ignominious defeat.

Those who think they have attained some sublime height of faith and trust and seem never to know any agony of conflict in daily life are out of touch with God and will never be able to polish the character God requires. There is a fight of faith as well as a rest of faith, and your knowledge of God is inadequate for life's storm and stress if you know only the God of the Hills. He is the same God as the God of the Valleys.

Was not this what Paul was saying when he numbered among his persuasions that "neither height nor depth" could separate him from the love of God?

Let this be our conviction likewise, and we shall find ourselves with an attainment to match his. MM

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.

Megiddo Message

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MEGIDDO is a way of believing and living, grounded solidly in the Bible as the reliable Word of our Creator. A total view of life, the world and the universe, it sees all events, men and nations moving together toward one God-ordained climax: the Kingdom of God on earth. This has been the plan of God since the beginning. Christ will return visibly, bodily, as King, and the governments of this world will be joined to form a totally new worldwide government. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants. This is the purpose and goal of all creation.

Gratitude Without Gravy



THANKSGIVING is a tradition in our nation that expresses gratitude for blessings enjoyed. This is good, for we all need to learn to praise God for the bounty we receive daily from His beneficent Hand. But thanksgiving that stops here is not complete. God never intended that we should be grateful only for the gravy on the plate, that which is over and above necessities. Nor did He mean that we should be grateful only for that which we enjoy. There is a deeper aspect of thanksgiving we want to consider, a gratitude that is of the heart and spirit and life, a gratitude that reaches beyond the comfortable and pleasant to the very Source of life itself. He wants us to learn to be grateful for the sheer privilege of living. He wants us to be grateful—whatever. A seventeenth-century German pastor is said to have buried 5,000 of his parishioners in one year, an average of nearly 15 a day. Yet, although his parish was ravaged by war, pestilence and an invader's economic oppression, he wrote this table grace for his children:

*Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices;
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom His world rejoices.
Who from our mother's arms,
Hath led us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

In 1636, amid the darkness of the Thirty Years' War, this stalwart man drew spiritual strength from a spirit of thanksgiving for

*"In everything give thanks"—not only in good things,
not only in pleasant things, . . . joyous things, . . .
smooth things, but "in everything."*

God's past and present goodness.

Fifteen years earlier, when the Pilgrims celebrated the first Thanksgiving in America, they, too, were acknowledging their gratitude to God for His "countless gifts of love" but it was a time when some of us might have wondered where any gifts of love existed.

Present-day thanksgiving among U.S. citizens is rooted in our national heritage. But peace and plenty were not the conditions of gratitude among our ancestors. Theirs was gratitude when there was no gravy.

The first pilgrims to America took trusting God seriously. For most of them, freedom to worship God according to their conscience was of greater import than physical hazards, and they were willing to risk anything—even their lives—to secure that freedom.

This took faith. No small venture of faith was it to launch from the seacoasts of Holland and England in 1620. Yet, those who desired to separate from the state religion were forced to seek a new land where they could live in freedom.

Leaving the leaky *Dutch Speedwell* behind, a combined party of 102 passengers and 30 crew members boarded the seaworthy Mayflower. God willing, they would survive and worship Him in freedom in the new world. Two months later they were safely across the Atlantic. The journey itself required great trust, for the crossing was marred by storms, disease, and several deaths. The crowded quarters of the passengers below deck added to their hardships.

WHEN the Mayflower anchored in Cape Cod Bay in November 1620, the Pilgrims bowed down and thanked God for land—their "proper element." But their problems were just beginning. Only trust in God carried them through the horrors of that first winter. Half of the population died from scurvy and other diseases. The graves were later planted with corn in an effort to conceal the number of deaths from the Indians.

But the following year, conditions began to improve. On November 19, a second British ship, the *Fortune*, arrived, bringing more English settlers and fresh supplies. The colony began to grow and prosper, and their trust in God was vindicated. In memory of that testing time, a plaque on Burial Hill proclaims today: "What your fathers attained with such difficulty, do not basely relinquish."

After the first successful harvest in 1621, the Pilgrims observed Thanksgiving. Even then their supplies, by our standards, were meager. There was, so to speak, no gravy. But oh! the gratitude.

We today should be grateful for their hardiness, and for their determination to find the freedom they sought.

ASERIOUS thinking man once told how Thanksgiving Day had always been remembered in his family. "Each year," he recalls, "I would write down all that I felt I should be thankful for. I continued this practice into adulthood. One year, for some reason, I decided to list the 'things to be thankful for' on

one side of the paper and the 'things not to be thankful for' on the other. A few years ago I came across this list that I had written long ago. What I saw amazed me.

"Events of the intervening years made me want to revise the list almost completely. In many instances, as things turned out, I should have given thanks for that which was listed on the 'not thankful for' side, and the opposite was also true." Then he comments, "That experience has completely changed my thinking and attitude concerning day-to-day experiences. It has helped me to withhold judgment as to whether what happens is 'good' or 'bad.' And it has helped to explain a Bible passage I was never able to understand: 'In everything give thanks' (I Thess. 5:18)."

Perhaps we also need a living explanation of this text. "In everything give thanks." "In everything give thanks"—not only in good things, not only in pleasant things, not only in joyous things, not only in smooth things, but "in everything give thanks." Why such a command? Because we with our limited vision cannot always tell what is "good" and what is "bad" for us in the long-range view. Only God knows. And how easily He can use the experience we classify as "bad" for His eternal good purpose! It is a necessary part of our training to learn to accept all things as from His hand.

The same point was made by a man who had circled the earth in a sailboat. When asked what was the most dangerous thing he had had to face while sailing all those miles alone, he said, "If you think it's the

storms and rocks, you're wrong. It's the clear, calm weather with a good breeze blowing. In a storm you hold onto something every step of the way. In the calm, you're apt to walk without holding on and a little roll of the boat can throw you overboard." How much like this is our daily-life experience. True, adversity can pose a real danger for us. Doubt, discouragement and depression lurk in the shadows of hard times. But these things also put us on the alert. The greatest danger lies in the periods of relative calm. When things are going smoothly for us we tend to relax. Then comes sure trouble—and danger.

This is where the patriarch Job found his most painful experience a blessing, though heavily disguised. Put yourself in his place, suffering the loss of everything near and dear to you—friends, family, comfort, health, wealth—everything that had seemed to make life worth living. Put yourself face to face with this, and see if you can be generous and grateful when the gravy has all been wiped from your plate. I'm afraid more than one of us would be tempted to complain. When things are going great, it's easy to be thankful to God. But what about those interludes of ebb tide, those calamities that seem like divine travesties upon our lives? Like Job we cry, "God has stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head! My hope he has pulled up like a tree. He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass." Or again, "My heart is in turmoil and is never still; days of affliction come to meet me. My skin turns black and falls from me, and my bones burn with heat." Yes, when the gravy is all gone, can you and I still be grateful?

It is precisely here that Job found the true basis for gratitude: not comfort but trust in everything. It

was a far cry from the we-love-our-life-because-it's-good approach to gratitude. In fact, it wasn't until all the gravy of his life had been wiped away that he saw the true beauty of a right relationship with God. It was only when all else had been stripped away that he began to see the basis of a true gratitude to God. And that is where true gratitude is always found, not in the gravy but in the clean plate.

IT IS one of history's ironies that the worst times can produce the best men. As the English writer said, "It was the worst of times; it was the best of times." The same may be said of our day. From the standpoint of world conditions, it

Praise and thanksgiving are visible evidences of our faith.

may well be called the worst of times. But from the standpoint of spiritual opportunity, it has never been better!

Is it true that "the more you have the less grateful you actually are"? God grant that this may not be so with us. Perhaps, as a certain playwright has commented, sometimes "the good Lord takes things away from us to get our attention." If such be the case, we shall in due time learn to say from the depths of a broken and consecrated heart, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

At some point all of us get pilaged by life. Trouble beats us down where we think we are strongest and wrecks our dreams just where

we felt the most confident. But this may be good for us if at the point where our earthly props are removed we find our compass and stay in our faith and are strengthened, not crushed.

If someday we are asked to celebrate our real day of gratitude when there is no bounty for which to be thankful, if someday the fig tree is bare and the ground has yielded no meat, let us prepare now that we may still be able to thank God for the privilege of life—a life which we may yet use to obtain a greater life. Let us prepare that we may be able to say with Job, "O Lord, I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee; therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Let us learn to see ourselves as God sees us and repent in humble gratitude. Here is no superficial gravy-on-the-plate thanksgiving that we sometimes call gratitude. Here is trust that is rooted and grounded in sincere faith and repentance. Here is faith that springs from an unwavering devotion to God and the hope He offers, which hope we have as an anchor to our soul, both sure and steadfast. Here is the vision of gratitude that makes us grateful above all things that we understand and know God, the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth. It is the gratitude that teaches us to thank God for life, and the tremendous potential life holds for life in eternity. This is Job's lesson in thanksgiving. Let us make it ours today: gratitude even when there is no gravy.

WHETHER expressed in precept or song, it is "a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High" (Ps. 92:1). Jesus regularly gave thanks to the Father.

(Continued on page 22)

When Sin Is Pardonable

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 6:1-6

WE HAVE all sinned. Time and again, wittingly or unwittingly, we have gone against the law of God, or the good judgment of others—or even our own better judgment—and done what we knew we should not. We have taken the wrong course when we knew better, or we have acted upon impulse rather than thought. In the words of the patriarch of long ago, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (Job 9:20).

When we realize our own inclination to evil, we marvel the more at Christ. Ever more deeply we appreciate the magnitude of His supreme achievement, He who when He learned what He should do never did the wrong. In other words, He never made the same mistake twice. If only we could say that we transgressed only twice, or even thrice, on a given point, when we knew better. So we say, but oh, when the temptation comes again, what will we do? Do we long for righteousness with a depth of fervor that will in the hour of testing call forth from our inner being diligence of Christ so that we, like Him, will do—or think, or say, or feel—only that which will please our Heavenly Father? Jesus was made in all points “like unto his brethren,” we know, yet clearly Jesus had something we lack—in desire, or perseverance, or divine association, or perhaps all of these combined. For of all our stumbling race, He alone holds the remarkable record.

Sin . . .

We all sin. In the words of the apostle Paul, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). This text, so often misapplied to justify our human waywardness or credit it to our greatest grandfather Adam, does nothing but state the existence of a condition, a condition that is undesirable and which can be changed. It is true. We all have

sinned—not because of Adam but because we ourselves have transgressed the law of God. And in this sinful state we cannot be recipients of God’s full glory. But this does not mean that it is not within our power to *change* this naturally sinful and short-falling condition. That is precisely why we are here. That is the God-ordained purpose of our lives. We are not here to seek great things for ourselves in this present and soon to vanish cosmos. We are here to free ourselves from all that God forbids and thus prove that we are suitable material for His better world. We are here to use the ordinary experiences of each day to re-make ourselves according to God’s standards, to present ourselves to Him a living sacrifice, “holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service.”

Sin is abhorrent to God. It is diametrically opposed to God. God hates sin. He abhors sin. He despises sin. He will not have it in His presence. Sin, whatever its more specific and perhaps, in our eyes, “refined” guise, is still sin, of the earth, earthy. It places a heavy barrier between us and God, through which none of His lasting favor, recognition or blessing can pass. Hence, when we sin, we must have pardon and forgiveness.

The Solution . . .

And, praise be to God, He has provided a way. Our sin—yours and mine—need not form a permanent barrier. Pardon and mercy are available at the throne of grace for each sincere and penitent one. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts”—do these terms seem “ungentle,” inconsiderate of all our earnest efforts at right doing? However noble our good record, we sin, we are part of “the wicked,” part of the “unrighteous man.” But is not our God merciful? “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and

***God abhors sin. He despises sin.
He will not have it in His presence.***

to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55:7).

When we realize the seriousness of our sins, that any unkind word or thought of ill separates us eternally from divine favor, that any inner rebellion or perversity or unwillingness of heart incurs the displeasure of Him on whom we depend for every breath and blessing, both in this world and in the world to come, how conscious we should be of all our words, all our acts, all our thoughts, all our feelings, in the sight of God. So easily, and so frequently, we say that we want to watch them, but do we realize all that this statement entails? Do we realize it in the petty incidents of every day, when our strongly cross-grained nature gets us into difficulties we never imagined; when our best-laid plans suddenly do not work out; when we must face problems of ill health, sickness, financial strains, or loss? Do we realize that whatever comes we are individually responsible for ourselves and all that we allow ourselves to do and be in every aspect of our lives? And do we realize, too, that this obligation makes us responsible to God for all our attitudes and actions toward one another?

Steps to Pardon

We have all sinned. But God has mercy and abundant pardon to offer. However, there are divinely stated conditions for that pardon which we must never overlook. Pardon is not automatic. And there is no way whereby we perform some simple motion and erase the sin. There are definite steps which we must take. What are they?

First, we must repent. We must recognize that our conduct has been displeasing to God and must abhor it in ourselves. His law is definite, and we must acknowledge it.

Then, we must change. This is often the most difficult step in the process of obtaining pardon. We must actually change our manner of deportment, or our attitude, or our feelings that are not right. This may be difficult. Strong wills are not easily broken; wandering thoughts are not easily coralled; stubborn habits are not easily broken. Strong feelings are not easily changed. Definite patterns of thought and action are not easily re-directed. Nevertheless, they must be if we

would win the approval of God upon our lives. This done, God will forgive—He will "have mercy, . . . and abundantly pardon."

"Cleanse Thou Me"

David, who was well acquainted with both human weakness and divine mercy, knew well this process of obtaining pardon and his own need for God's love.

"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (Psalm 19:12-13).

In these words David mentions two basic types of sin, either of which may easily defile our record. Let us listen, because if anyone is qualified to talk about sin, David should be.

From "Secret Sins"

"Cleanse thou me from secret faults." It is a saintly prayer against a most deadly type of sin: secret sin.

There are perhaps two types of sin which may be called "secret." The first are those sins into which we fall unawares, and which are in that sense secret even from ourselves. We did not realize it was sin, or we would not have done it. And as soon as we learn, we are ready to turn from it. The second type of "secret sin" are those sins which we practice secretly, and carefully keep secret, sins which are known only to God and ourselves. Both kinds are no less sinful, but the second kind is by far the more vicious because of its intentionally secretive quality. We seldom find it "easy" to overcome even those sins which are evident to all and for which we can have help. But when our sin is secret, first of all it is "secret" because we choose to have it that way; and secondly, we keep it "secret" because we want it that way. We coddle it; cherish it; love it. It is a well known fact that the germs or bacteria which get into our bodies and find a dark, secret, unknown lodging in which to grow and multiply, are the most deadly. What could be a more "ideal" environment in which sin may grow.

What power have we in ourselves to combat such sin—when we in our weakness are propagating it? How wise was the Psalmist to seek God's help in dealing with such: "Cleanse thou me from secret faults." He realized his need for the help of the Lord; and do we not realize our need?

What may be the form of the cleansing *He* will send in answer to our prayer? The first may be a revealing to us of the hideousness of the sin we cherish—let us pray that our eyes may be open to see it as God sees it.

Then should follow the desire to be free of it, and open, honest confession, repentance, and turning, perhaps with the help of a trusted brother or sister in the faith.

It has been truly said that secret sins are seldom forsaken so long as they remain secret. And of all sad plights imaginable is that of one who has lived in honor and esteem among his fellow Christians, who is suddenly discovered to have been secretly leading a dishonest or impure life. It is like a tree, hollow at the heart, suddenly uprooted. Such give dreadful emphasis to the question of the Psalmist: "Who can understand his errors?" Who can unravel the deceitfulness of sin or comprehend its folly, or picture the inward anguish of a life of "secret sin" when it is finally disclosed?

Oh, let us pray with the Psalmist: "Cleanse thou me," that I may be spared that shameful revealing.

"Cleanse thou me," an actual inward cleansing of the thoughts, desires, and affections from which such sins spring. Perhaps it is a secret opinion, or a harsh or hasty judgment we hold in our mental storehouse. Or perhaps it is an attitude of hostility, felt but unexpressed. It may be only a bit of pride—but oh, how deadly. In anticipation of the searching light of the great Day of Revealing, we ought to blame ourselves bitterly *now* for every secret sin we can discern, for Him whom we worship sets "our secret sins in the light of (His) countenance" (Ps. 90:8). What may be made naked and open in the great revealing Day if we do not give all diligence to searching out every secret sin now!

What need to pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

Let Us Pray . . .

Almighty God, whose mercy is still remembered, whose glory is still glimpsed, whose power is still felt, and whose mighty acts shall soon be known through all the earth: our souls are alive with praise and exultation this bright morning for all Thy mercies toward us and for Thy Guiding Hand. Into the fabric and fiber of our days are woven blessings greater than our finite minds can compass. Over and over Thy blessings appear, alive with the Holy, replete with the practical. For all, our God, we thank Thee.

We come to Thee this morning seeking greatness, vision, hope, and purpose for our lives. We come to Thee to confront anew the real values of life, to catch fresh visions of Thy truth, to glimpse anew the grandeur of Thy glories and to grasp ever more firmly those promises upon which we have set our hearts. We come also, our Father, to obtain a keener insight into our duty to Thee and to see deeper into the depths of our own hearts, that we may search out any evil still remaining and cleanse it away before it is everlastingly too late.

Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but to us the tendency to waywardness, indecision, delay, and a too keen absorption with the petty interests of our mortal existence. Grant us an awakening, our Father, as we ponder the seriousness of each hasty word, each

careless judgment, each wandering thought, each selfish intent, each evil imagination, and the eternal consequences of these if the coming Day finds us with work undone.

We realize how prone we are to forget the seriousness of the covenant we have made with Thee. Thou dost take us at our word, and once we have made a commitment to Thee we cannot disregard it with impunity. However petty may seem our transgression of Thy law, that transgression is sin; and for each and for every sin that defiles our record we shall be held accountable—unless we now take definite action to obtain Thy forgiveness and pardon. As we sow we shall reap, and there is no respect of persons.

So help us, we pray, to face each day with godly sobriety, realizing that pleasing Thee is not beyond us. It is but the thoughtful governing of each impulse and emotion and the consecrating of every ordinary task to Thee, And may we now seize eagerly each opportunity to give up our way for Thine.

We pray Thee this hour to draw near to all Thy people, both near and far. Keep them mindful of Thy presence wherever they are. Be especially near to those who have trials which seem almost to the limit of their ability to endure. Remind them of what Thou hast promised: strength for each trial, help from above, unfailing sympathy, undying love.

Wilt Thou bless and keep each and everyone who is living according to Thy law, and bring us all at last together in the Great Day when the times of restitution shall come and all the saints shall tread the high road to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

We have all sinned. But God has mercy and abundant pardon to offer.

Presumptuous (Willful) Sins

There is another class of sins for which the Psalmist seeks help. But this time his prayer is different. This time he prays not to be pardoned or to be helped in cleansing from this type of sin but to be "kept back," withheld, restrained from it. He has a healthy fear of sin, and wishes to avoid it. Prevention is always more desirable than cure. But with a profound humility and a knowledge of his own heart that he has acquired, he again feels the need of divine help. Of himself he cannot be sure of avoiding the sin he fears. And he wishes at all costs to avoid the consequences. Is not this always the best plan and the proper attitude for every aspiring child of God? Thus he prays, "Keep back thy servant . . . from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me."

What is "presumptuous sin"? It is willful sin, literally, "sin with a high hand." It is sin that is plotted, planned; perverse disobedience to God; it is sin that despises His law, defies His justice, and denies His supremacy in our lives. It is sin which is an open contradiction to professing to serve God. David dreads the overmastering power of such—perhaps from the depths of his own bitter experience. Hence his prayer, "Let them not have dominion over me."

The more willingly and willfully we sin, the more do we forge fetters that will tie and bind us to death. Should not we with the Psalmist pray to be kept from all such? Should we not seek to avoid the consequences by avoiding the sin? And should we not realize with him that our heart also is deceitful and desperately wicked and in need of divine help if we would walk straight? It was not without meaning that Jeremiah penned those words: "I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). We need God to help us cleanse from sin; we need God to help us keep from sin.

And then there is hope. If God will help him, there is solid ground for hope: "Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression" (v. 13). Is not any sin, whatever its definition or dimension, a "great transgression" when we realize that it will keep

us from receiving the approval of God and sharing a place in His Kingdom?

To Be Upright

David's whole desire was to be "upright . . . innocent." Upright means—literally "perfect"; it is the perfection of which Scripture speaks so often. It is completeness, wholehearted sincerity, complete integrity. It is all good, all pure, with nothing over and nothing lacking.

What, then, is the message of this saintly prayer? "Cleanse thou me from secret faults," from those sins which are so difficult to bring to view. "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins," from those sins which I shall forever regret if I commit them. Let not them or any other conceivable form of sin "have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright"—perfect, pure, acceptable in Thy sight; then shall I be "innocent," and will someday receive that "great reward."

And once we have received God's pardon for our sin, that sin is wiped from our record as completely as if it had never been committed and we shall receive the full benefits of the "great reward." Does not this fact show the great mercy and goodness of our God? Men may remember, but not God. When the sin is erased, He forgets it.

God abhors sin, and He abhors those who sin, for sin and sinners truly cannot be separated. But He knows that in our natural state we will sin, and He has provided a means whereby we can obtain His forgive-

We need to pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

ness and mercy. All we need to avail ourselves of that mercy is an honest, humble, God-fearing heart, and a willing eagerness to reach His standard.

Oh, let us take more seriously our own obligation to God. And let us act now, before our sin becomes unpardonable—through our own negligence. For "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now—while we still have opportunity to turn. It is now, or never.

I belong not to the men of the Backward Look, but to the men of the Forward Look.

Unpardonable Sin

WE KNOW that if we sin, God has arranged a means whereby we can receive forgiveness, and if the proper course of action is taken, our sin need never stand against us.

However, it is sometimes frightening to realize that not all sin is pardonable. Though this is frequently misunderstood, the Bible does tell of sin for which there is no pardon.

The thought is startling. Is there a chance that you or I may do wrong—even without realizing it—and not be able to receive God's forgiveness and blessing?

We will discuss four basic types of situations in which sin was or is unpardonable:

1. Sin unpardonable under law of Moses, because the law said NO! and the penalty was death.
2. Sin unpardonable because of immediate judgment and punishment—i.e., Sodom and Gomorrah; Ananias and Sapphira; the Antediluvians.
3. Sin against the Holy Spirit
4. Sin unpardonable through delay

Let us look at each of these individually.

#1: Sin Unpardonable under the Law of Moses

Under the law of Moses, there were sins for which no pardon could be secured. For breaking the Sabbath, the penalty was death. For committing adultery, the penalty was death. For abusing one's parents, the penalty was death. Would-be transgressors were well advised to consider carefully before acting. God was civilizing a nation, and this was His means of restraining the most flagrant disobediences.

#2: Sin Upon Which Immediate Judgment Was Executed

During the time when God was working openly upon earth, there were sins that became unpardonable because of failure to repent while opportunity is extended or before God sends judgment. God sent immediate Judgment upon people He knew would not

repent. Such was the case of Sodom and Gomorrah and the wicked cities of the plain. The people *could* have repented if they had had any desire to repent. But God knew that they would not, hence sent immediate destruction. It was true also at the time of the Flood, when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." Despite Noah's preaching of righteousness, they would not listen; hence the great destruction. The case of Ananias and Sapphira is another example of sin that became unpardonable because of immediate judgment. And can we not trust the justice of God that the immediate judgment was executed because He knew they *would* not repent? The apostle Peter, having Holy Spirit power, could read their hearts. At this time God saw fit to withdraw opportunity. Immediate judgment was pronounced upon them and they died.

A similar situation will exist again in the near future, when God renews His open work upon earth and Christ returns with judgment upon all workers of iniquity. Those who will not repent will be destroyed.

#3: Sin Against the Holy Spirit—the Unpardonable Sin

What is most often referred to as "the unpardonable sin" is drawn from Jesus' words in Matthew 12:31, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men."

What is this "blasphemy or sin against the Holy Spirit" which cannot be forgiven? The book of Hebrews presents the thought in greater detail: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).

Who was liable for this unpardonable sin? It was those who had "tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit," who had "tasted

the good word of God and the powers of the world to come." To have in one's being the power of the Holy Spirit was a high and holy privilege not to be taken lightly. And if any having that power should afterward "fall away," he says, "it is impossible" to "renew them again to repentance."

The Book of Hebrews brings out another form of sin, also unpardonable. It is what our Common Version renders as "despite unto the spirit of grace." We read, "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:26-29).

The first warning is against "wilful" or deliberate disobedience. The author of Hebrews is rebuking his brethren for sluggishness, inattention, and Christian immaturity—a warning which we may well take to ourselves. It is serious to transgress God's law, to deliberately go against what He has decreed. It is serious also to render only a half-hearted adherence to the faith. Such obedience is disobedience and can have only one end: destruction. And such wilful sin, continued in, soon has no recourse: "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin"—there is no possibility for reform beyond the end of our lives.

The author then proceeds to point up the supreme worth of the unusual privileges of his brethren. If an apostate under the law of Moses died without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses, how much more punishment will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, the covenant of Christ—which is infinitely better than the old law of Moses? The higher the privilege, the more severe the penalty; it is an immutable law of God.

Then are listed three qualifications of apostasy under which sin is totally unpardonable:

- "Who hath trodden under foot the Son of God"—a literal translation more generally meaning "to treat with rudeness and insult."
- "And hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing." In reality, this is the only way an apostate from the faith can escape the truthfulness of what he has formerly professed—by belit-

ting, profaning, contradicting, considering it common and of little worth. It is the attempt to make sacrilege of the sacred.

- "And hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." This last qualification limits the possibility of this severest condemnation to those who had been partakers of the power of God, the Holy Spirit.

William Barclay translates this last phrase as "who has insulted the Spirit, through whom God's grace comes to us." To use the Holy Spirit contemptuously, or to abuse or insult its powers was to commit a sin for which there was no forgiveness. To be partaker of the best and pronounce it the worst—this was to do "despite unto the Spirit of grace," and for such there was no forgiveness.

Here is a sin of which we need not have any fear, for since the Holy Spirit was withdrawn at the close of the Apostolic Age, no one has ever "tasted of the heavenly gift" or been a partaker of the Holy Spirit. Hence no one has sinned against it. As our former pastor, Rev. Maud Hembree, commented: If today we could go to Mount Hope Cemetery and resurrect the sleeping dead; if we could cause the eyes of the blind to open and the ears of the deaf to be unstopped; if we could shake off a deadly serpent and feel no harm, as Paul did; or if we could instantly repair broken limbs and restore the sick to health; if we had such power from God in us and should then turn away from Him, we would not *deserve* to be forgiven. And our sin would be unpardonable. But during this time when there is no Holy Spirit power, there is no sin that our merciful God will not forgive if we confess and forsake it.

#4: Sin Unpardonable Through Delay

None of the aforementioned categories of unpardonable sin concern us. We are not subject to the law of Moses; we are not living in a time when God is pronouncing immediate judgment upon disobedience; and we do not have the Holy Spirit power, hence cannot sin against it.

There is, however, one more form of unpardonable sin, which does concern us, and it is sin which becomes unpardonable by delay. Any sin persisted in, no matter what its name or shape, becomes unpardonable. God is merciful, full of compassion, and of great understanding. But there is a limit to His mercy. There are several examples of this in Scripture for our learning. Esau's transgression was unpardonable. Why? We read that "he found no place of repentance, though he

(Continued on page 23)

And Still She Speaks

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



It is a great accomplishment to learn when to speak and when to refrain from speaking.

We all naturally think more highly of ourselves than we ought. I have never seen a man or woman yet who did not, although this trait is much stronger in some than in others. But we must think soberly, must look soberly at ourselves, must see ourselves as we would look were we being weighed in the balances of the Almighty.

What a merciful God we have who will blot out every transgression! It does not matter what sin you may have committed, if you cease to commit it, He will forgive!

To be tempted is not sin, no, no! I do not know that you will ever reach the standard where you will not be tempted on some point. There are some things which may not be a strong besetment to you, and by practice you will get so you are not tempted by them. There are other points on which you will be tempted as long as you live; but do not yield to the temptation. Like that old song, "Have courage, my boy, to say no." Resist the temptation.

What benefit would it be for me to pray to God for a clean heart, and then do nothing to obtain that condition; just have a Sunday religion, cry to God for mercy, and then live carelessly and have evil thoughts in my mind all through the week and go right along doing as I had been doing! Would it be of any efficacy? Would such a prayer ever be answered? No. But let me pray today; and tomorrow, when the temptation comes to get impatient, I remember what is written, "Let patience have her perfect work," then I am doing something; and if I keep resisting, I shall overcome. I may fall again, like a child learning to walk; but if I just keep trying, soon I will succeed.

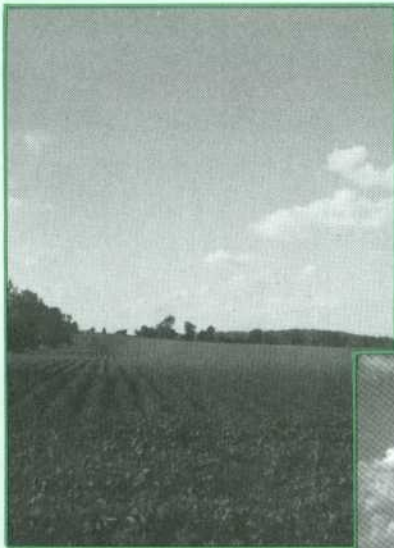
We should have more zeal in the service of God than in anything else.

You want to always remember Psalm 51:17. Do not forget it. Put it down in your mind now. If you have not been accustomed to remembering, you may be able to remember only the sentiment. But if you remember the sentiment and apply it, that will save you, even though you may not remember the exact words or the chapter and verse.

Another good testimony to put down in your mind, or to remember the sentiment of, is Micah 6:8. If you put it down in your Bible, that will help you to remember it. That is the way I did in the beginning. I never owned a Bible until I was twenty-four years old, and I could not remember all the testimonies. I had to take the texts on different subjects and write them in my Bible where I could turn to them; and then, after a while, like learning the multiplication tables, I learned them.

Oh, to be diligent in this work of the Lord! Be diligent tomorrow in putting away all wrath, anger, and evil speaking. Be more diligent the next day. Watch self, your greatest enemy. Have great diligence to always bring self into subjection.

God requires us to "do justly," to be honest to the last penny. No man or woman who is dishonest in any shape or form will ever see the inside of the Kingdom. We must be honest in all our dealings, right to the line, right to the mark. When we sell things, we may be tempted to misrepresent—sometimes this is quite a temptation. But we must tell the facts about whatever we have to sell. We must do justly.



Lines to Live By

COME ye yourselves apart and rest awhile,
Weary, I know it, of the press and throng;
Wipe from your brow the sweat and dust of toil,
And in My quiet strength again be strong.

Come ye aside from all the world holds dear,
For converse which the world has never known;
Alone with Me and with My Father, here,
With Me and with My Father not alone.

Come ye and rest! the journey is too great,
And ye will faint beside the way, and sink;
The bread of life is here for you to eat,
And here for you the wine of love to drink.

Then, fresh from converse with your Lord, return
And work till daylight softens into even;
The brief hours are not lost in which ye learn
More of your Master and His coming Kingdom.

—Selected

If You Have a Friend

PEOPLE talk at length about the weather, but nobody does anything. Our appreciation of another's qualities and achievements is too often similar. Inactive. We feel it; but we say nothing, do nothing, and no one knows or is encouraged.

IF you have a friend worth loving,
Love him! yes, and let him know
That you love him, ere life's evening
Tinge his brow with sunset glow.
Why should good words ne'er be said
Of a friend—till he is dead?

If you hear a song that thrills you,
Echoing the praise of God,
Stirring on to swifter motion
In this path the saints have trod,
Reassure the singing brother,
Such a song deserves another.

If you hear a prayer that moves you
By its humble, pleading tone,
Join it! Do not let the seeker
Bow before his God alone.
Why should not your brother share
The strength of "two or three" in prayer?

If your work is made more easy
By a friendly, helping hand,
Say so! Speak out brave and truly
Ere the darkness veil the land.
Should a brother workman dear
Falter for a word of cheer?

Scatter thus your path with kindness;
There's indeed a crying need
On this way of life we're trav'ling
For encouragement's good seed;
Plant it! Tend it carefully!
It will blossom cheerfully.

Cast Thy Bread Upon the Waters

*Cast thy bread upon the waters,
Thinking not 'tis thrown away;
God hath said that thou shalt gather
Rich rewards some future day.*

*Cast thy bread upon the waters,
Why, oh, why still idle stand;
God shall send a bounteous harvest
If thou sow'st with liberal hand.*

*Give then freely of thy substance,
O'er this cause the Lord doth reign;
Cast thy bread, and toil with patience,
Thou shalt labor not in vain.*

*Cast thy bread upon the waters,
Waft it on with praying breath;
In some distant, doubtful moment,
It may save a soul from death.*

*Soon, some day, 'twill be returning
In the Kingdom bright and fair;
Longing hearts are somewhere yearning
To the coming blessings share.*

*Cast thy bread upon the waters,
Ye who have but scant supply,
Angel eyes will watch above it;
You shall find it by and by!*

Welcome

BE thoughtful; be silent; be reverent;
for this is the House of God. Before the
service speak to the Lord; during the
service let the Lord speak to you; after
the service speak to one another.

*How can we expect a harvest of thought
who have not had a seedtime of character?*

Points for the Month:

Week 1: It is better to PREVENT than to REPENT.

Week 2: It takes a strong man to hold his tongue.

Week 3: Obedience makes the heart light.

Week 4: Use your cross as a crutch to help you on, not as a bar to tear you down.

In the Days of the Judges

Israel's Neighbors

SOME neighboring nations live in comparative peace with their neighbors for generations. Scarcely does anyone even hear their names.

Not so with Israel. Whether B.C. or A.D., Israel has always been known. From the time the children of Israel arrived in the promised land, they had problems with neighboring peoples. Why?

Historically, there was one major underlying reason for this: the favored position which Israel enjoyed. It was difficult for Israel to maintain a position of total separation from the nations around them. And it was difficult for the neighboring countries to perceive Israel as any different than themselves.

Failing as a nation to comprehend the obligation which their favored covenant relationship with God imposed upon them, Israel paid heavily in blessings they might have had. When it came to eligibility for privilege, they wanted to belong to God. When it came to matters such as obedience and sacrifice and being different from those around them, how easily they forgot.

Who were Israel's neighbors? How did these neighbors cause or affect Israel's problems? And who were the people that populated these neighboring countries? Let us look at the geography of the land surrounding Israel.

The Canaanites

From the time the children of Israel crossed Jordan, they had trouble with the Canaanites. The trouble began when the Israelites failed to obey the divine command to eliminate them from their land. In the light of 20th century values upon human rights, we might be tempted to sympathize with the Canaanites (as apparently Israel did), thinking they should have been



1. Part of the tribe of Dan, unable to secure its inheritance, migrated north and captured Laish, renaming it Dan.
2. Although all of Bashan was assigned to the half tribe of Manasseh, it is doubtful that Israelite settlement reached beyond this river valley.
3. During the period of Judges, invading Ammonites, Moabites and Midianites were repulsed by the Israelites.
4. The priestly tribe of Levi did not receive a definite territory but instead was allotted 48 cities distributed over the tribal areas.
5. The cities assigned to Simeon were also a part of the inheritance of Judah. Simeon as a tribe was later absorbed by Judah.
6. The Israelites were under constant attack from Philistine invaders who occupied the coastal area about this time.
7. The Israelites were unable to capture the fortified towns of the plains during the early period of settlement.

allowed some rights in the land. After all, were not the *Israelites* the intruders? But we must remember that the plan was God's; it was *His* order that they be driven out. The matter was not left to any human judgment.

With God, obedience always comes first.

An Israelite moving into Canaan at this time did not have to look far to find a pagan god. Israel being largely under the control of Egypt, Egyptian gods were everywhere. The Canaanites had also adopted some of the gods of the Philistines. What had been the divine decree? To destroy them. But here Israel failed. And the result: disaster to Israel's faith, sovereignty, and morality. Again and again, intermingling and intermarriage with these people (which God's law sternly forbade) led to apostasy.

The Philistines

Philistine territory spread all along the rich Mediterranean coast covering an area some fifteen miles wide and fifty miles long, from Joppa to near Gaza where it joined the western border of the undivided kingdom. This long, undefined border provided ample opportunity for the Philistines to harrass Israel and for Israel to learn their heathen ways.

The Philistines were a very religious people, but they worshiped only pagan gods, their national god being Dagon, an image of a fish with a man's head.

After the Philistines defeated the Israelites in battle, Israel was dominated by them more or less for the next forty years, until God raised up Samson to war against them. Not until the time of Samuel was Israel able to regain the lost territory. When the Philistines took Samson prisoner, they offered a great sacrifice unto Dagon. And it was the house of the Philistine god

Dagon that Samson pulled down, an act which resulted in his own demise along with many Philistines (Judg.16:23). This was a significant defeat for the Philistines. In later time, it was to the house of Dagon that the Philistines carried the ark of God after they overran Israel and captured the ark at Ebenezer (I Sam. 5:2). However, the coveted treasure brought them nothing but grief and trouble, and they were soon trying to rid themselves of it.

Historians describe the Philistines as being "war-like" in nature, and they often carried their idol gods with them to battle. In II Samuel 5:21, David defeated the Philistines at Baál-perazim, "And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them." But this was not the end of the trouble; only a short while later they invaded again.

Philistine weaponry gave the Philistines an advantage in battle with Israel. Having learned the secret of smelting iron ore from the Hittites, they maintained a superiority on the battlefield—except when the Lord was involved. And the Philistines guarded this secret jealously—they would not allow iron working in Israel, fearing that Israel might use the knowledge sometime to fashion weapons to use against them (I Sam. 13:19). Because of their superiority in weapons, they were able to enforce their will upon Israel. The iron chariots of Jabin, king of Canaan, which he used to oppress Israel until he was defeated by Deborah and Barak, were no doubt of Philistine origin, because the Philistines and Canaanites were closely allied.

From the time of the Judges until the Philistines were conquered by King David, there was almost a continual struggle for supremacy between the Philistines and Israel, the Philistines even maintaining bases within Israeli territory.

Where did the name "Palestine" come from? It is the Greek form of "Philistia."

The Syrians

To the north and east of Israel lay the country of Syria, a country far larger, richer and more powerful than Israel. Though the inhabitants of the area were descended from the same families as the Israelites, like the Philistines they many a time provoked Israel. And again, there was religious contamination, largely the result of commerce between the two nations. Also, because of the close proximity of the two lands, there was the constant temptation to intermarriage, which led to Israel learning the ways of the heathens.

During the reign of the kings, numerous wars were fought between Syria and Israel, so many that a space of three years without war was worth noting (I Kings 22:1). Because Syria bordered Israel, King Asa of Judah sought the help of Benhadad of Syria against Israel. At a later time, Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab and made war against Syria in an ill-fated attempt to show himself strong against the power of God. The battle ended in total disaster, with Ahab killed at Ramoth-Gilead and Syria triumphant.

The Amorites

Adjoining Syria to the southeast was the Amorite Kingdom. The northern part of the Amorite Kingdom, north of the Jabbok river, was known as Bashan. In Moses' time it had been ruled over by Og. At the same time the southern part, known as Gilead, was ruled over by Sihon. They were the people who inhabited this land when the Children of Israel came up from the wilderness after the forty years wandering. Because they refused the Israelites a right to pass through their land,

(Continued on page 22)

Literal Vs. Spiritual

A New Perspective on Genesis

*An allegory
has been called
"an earthly story
with a heavenly meaning."*

*An allegory uses
literal people, literal objects,
literal images, expressions,
and incidents to teach
spiritual truths.*

TO THE majority of people who call themselves religious, the opening chapters of Genesis are an enigma. Either they are relegated to the category of ancient myths, or else they are presented as an elaborate explanation of the time-honored—though unsupportable—belief in a literal creation six thousand years ago. Failing to find consistency in this, some choose to ignore the creation narrative altogether.

Nevertheless, Genesis is among the ancient books "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). What does God intend us to learn from the opening passages of His Book?

Origin/Author

First, who wrote Genesis? Who was the human author God employed for this task? We have Jesus' own word: "Moses . . .".

Why might Moses have written as he did in Genesis? Rather, why did God inspire Moses to write the opening of Genesis as it is? There are several points we might consider.

1. Genesis was written to vindicate the absolute position of God in the ordering of human events. It shows God at work, God directing, God controlling, God creating according to His own good purpose.

2. Genesis was written to show the background and lineage of the Israelite people. Lineage was highly important to a nation that had been commanded

* This article centers around the Biblical use of figurative language, i.e., the use of common terminology to represent deep spiritual truths. For example, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken. . . . Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah" (Isa. 1:2, 10).

strictly not to mix with other peoples, who were to keep their race and their lineage "pure."

3. Genesis was written to record Israel's unique covenant relationship with God. They were the first covenant people whom God chose to work with as a nation. How did God choose Israel? Why? Genesis has the answer.

What special meaning does Genesis have for us today?

It reveals the plan of God. The first three chapters are an outline, an introduction to the whole teaching of the Bible.

It provides primary answers to the basic questions of life and existence (who are we? where are we going? what is there to life? what is there beyond this life?, etc.).

Genesis and Creation: the Questions

But the question is: How do we get this information from an account of physical creation?

The problems resulting from belief in a physical creation that occurred only six thousand years ago are too involved for this study. Suffice it to say that the idea does not carry either scientific nor Biblical endorsement. Scientific studies today place the age of the earth somewhere between four and six billion years, and the Bible does not disagree. It simply tells us God is the creator. The Bible was written to tell us about a singular project of creating, to reveal to us several basic and significant points about His overall plan, i.e. WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE and HOW? Genesis outlines the answers to these questions.

The Answers

WHO is responsible for the action in Genesis? Who is doing the creating, the planning, the offering, the judging? It is God, the Almighty. "In the beginning God . . ." are the

opening words of the book.

WHAT is being created in Genesis? "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The plan of God focuses on the perfecting and glorifying of a human family, climaxing in this planet being annexed to His heavenly family of

these details, language which we must study and ponder to extract its meaning, but language with meaning far richer and deeper than simple statements could ever convey.

In other words, God did not tell Abraham that on the first day of the

Figurative language is a means of "expressing one thing in terms normally used to denote another."

glorified worlds. Heaven (the ruling powers) and earth (general populace) are the objects of this special project of creation.

WHY is this special creation project being done? It is for the benefit of His people, for "as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14:21).

WHERE is this project going on? Right here on the earth. The whole focus of the Bible is upon the earth and its inhabitants. "The heaven, even the heaven of heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:16). ". . . He created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:17-18).

HOW is the work being done? God is the great instigator and organizer, and every living participant has a part in the work being done—as well as an opportunity to be part of the finished product.

Deeper Meaning Through Figurative Language

In communicating His message to us, God does not simply tell us in plain, simple words what He is doing, or what He is going to do. He uses figurative language to reveal

year, exactly nineteen hundred and sixty two years from then, a child named Jesus would be born. He gave the prophecy to each of His prophets in different words, using different similes and figures, revealing where Jesus would be born, His lineage, the significance of His name, and other details, along with prophecies of His earthly career, His second advent and ultimate destiny.

Bible personalities and events portrayed in figurative language are among the most priceless of Biblical gems, enriching our thought-life as nothing else could ever do. As immortal representatives of ourselves, they focus upon the meaning of life and the struggle of good with evil, of courage with cowardice, of the glory of God with the ambition of man. As such, they provide deeper and wider ground for the foundation thinking than could ever be communicated in simple, straightforward language.

Compared to any writings which have come to us through unaided human hands, the Bible has a nobility and a power all its own. What is the reason for the power of Genesis? There is, to begin with, the sub-

limity of its theme. It deals with God, man and destiny. It tells us God's definition of life. It presents a concept of history that is lofty, far-seeing and grandly unified. It is history not as the chance actions of men but as the unfolding of the will of God.

The Bible recognizes the shadows as well as the lights in human destiny. It sees more than the surface, and more than the present moment. Through all and beyond all it shows the heavenly plan. Always there is promise and hope.

This type of figurative language forces our thoughts to confront the fundamental questions of life. It stands us, as it were, in the presence of the ultimate where we can look up into the skies of the infinite. It puts us in our place as no words of man could ever do.

This type of communication is real. And it is honest. It does not evade facts. It presents life as it is, and sees human nature as it is. The symbols in the Bible were not included to make it vague but to make it plain, to put truth into pictures that wordy generalizations could never express.

Though the styles of divine communications vary, they represent the handiwork of God behind the words. Into the Garden of Eden is brought a grave awareness of the wilfulness of man which instinctively rebels against God, and the tragic consequences of that rebellion. These simple pictures tell us vital lessons for life which we can hear, understand, and then apply.

To the sleepy mind the Bible may seem dull. But for those intensely interested in learning about themselves, it contains many a profound revelation. Always there is something new. Figures that had never been noticed in the background of some story suddenly stand out with new significance; and some great

personalities about whom one supposes that he has long known everything steps forward with new meaning and new relevance to the problems of today.

Figurative, prophetic language also enriches our knowledge of the second advent. For example, Jesus might have told us that everyone would see Him when He comes. Instead He puts the prophecy of His second coming in these vividly descriptive words: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even to the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt 24:27). The use of the word "lightning" creates a picture in our minds which reveals far more than a simple statement of His arrival could convey. Lightning suggests suddenness, speed, brightness, visibility, light, as well as storm and destruction. Figurative language gives us a picture to see, as well as a prophecy to understand.

Figurative language is a means of "expressing one thing in terms normally used to denote another." Figurative language is not any less truthful or less certain because of its differing terms. It is merely more descriptive.

Summarizing

What, then, are the purposes of figurative language as used in Scripture?

- 1) to lend forcefulness to what is being said
- 2) to provide clarification of deep and abstract truths
- 3) to emphasize aspects of truth otherwise obscure or unknown

The Bible uses different forms of figurative language. There are metaphors, symbols, allegories, and parables, as well as dramatic expressions.

For example, we might say, "Ben-

jamin is a wolf" as a metaphor meaning "Benjamin is like a wolf," not that he is literally a wolf. Benjamin is real, but in this instance he is compared to a wolf. If we build a story around "Benjamin" and his wolf-like nature, and use Benjamin to represent a nation or a certain group of people, and tell what Benjamin does and what happens to him, we have an allegory. Everything that happens to him belongs to the allegory.

The Allegory as Figurative Language

What, then, is an allegory? An allegory is a combination of metaphors expanded to tell a whole story and teach a lesson. An allegory 'puts spiritual truths into vivid, living pictures. An allegory of God's plan is like a spiritual blueprint of that plan.

An allegory uses literal people, literal objects, literal images, expressions, and incidents to teach spiritual truths. The people, objects and images used are no less "real" because of their being used in an allegory, but in the allegory they are to be taken not as literal but as symbolic.

How can we be sure of the exact use of an allegory in Scripture? We find a simple illustration in Psalm 80. "Israel is a vine," writes the Psalmist. We all know that the nation of Israel was not a literal vine, nor was Israel himself a vine. The language is symbolic of the vine-like qualities of the Israelite people. But this does not suggest that there was no literal nation of Israel.

Another example of an allegory is found in Galatians 4. In this chapter, the apostle is using the bondwoman (Hagar) and the free woman (Sarah) to the two covenants, one from Mount Sinai and one from Christ, the law of faith. He says specifically that this is "an allegory"

(Gal. 4:24), a story which he is using to teach deep spiritual truths. In the allegory, each person is a symbol; yet we know that Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac all actually lived.

In the same way, the persons who are part of the Genesis allegory are real people, even though they are entirely representative as they belong to the allegory. There was a real Adam, there was a real Eve.

In studying an allegory, we must be careful not to confuse the literal with the "spiritual" application. We must follow the rule of the apostle Paul, comparing "spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:13), knowing also that "things of the spirit" must be "spiritually discerned" (v. 14).

What does this mean in our study of Genesis? It means that if we take the Genesis account of creation as an allegory, we must be careful not to combine literal and spiritual. We know that Adam and Eve were literal people, but in the allegory they are symbolic, and all that they do is symbolic. They, together with the fruit they eat, the garden they inhabit, the ground they till, the clothes they make and wear, together with the serpent that tempts them and the curses that come upon them, *all* must be spiritual and must be applied as illustrating spiritual truths. If we try to keep any part of the allegory literal, we distort the meaning and miss the intended truth.

Adam and Eve: Faithful and Unfaithful

When we discuss the Genesis allegory, we immediately confront a situation that may seem strange upon first thought. In the account, we have first a "faithful Adam" and then what we must term an "unfaithful Adam." Likewise, we have first a "faithful Eve" and then an

"unfaithful Eve." Why? Why the apparent seeming confusion? Isn't this complicating the picture unnecessarily?

Consider a few facts:

1) The circumstances in the narrative require the dual application of Adam and Eve because Adam first fulfills the qualifications of a "faithful" servant of God, then he becomes "unfaithful Adam" and must be condemned.

Now isn't this an accurate picture of human nature? Are we not each acquainted with this very human situation, one moment good and the next falling into temptation and sin?

If we were to say that Adam in the allegory represented only the faithful, then we would have a problem. What about the Adam that is driven out of the garden? What about the Adam who eats the forbidden fruit? and what about the Adam that is ashamed?

Nor is Eden the picture of perfection. There is evil in this garden as is seen in the tree of knowledge of good and evil. There are thorns and thistles. And, of course, we must not forget the serpent.

2) If we consider Adam as representing only the *unfaithful*, then what about the man that is made in the image of God who is "very good"? What about the time when God "rested" because all was done?

3) We should note that during the entire time of development of the plan of God, there are always faithful and unfaithful together, until the time of separation. Notice that this fact is illustrated in many of Jesus' parables. There were wheat and tares; sheep and goats; faithful and unfaithful servants; 5 wise virgins and 5 foolish virgins; productive and non-productive soil; "good" and "bad" fish; a large amount of seed that fell by the wayside, on stony ground, and among thorns,

and a small amount of seed that fell on good ground.

Can we not allow the same point in the story which God used to illustrate His entire plan of salvation?

By removing either faithful or unfaithful completely from the allegorical picture, we remove the element of reality and the strongest lesson for ourselves. Both are an essential part of the picture. Both are present, and both at the same time. Both abide—until the final judgment removes the unfaithful and only the faithful remain.

"Adam" in Scripture

"Adam" is used broadly in Scripture in place of "man." Sometimes it is used to denote the entire human race. For example, in Job 14:1 we read, "Man [literally, Adam] that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble." Again, "Adam" is used of that which is "earthly" or mortal as opposed to that which is "heavenly" or immortal. "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. . . . The first man is of the earth, earthly: the second man is the Lord from heaven" (I Cor. 15:45, 47).

Being the beginning of God's work with humankind, Adam is often used as a representative of the servants of God.

What can we conclude? That God's entire work with mankind is a work of separating, the good from the evil, the gold from the dross, the precious from the vile. And that separating will not be complete until after the Lord Himself has judged and approved His own and removed all that offend. Only then will there be a garden on earth that is without fault or sin—or sinners. MM

My joys are growing richer in content and wider in extent, because purer in intent.

Israel's Neighbors

(Continued from page 17)

God gave Israel a great victory over them, and gave them the land.

Ammon, Moab and Edom.

To the east of Israel and Judah were the countries of Ammon, Moab and Edom.

Ammon, Moab and Edom were also troublesome neighbors of Israel. The Ammonites were plaguing Israel when Jephthah was called to deliver the nation in their distress. Steadily rising in power, they invaded all the land of Israel on the east side of Jordan. Reuben and Gad, the two territories nearest them, were first to feel their onslaught, then they pushed northward to Manasseh, even crossing over Jordan to invade the territories of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim.

(Continued Next Issue)

Gratitude Without Gravy

(Continued from page 6)

Thanksgiving is a necessary and natural part of the Christian life. Thanksgiving sanctifies all aspects of life, including that which is hard and painful.

There are at least 140 references in Scripture to thanksgiving. Many passages link thanksgiving with praise, often through music. In fact, to "prophesy" through music meant to praise and give thanks (I Chron. 25:3). "I will praise God's name in song and glorify him with thanksgiving" (Ps. 69:30, NIV). Translators have sometimes considered thanksgiving and praise almost as synonymous terms. Today, we read Psalm 40:3 as "He put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." Miles Coverdale, in 1535, translated the last phrase, "even a thanksgiving unto our God."

The word most frequently used in the New Testament for giving thanks is *eucharistein*. This word implies an intimate acquaintance with the person to whom thanks is given. It is thanks that cannot be given to a stranger or a distant friend. Matthew uses it when he records the Lord giving thanks at the Last Supper (Matt. 26:27). The root word of thanksgiving is *charis*, "grace." We acknowledge this when we refer to giving thanks before a meal as "saying grace." It is our offering of gratitude to one we love. The apostle Paul emphasizes that when we give thanks to God through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we are to do so with this same "grace" in our hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5:18, 20, Col. 3:16-17). We must have this grace in our hearts if we are rightly to give thanks to Him.

God commands that we offer thanks to him: "And be ye thankful" is the conclusion to this thoughtful admonition: "Let Christ's peace be the arbiter in your hearts; to this peace you were called as members of a single body" (Col. 3:15). If Christ's peace is the arbiter in our hearts, thanksgiving will be part of our obedience and we will gladly follow the Psalmist's advice to "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise" (Ps. 100:4).

Praise and thanksgiving are visible evidences of our faith. They are the natural outgrowth of trust in God. If we believe God; if we believe that the things He has promised He will actually bestow upon every faithful son or daughter; if we believe that these promises can actually be our own provided we do our part; our hearts will not be able to contain the praise that swells within us.

Our forefathers long ago used the motto "In God we Trust"

on national coins and currency. But trust in God and thanksgiving is a personal matter for each of us individually.

A thankful heart does not just happen. Songs of praise do not burst forth without cause. We give praise and thanks to the One in whom we find refuge, in whom we trust, in whom we place our confidence. Across the centuries thanksgiving has overflowed from those who put their trust in God. MM

Persevere

"**B**E watchful and diligent in the service of God, and often reflect upon the nature of your calling and your promise to renounce the world. Was it not that you might live unto God, and become a spiritual man? Therefore you should be eager to progress, for in a little while you will receive the reward of your labors. Then shall there be no more fear or sorrow in your borders. Now you will labor a little, and you shall find great rest, yes, perpetual gladness. If you continue faithful and fervent in your work, God will doubtless be faithful and bountiful in rewarding you. You ought to preserve a good hope of attaining your crown, but it doth not behoove you to feel secure, lest you should grow negligent or presumptuous.

"When some one who has often wavered between fear and hope on a certain occasion . . . said within himself, 'O that I could know that I should persevere to the end!' immediately he heard a voice within him reply: 'And if you knew it what would you do? Do now what you would do then, and you shall be quite secure.'"

—A Fifteenth Century
Ecclesiastic

The Unpardonable Sin

(Continued from page 12)

sought it carefully with tears" (Heb. 12:16-17). He could not repent because he would not meet God's terms for repentance when that repentance was available.

The sin of Judas was unpardonable—through his own act. Had he had the heart of Peter, the good and honest heart, even though he sinned he could have stood on his feet again and gone forward. But he precluded all chance of recovery by taking his own life.

The five foolish virgins demonstrated sin unpardonable—through delay. They could have been among the wise. They could have been ready to meet the bridegroom, had they prepared in advance. They could have—but they waited until too late to renew their supply of oil.

The sins of the people of Noah's day became unpardonable through delay. They could have been safe in the ark. They had opportunity. However sinful they had been, they could have been saved. And no doubt many thought they would turn—when the time drew near. But one day at a time, their opportunity slipped

by, and when the flood came, they were still outside.

The sins of the Israelites became unpardonable through delay. Multitudes perished in the various plagues. They need not have perished. If they had only listened and obeyed, they could have lived. Every one had opportunity. But they rebelled. They fretted. They murmured. They doubted. Instead of trusting God, they found fault with His leader and His leading. Instead of appreciating what they had, they complained of what they lacked. And because they continued in disobedience and showed no intention of repentance or turning, they were cut off.

Eli's sin became unpardonable through neglect. "His sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (I Sam. 3:13-14). He could have—he had opportunity. But he did not.

It is a lesson we should take to ourselves. What shall be written of us, when our day of probation is ended? What will our record say—that we postponed the serious effort we intended to make; that we let slip one golden opportunity after another until—alas, our opportunity was gone?

This situation need not be our plight, not if we take heed to our ways NOW.

MM

Where Are the Nine?

"In the course of his journey to Jerusalem he was travelling through the borderlands of Samaria and Galilee. As he was entering a village he was met by ten men with leprosy. They stood some way off and called out to him, 'Jesus, Master, take pity on us.'

"When he saw them he said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests'; and while they were on their way, they were made clean. One of them, finding himself cured, turned back praising God aloud. He threw himself down at Jesus's feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. At this Jesus said:

" 'Were not all ten cleansed? The other nine, where are they?' " (Luke 17:11-17, NEB).



I meant to go back—you may well guess
I was filled with amazement I cannot express,
To think that after those horrible years,
That passion of loathing and passion of fears,
By sores unendurable—eaten, defiled—
My flesh was as smooth as the flesh of a child!
I was drunken with joy; I was crazy with glee;
I scarcely could walk and I scarcely could see,
For the dazzle of sunshine where all had been black—
And I meant to go back—oh, I meant to go back!

I had thought to return; then my people came out,
There were tears of rejoicing and laughter and shout;
They embraced me—for years I had not known a kiss;
Their amazement, their gladness—what exquisite bliss!
They crowded around me, they filled the whole place;
They looked at my feet and my hands and my face;
My children were there, and my wonderful wife,
And all the forgotten allurements of life.
My cup was so full, I seemed nothing to lack! . . .
But I meant to go back—oh, I meant to go back!

• Concerning Clean and Unclean Foods and Isaiah 66

"I am going to say that I am really grateful for the thought-provoking, spirit-reviving 'trunk-load' of knowledge that has come to me. It is beginning to change my understanding, and it seems that the truth shines far brighter now. But I have a few questions to ask, that bother me quite a bit. One is in Isaiah 66:16-17. The so-called Seventh-day Adventists emphasize this verse, that you or an individual must abstain from so-called unclean foods before you can be accepted by God. And those who profess religious practice in the realms of Christian faith, no matter how consistent they are, if they eat swine or any unclean foods they shall perish.

"In speaking of salvation of man, are foods necessarily an important item, as mentioned above? Please give some elucidation on this passage."

The 66th chapter of Isaiah is a chapter highly prophetic and descriptive of events that will take place after Christ's second advent. It is a time of joy and rejoicing for the righteous, and of punishment for the wicked. We read: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, . . . shall be ashamed" (v. 5).

The Prophet is describing the time when God begins His great work on earth and a new nation is born. It will be an event without precedent in the history of our earth. "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?" (Isa. 66:8).

But in order for the new nation to develop, the opposing evil element must be eliminated, hence the vivid description of God's judgments upon the workers of iniquity. "The hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For, behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with

flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many" (vs. 14-16). The same time was pictured by the prophet Zechariah when "it shall come to pass, that in all the land, . . . two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein" (Zech. 13:8). Only by the removal of the opposing wicked element can the work of the Lord progress rapidly and on course.

It is comforting to know that only the wicked element will be destroyed. All who turn to the Lord and cooperate with the new government will be spared. Verse 17, the text in question, follows: "They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord."

The exact meaning of this text is more difficult to determine. The passage reads in the Moffatt Bible: "Any who consecrate and cleanse themselves to enter groves for ritual dances, any who eat the flesh of swine, of mice and crawling vermin—their rites and their devices shall perish—by the Eternal's order." The reading in the New English Bible is similar: "Those who hallow and purify themselves in garden-rites, one after another in a magic ring, those who eat the flesh of pigs and rats and all vile vermin, shall meet their end, one and all, says the Lord, for I know their deeds and their thoughts."

Some scholars believe that this verse was added by an editor. In the Jerusalem Bible the text is preceded by a heading which reads, "A fragment condemning pagan mysteries."

These verses could be understood as a condemnation of the pagan practices, rites or rituals of any age, Isaiah's as well as our own. The form of the paganism would vary; the fact would not. The temptation to worship other gods in forbidden manner, or to perform the ritual and overlook the meaning has been strong in all ages. We know that in Isaiah's time many of the Israelites had forsaken the worship of the true God and had adopted the abominable practices of the pagan cults which took place in

"groves" or gardens. As God's representative, Isaiah condemned all such idolatry, along with the eating of meats which were forbidden under the law of Moses. Those who perform any pagan or unauthorized rites and rituals shall perish.

The passage as heard by Isaiah's audience at the time delivered would have been understood in the context of the law of Moses, which was then in force, and which forbade the eating of "the flesh of pigs and rats and all vile vermin" (Isa. 66:17, NEB). The law of Moses is not binding upon believers today, hence the eating of pork would not be a violation of God's law today (though, as a church group we do not make a practice of eating pork if other foods are as readily available). However, we do not believe this was the intent of Isaiah 66:17.

As for what foods a Christian should eat, the apostle Paul gives this guideline: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." If a particular food does not agree with us, we do wrong in eating it. On the other hand, we are not to condemn another person for eating or not eating a particular food. The command is: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink" (Col. 2:16; see also Romans 14:1-6).

• Concerning Doctrine

"If a so-called Christian is consistent in doing good works, but still embraces the pagan doctrine of the trinity, can he be saved and receive eternal life?"

The apostle Paul considered sound doctrine an important part of the Christian's equipment. He wrote to Timothy, "These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, . . . from such withdraw thyself: (I Tim. 6:2-5). He warned of those who would "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. 4:3-4).

Among the duties of a good steward of God was that of being able "by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9), or as rendered in the New English Bible, "He must adhere to the true doctrine, so that he may be well able both to move his hearers with wholesome teaching and to

confute objectors." As Christians, our duty is to strive to learn the correct doctrine and then to apply it to our lives. If we do this, we can look forward to the acceptance and approval of God. MM

Little Foxes Spoil the Vines

*It's the little things that vex us
And erode our patience thin . . .
It's the little problems we can't solve
That mock our discipline.
The little foxes early come
And destroy the vineyard vines . . .
And when the purple clusters drop,
Some search for redder vines.*

*It's the slight remarks that wound us
And make us mar the scroll . . .
Like little barbs retaliate
And crucify the soul.
The small resentments we have held
And watered with our tears
Rise up to walk again at night
Like ghosts from former years.*

*It's the little words we've spoken,
Words we've spoken carelessly,
That fly like sharpest arrows, swift,
And make Gethsemane.
It's the little notes unwritten
To a dear friend in deep loss
That hang regrets around our neck
Like a heavy albatross.*

*So I pray to be a guardian
Over all I say and do,
Rememb'ring what I sow, I reap,
That life will soon be through.
So I will think before I speak
And closely watch my tongue . . .
For he who keeps his words aright
Has all the battle won.*

What about the Harvest?

Time passed can never return to us again, which makes us realize the great danger of procrastination. Right now is the time to be preparing ourselves for that great and most important spiritual harvest time just ahead. How we will want to have a fruitful harvest in that day, and, "What shall we harvest?" is indeed a question. To expect a plentiful crop in harvest if we have thoughtlessly slept through the planting and cultivating season is truly vain, for we shall reap only what we have sown. So it depends on ourselves whether our harvest be a heap which will bring us everlasting grief and desperate sorrow, or of the fruit that will yield us everlasting life and happiness and great rejoicing with all the other fruitful and happy harvesters.

We are given such an abundance of life-giving waters to encourage and develop the growth of our good seed, so may we work with patience to bring forth fruit to perfection. How wonderful to have a fully grown sheaf of pure gold to lay at the Master's feet!

But just one evil seed allowed to grow will cause us to lose a grand and eternal future.

South Wales

R. B.

Appreciative

We are thankful and pray that God in His goodness and mercy will continue to bless and inspire you. May your church ever grow in that spirit of oneness, unity, love and peace which God, our Father, requires of us, His children.

Jamaica

E. L.

We thank you for the *Megiddo Messages*. We enjoy reading them. Those elderly that cannot see to read, we read to them.

Thanks to the Megiddo Church, which enlightened us with the plain truth. May that church flourish until the coming of Elijah and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Jamaica

T. T.

Inspired

Yesterday while waiting in my doctor's office, I picked up your April magazine and was very inspired by the different messages and beautiful poems that I was hoping I could read the book through before the doctor called for me; but I didn't get to. So I decided to write for a subscription. I would love to have the last issue if possible so that I can finish the other messages I didn't get to.

It was very nice to find some good reading material in the doctor's office and good to know that you do such a good job at spreading the Gospel of our Saviour.

West Virginia

Mrs. H. K.

Our Only Hope

I am renewing my subscription for the wonderful magazine, *Megiddo Message*. I enjoy all the chapters and poems about God and Jesus Christ, which are so interesting to read.

We are waiting for the Lord's return soon to this earth. I believe the Lord is coming.

It is wonderful that your church has lived through a century of progress, service and difficult times. The world's ills have to be solved and only Jesus can do it. He is our only hope for this troubled world.

Michigan

J. H.

Showing Our Thankfulness

How can we show our thankfulness to God?

We can thank God by redeeming the time as we ought. Do we realize that we are standing on the threshold of the Kingdom of God? If we are letting our thoughts wonder off in by and forbidden paths, and deriving pleasure from worshipping things which pertain to this world, our spiritual life will suffer. God knows whether we are making the utmost use of our time for Him, or spending it on self.

It will be wonderful when the new world comes, a new and righteous government to replace the old, corrupt governments. In Revelation 21 we read that all things will become new. A new King, new government, with new laws and a new world of people who will walk in newness of life. And to think that we may become partakers in this glorious new era!—if we are among those whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find *watching*.

South Wales

G. S.

Little Things

The little things are the things we are so apt to overlook. It is a good thing for us to remember when we are tempted to pass over some little thing like not owning up to our mistakes. The Word tells us, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

We have been wonderfully blessed with many blessings far more than we deserved. Although we are absent from you in body, we are with you in spirit.

Newfoundland

G. W.

Diamonds in the Making

THE diamond has some lessons for our spiritual lives. Have we considered . . .

How did the diamond acquire its radiance and great worth? Certainly the element of which it is composed—carbon—is anything but beautiful or valuable; in fact, its most common form is that of dirty, black soot.

But diamonds are carbon, pure carbon. Deep in the earth, in places which at one time had been the throats of active volcanoes, are carbon deposits which, having undergone severe heat and pressure, are now mines producing diamonds.

Diamond mining is a *quality* not a *quantity* production. The yield, accordingly, is exceedingly small: it is one part diamond to about 14,000,000 parts worthless rock.

For this reason, the extracting process is very important. To separate the diamonds from their ores, the rock is first crushed by heavy machines. The crushed mass is then mixed with water and poured over greased surfaces, to which the diamond bits cling.

At this point, the diamonds look like nothing more than misshapen bits of crystal. It is not until they have been carefully cut and polished by skilled workmen that their true beauty is visible.

A crystal whose super-smooth surfaces flash out the dazzling colors of the rainbow—what a miraculous change from ordinary carbon!

We, spiritually speaking, are diamonds in the making. Along with Abraham, we must recognize that we are by nature only “dust and ashes”—absolutely worthless in our uncut, unpolished state. But by the heat and pressure of life we get that quality of toughness which fits us for the “crushing process,” ready to be separated as potential Christians.

The extraordinary value of the diamond lies in its extreme hardness. It is the hardest natural substance known to man. The Greek word for dia-

mond, *adamas*, means literally “unconquerable,” “invincible.” If we would be of value in the Lord’s sight, we must exhibit this diamond-like quality.

After being separated from the mass, we are still only misshapen bits of crystal. But our Master sees our potential and knows just where to cut to perfect our form, and just how to polish our rough surfaces to produce our luster. He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust, and He has promised that we will not be tempted beyond what we are able to endure.

Since there is nothing harder than diamonds, what then is hard enough to cut and polish the diamond? Nothing but other diamonds. So it is in our lives. Our Master-workman also uses other diamonds to aid Him in His work, for it is in our daily intercourse with others that we receive that all-important polishing.

Oh, let us not resist that rubbing, highly abrasive action of daily life. God wants us to shine as lights in the world, and we never will until those dull spots of pride, impatience, sensitiveness, and deceit are completely rubbed off.

Some diamonds never prove to be the perfect, flawless gems which are of greatest value. These are useful only for cutting and polishing other diamonds, or for industrial purposes. Our King will select only perfect stones. He will have only those diamonds which have allowed themselves to be perfectly cut, shaped, and polished to such a high degree that His own Divine Image is reflected from their surfaces.

Our Creator has said that they that be wise “shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.” What a miraculous change from ordinary dust! Let us be wise and submit to the hands of our Creator now, allowing Him to cut and polish our stone that we may be among the jewels He selects to adorn His everlasting crown.

MM

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