

Megiddo Message

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“The path of the
righteous is level; O upright
One, You make the way of the
righteous smooth.” —Isaiah 26:7, NIV

Oh! Lord God

Perhaps the greatest prerequisite to vital worship is a sense of the greatness and mercy of God. It was that sense that moved the sons of Korah to sing, "O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For the Lord most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth" (Ps. 47:1-2) and "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised" (Ps. 48:1).

When we see God in this light, we are moved with awe and wonderment to say with the young and incumbent prophet Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

How can we feel the awe of Him, we who have not seen the vision God gave Isaiah? We have not heard the voice of God calling us to leave our home, and kindred and people, and journey into a land we do not know, as did Abraham. We have not heard the voice of God calling us up into the mountain, as did Moses and Aaron when "they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness" (Ex. 24:10). We have not even seen the cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night as it hovered over the tabernacle, as did the many thousands of Israelites day after day for forty years. We have not walked dry shod through the midst of the sea, with the waters piled up on either side, and then seen those same waters come crashing down upon the pursuing Egyptians, leaving us free to travel in safety. We have not in our minds a keen remembrance of a night in our early youth when we heard the voice of the Lord calling our name, awaking us from sleep, as did the young Samuel. We have never seen a foreign army invade

our country and be stopped miraculously by the power of God, as did many during the times of the kings of Judah and Israel, when God fought for them.

We have not heard the voice of the Lord saying to us, "Ask what I shall give thee," then promising us "wisdom and knowledge,...riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like," as did Solomon (II Chron. 1:7-12). We have not seen fire come down from heaven and consume the sacrifice upon the altar, as did the multitudes in the time of Elijah, during the great display upon Mount Carmel. We have not seen the light from heaven above the brightness of the noonday sun that struck the proud Saul to the ground. We have not climbed the mountain with Jesus and seen Him transfigured before us, as did Peter, James and John.

We have not—and yet, all this is *our heritage!* For we worship the same God, we trust in the same power, we live by the same spirit, we worship the same Lord God Omnipotent! Yes, all this is our heritage! What can we say but, "Oh! Lord God."

We need desperately to gain a life-changing glimpse of the greatness, the awesomeness, the wonder, the power, the mercy, the goodness, the loving-kindness of the God we serve. We need to know Him, to worship Him, to have His interests our highest delight, His approval our deepest concern.

The people of God down through the ages have shared this noble, exalted enthusiasm. It was a feeling that words could not adequately describe, a sort of living Divine exclamation. It is an appreciation, an impression, a longing which all the words in the world cannot begin to convey. It is something beyond our ability to express; a conviction and a love too deep

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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 and sustainer of the earth, the world, the universes, and all life, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being."
- **IN THE BIBLE** as our only source of true knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for His creation and for the salvation of humankind.
- **IN JESUS CHRIST**, the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin; who ministered among His brethren, was crucified, resurrected, and taken to heaven and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be King of the whole earth.
- **IN THE HOLY SPIRIT**, the openly manifest power of God, which God bestowed at various times and in various ways to reveal His knowledge to humankind, to support His spokesmen, to confirm His utterances, and to demonstrate His supreme power and authority.
- **IN LIFE** as the gift of God, and in our sacred responsibility to use it for God and His coming Kingdom.
- **IN HUMANKIND** as providing the raw material from which shall be selected and developed a superior, God-honoring people upon whom God will bestow the blessings of immortal life in His soon-coming Kingdom.
- **IN OURSELVES** as capable of applying in our own lives the precepts and principles taught in the Word of God, in this way perfecting that high quality of moral character which God has promised to recompense with life eternal in His heavenly Kingdom on earth.
- **IN THE PROMISE OF GOD**, that a new age is coming—is near—when the earth shall be filled with His glory, His people, and God's will be done here as it is now done in heaven.

Soon-coming events . . .

THE HERALD AND THE KING

OUR PLANET will soon witness the greatest events in its history. For centuries God has been silent. But that silence will soon be broken by the arrival of Elijah the prophet, who comes to herald the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: . . . lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Then shall follow the King of kings and Lord of Lords, to begin His momentous work of transforming our world into the glorious and eternal Kingdom of God.

The Bible pictures all events, all men and all nations moving together toward this one God-ordained climax, when "the kingdoms of this world" will become "the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ" (Rev. 11:15), a kingdom in which all will enjoy the blessings of peace, equity and prosperity. When the task is complete, our earth shall be numbered among the heavenly, glorified worlds and filled with immortal inhabitants, bringing to reality the promise of our Lord in His prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

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A Time To *Remember*

If we work with God, if we are careful to honor Him in everything we do, just as surely as He was with David, so He will be with us.

The life of King David was a life filled with events to remember; not events of small consequence but great events, great as seen from God's point of view. For David had linked his life to God, and nothing mattered to David except it mattered also to God. David's life was rich with experience that drew him closer to God.

Quite near the beginning of David's long reign was an occasion that called for great thanksgiving and great rejoicing. David rejoiced especially because it was a victory for his God.

When David was made king by the men of Judah and set up his headquarters in Hebron, his dominion was small. Much of the land of Israel was still loyal to Saul's family. But with the passing of time, the people of Israel slowly came over to David's side until, after about seven years, all of Israel had transferred their allegiance to David.

Now with all of Israel under him, David immediately took two significant steps. First, he removed his capital to Jerusalem, calling it the City of David; and second, he made plans to bring the sacred ark of the covenant back to Jerusalem.

David wanted to make Jerusalem a center of faith, as well as of government. He wanted God to be with him in his chosen city, for David was God's chosen ruler. David ruled only *under God*.

In the time of Moses, the ark of the covenant had symbolized the presence of God in Israel. Could it not mean the same in the City of David?

Many years had passed since the sons of Eli had taken the ark to battle with them and the victorious Philistines had captured it. But the Philistines found the ark no charm of good fortune. Rather, it was a troublesome thing, demolishing their gods and bringing plagues on their people. Finally, after some seven months of moving it from place to place, they put it on a new cart and sent it back to Israel, glad to be rid of it.

For some fifty years, the ark rested in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim. So when David resolved to move the ark back to Jerusalem, it was to Kirjath-jearim, some eight or nine miles from Jerusalem, that he went with his men. They loaded the ark onto a new ox-drawn cart, and began the trip to Jerusalem. All went well until the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, and was immediately smitten by the Lord—dead! (II Sam. 6:1-6).

David was stunned. Why was Uzzah smitten? Was God not pleased with David's desire to bring the ark back to Jerusalem? Immediately he called a halt to the moving operation, and made temporary arrangements for the ark to rest in the nearby house of Obed-edom.

Did David or anyone else in Israel wonder if the ark was still sacred, or if the ancient laws of God were still binding? We are sure they did not wonder.

And does not God mean what He says to us today, just as surely, just as firmly as then?

About three months later, David decided to try again. But this time, before he began, he made a diligent study of the law of Moses. David had learned his lesson. For, as David told the Levites, "The Lord destroyed us before, because we handled the matter improperly. You were not carrying it." This time he would do everything in his power to transport the ark in the proper honorary manner God would bless.

The story is recorded in I Chronicles 15. First, he prepared a special tent in which the ark could rest. Then he planned just how the ark should be handled. No one except the Levites should carry it, for God had chosen them for this purpose.

Furthermore, David commanded the Levites to sanctify themselves in preparation for bringing home the ark of the God of Israel. And when

they carried it, they were to carry it on their shoulders with its carrying poles, just as the Lord had instructed Moses (v. 15).

In addition to all this, David instructed the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be singers with instruments of music—psalteries, and harps, and cymbals—lifting up their voices with joy. Then he invited all Israel to Jerusalem to celebrate the event. It was a great occasion. At the appointed time, the musicians played, and the singers sang, and the Levites lifted the ark to their shoulders. They took six steps, then stopped and waited while their brethren sacrificed seven bullocks and seven rams to the Lord in gratitude for not destroying them. Then they proceeded all the way to David's new tent.

And so, we read, "they brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of the house of Obed-edom with joy." This time David knew he was not doing it alone. This time the effort had God's blessing, for we read that "God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord." With God helping they were safe.

Isn't this the same blessed assurance we have today? If we work with God; if we are careful to honor Him in everything we do; if we work with God and for God, just as surely as He was with David, so He will be with us.

David did all that was written in the law of God and more. The occasion lacked nothing that David was able to lavish upon it. Even the attire of David and the ministering Levites was specially prepared. And "so all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps." It was a time of great joy, a time of great thanksgiving, a time of great remembering.

We should remember

- 1) *what God has done,*
- 2) *what God is doing, and*
- 3) *what He has promised to do.*

We need to look back over the day, the week, the year, not to pride ourselves in what we have done but to see God at work in our lives, directing, supporting, training us for the tasks for which He has chosen us.

We should look back and thank God that we have survived to this day. Many have not. Truly it is a time to remember.

David was grateful for every day through which God had helped him to survive himself, his darkness, his weakness and his folly.

It was indeed a time to remember. This day of thanksgiving was significant in another way. It heard the first performance of David's choir, for we read that at this time David began the custom of using choirs in the tabernacle to sing thanksgiving to the Lord. Asaph was assigned the task of directing the choir.

The song they sang was specially composed by David for the occasion. And it is one of the most beautiful psalms on record. Notice the exultant mood of the psalm expressed in its short, rapid, almost staccato phrases. Notice, too, its strong beats of joyous gratitude. "Give thanks, call, make known, sing, talk, glory, rejoice." This is the first stanza of the song:

*"Give thanks unto the Lord,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the
people.
Sing unto him, sing psalms unto
him,
talk ye of all his wondrous works.
Glory ye in his holy name:
let the heart of them rejoice that
seek the Lord"*

1 Chron. 16:8-10

It was a time of great thanksgiving. It was a time to remember.

David wanted all Israel to look back and remember. What should they remember? Remember the marvelous works of the Lord, His wonders and the judgments of His mouth. There were three things he wanted them to remember: God's works (what He has done); His wonders (what He is able to do); and His judgments (what He has promised, both of reward and punishment).

Here is the message for us today, as we meet to offer our thanks to the same God David served. We, too, give thanks because we, too, remember. David had much to remember, and so do we. In one way or another, we are always remem-

bering. There is no escaping it, even if we should try. In one sense, the past is over and done, never to be repeated. But in another sense, it is not done at all, because in its passing it has become part of us. Everything we have ever known or experienced has left its imprint upon us in one way or another, whether we like it or not.

Memories stir emotions that are as varied as the memories that stirred them. Yes, we remember. We are all by nature such escape artists. We avoid what we need most. It is so easy to talk about anything—except what really matters. It is so easy to pass the time of day rehearsing idle nothings. But isn't this dishonoring to the God who has done so much for us, in us, and around us, and who has promised so much more?

This is why God gave us memory. He knew how desperately we would need it to help and encourage one another. One way is to remember the wonderful works of God in our behalf; we, whom He has called into His service; we, to whom He has entrusted His Divine knowledge; we, who are so richly blessed. We need to ponder, too, what may be His will for us.

We need to look back over the day, the week, the year, not to pride ourselves in what we have done but to see God at work in our lives, directing, supporting, training us for the tasks for which He has chosen us. We need to see where we have come from, and where we are going. We need to sort out the things we have done, and the things that remain yet to be done.

We need this deeper, slower kind of remembering, this remembering that is both a searching and a finding. The process is not unlike the process of praying, because prayer, too, is a slow, great journey; it is one way of seeking God to learn the truth about ourselves and our own lives at their

deepest level; a search to understand, to learn, to grow.

We should look back and thank God that we have survived to this day. After 30, 40, 60 or 80 years we have made it to this day, and to this hour. Many have not, and we, too, might not have, but by God's help. Truly it is a time to remember.

And what does this remembering tell us? It tells us that we are surviving because a strength beyond our own has pulled us through. Weak and mortal as we are, a Divine strength has sustained us. A wisdom beyond our own flickering lamp has lighted our path. A Divine presence has given us courage to go on. A Divine power has given and continues to give us life and breath. *Shouldn't we thank God?*

And so it is that we find peace, a peace that comes from looking back and realizing something that we so easily fail to see: that we are never really alone, not if we belong to God. This is why David cried out in this great psalm of thanksgiving, "O give thanks unto the Lord." Remember the wonderful works that He has done, the wonders He has wrought, the judgments He has uttered.

Remember, and thank God.

What memories there were for David—and will be for us! For David, there were memories of bitter failures, as well as of victories. There were also memories of great sins that he had committed. But triumphing over all was the mercy of God. When David truly repented, God truly forgave. What could give greater cause for thanksgiving? No wonder David sang his exultant song, "O give thanks unto the Lord. Tell of his salvation from day to day." David was grateful for every day through which God had helped him to survive himself, his darkness, his weakness and his folly. He was thankful for every day God had saved him enough to go on through thick and thin, to the next day, and

the next day, and the next. This is what he remembered, and this is why he sang for joy. It was a time to remember.

But perhaps we have more to remember than we wish. Perhaps we recall times we would rather forget: the times we spoke, when we should have been silent; the times we answered in anger, when we should have possessed our soul in peace. Perhaps we remember, too, times our faith failed, or our courage, or our peace, when we were offended. Or our feelings were hurt, and we complained, when we should have praised. Perhaps we remember with shame the time when we could not forgive another, when that person was only too willing to forgive us! If only we would remember our sins and failures with the shame and the disgrace they should bring upon us. If only we could see them as God sees them, and humbly acknowledge them before Him, and turn and change our ways! Then God would hear, then God would forgive, then we would receive His forgiveness. And then we could forget our misery and remember it as waters that pass away. Then our remembering would turn to gratitude, and our gratitude would bring peace—and hope.

Then and only then we shall see what hope is and where it comes from. We shall see hope as the driving power and the outermost edge of faith. We shall see a hope that can stand up to its knees in trouble and still keep its eye fixed confidently on God and the future.

There has never been a time when God wasn't with His people as the strength beyond their limit of endurance, the wisdom beyond their knowledge, and the spirit beyond their will.

To remember is to realize that we are here today by God's grace. And what does that mean about tomor-

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The present time with its struggles and trials is but a second in the mind of God, a second that is preparing us for an eternity of joy, and glory, and happiness past all comparing.

SHALL is the word of hope. There shall be is the promise of hope. Only God can say, This shall be... and know of a surety that it SHALL.

Lord, Increase Our PATIENCE

An earnest brother writes:

"I have a problem in the matter of patience. It seems I have made significant progress in developing patience, controlling myself and my emotions, being patient with my near ones. Yet when unexpected situations come up where much patience and control has to be shown, I often fail. I am very dissatisfied with myself. I analyze the situation precisely and promise myself that the next time such a situation occurs I will do decidedly better. Sometimes I do, but not always, especially in stressful situations.

"It is not the great predicaments that trouble me but the small, everyday matters; those to which one doesn't attach any special attention. I am distressed over this. I'm anxious about making spiritual progress, yet this bad feature called impatience is difficult for me to root out. I am writing in the hope that you who have a great deal of experience in the work over self may share thoughts and experiences with me in this matter. How did you get strong in patience? Surely there are those who had either a great deal or at least some problem with impatience. I will be very grateful for every practical instruction on this subject, and I thank you in advance."

Lord, increase our patience." These are not the words of Jesus' disciples, but they might well have been, for did not they demonstrate that they needed more patience?

There is a reason behind this, because children of the heavenly calling are persons intensely goal-oriented, of high aspiration, strong desire, vigorous disposition, passionate feeling, firm conviction, powerful reaction. Along with all these come an iron will and an eagerness to accomplish. We feel the press of time. Do we wonder why we need patience?

Whatever the project we begin, we want nothing to stand in our way. The sooner, the quicker, the better! But we soon learn that this eagerness, like every other trait of our nature, must be educated, controlled, disciplined, focused. *Lord, increase our patience!*

God has answered our prayer. He has so designed our lives that they are laden with opportunities to develop patience. He wants us eager, but He also wants us to develop in our lives the perfect beauty of

patience. Have we ever noticed how many of the Christian virtues depend on this heavenly quality? Endurance...long-suffering...forbearance...perseverance—none of these could be perfected without patience.

Yet, again and again we fall short—with our family, associates, strangers, circumstances, or ourselves. To some it is a persistent annoyance, to others a serious besetment. We resolve to be more patient, and think we are doing well—until suddenly the unexpected happens, and our supply is quickly exhausted.

If not reckoned with, this deficiency can discourage us in the task we have undertaken. For what is discouragement but a lack of patience—with ourselves? Perfecting a character by the standard of Christ is not a task begun at dawn and accomplished by dusk. It is a work that takes time—and patience, steady patience, persistent patience, patience all the way, before we can stand approved with those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12).

The first step toward patience is to convince our-

selves that it is absolutely necessary that we be patient at all times and under all circumstances, that we cannot live in God's eternal kingdom unless we *perfect* our patience. Most people allow that patience is *desirable*, but look upon the lack of it as a small thing—probably because they themselves offend so often. But impatience is not Christlike, and it is not Godlike. It is not even desirable in most human relationships. Impatience is really only a diluted form of anger, and we read that "Anger rests in the bosom of fools."

For those seeking a place in the eternal Kingdom, *patience is not an option, it is a requirement*. It is one of the distinguishing marks of the saints. Twice we are told in the book of Revelation: "Here is the patience of the saints" (Rev. 13:10; 14:12). Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit enumerated by Paul (Gal. 5:22-23). It is one of the additions in Peter's list (II Pet. 1:5-7). James did not say that we should *try* to be patient, but that we must practice patience to perfection (James 1:4). Jesus said that in our patience we possess our souls (Luke 21:19). Again, James is simple and forthright: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.... Be ye also patient" (James 5:7-8).

Patience is something we must learn, and let us thank God for situations we can use to learn it!

Impatience is fundamentally a discontent. But this is not to suggest that all contentment is patience. If we were so easy-going and non-caring that nothing ever bothered or distressed us, this in itself would not indicate patience but—more likely—a lack of the strong desire we must have to pursue the eternal rewards God has set before us.

There are many misconceptions about patience. There are some people who appear patient because they are mild-mannered and tranquil. *But patience is not a mild and tranquil mannerism that can tolerate equally any good or ill, right or wrong. Godly patience is a strong virtue, strong for right and against wrong.*

Patience is not a meek submitting to any circumstance, without desire or direction.

Patience is not a wave of the sea, willing to travel with any wind.

Patience is not a carefree attitude to which nothing is a concern and nothing matters. There is no real patience without struggle and victory. One who seems naturally docile is not truly patient but passive, and passiveness—aimlessness, lack of desire—is not patience.

The quality of true, godly patience is, like all the other virtues, not found in nature. Some persons may appear naturally patient, but true patience must be *practiced*. Patience is the ability to "rejoice in the Lord *always*," in every present moment, even when one has a strong desire, or reason to desire, to depart from it.

There is some reason to say that a person who has or has had no tendency toward impatience is not really "patient." We would not say a person is patient if there were no inclination or reason to act otherwise. But we do describe the saints as patient for two reasons. *First, they achieved this state through struggles with practicing patience, and by changing their disposition they reached the point where the same situations that formerly distressed them no longer bothered them at all.*

This is the patience of the saints.

From another aspect, patience is the strengthening of our adversity-resisting powers toward the attain-

ing of a goal. It makes us able to "put up with" something disagreeable in prospect of something better. Even in this life, one must have patience to be a good wife or husband, a good scholar, a good employee, a good musician, a good artist, or any other skill in this world. How much more for the call of the Kingdom of Christ!

Well may we pray, Lord increase our patience!

God has so designed our world and our lives that they are laden with opportunities to develop patience.

Now let us look closer at impatience. This miserable disturber of our inner peace is a feeling of intense frustration with a definite cause. If we look closely, we can usually determine that 1) there is a situation (a person, a circumstance) not to our liking; and 2) it is something over which we have very little or no control. Because we are unable to change the situation (person, circumstance), a feeling of frustration builds up inside us, which we often "vent" in the form of "steam" (harsh words, vengeful actions, disturbed feelings).

We have within us a very strong instinct to think too highly of ourselves, to think that everything should happen and be just according to *our* idea and plan. And when it doesn't, we feel frustrated, defeated, impatient with those things beyond our control. It is part of the old nature we must conquer.

What are some of the situations

Lord, Increase Our **PATIENCE**

that spark our impatience? They are often petty things we would so like to control but cannot—little irritations, unwanted comments or opinions, annoying interruptions, small delays, another's mannerisms or way of doing something, etc., etc. Or they may be bigger situations we cannot change, like sickness, an undesirable living situation, an incompatible companion. The list is long, and we could all add to it. And the solution—?

The solution—strangely—is not in changing the cause but in changing *ourselves*.

How does God evaluate us human creatures? It is far superior

to be able to control ourselves than to control other persons, or our circumstances, or the things that irritate us. In God's sight, greater is he who rules his own spirit, than he who conquers a city (Prov. 16:32).

This brings us to the crux of dealing with our impatience. For we can make up our minds that the source of the irritation (trouble, discomfort, aggravation) will remain. If one irritant is removed, another will appear. To hope for a situation in this world where everything and everyone is just to our liking is to waste our time dreaming. And if it were, we should have no opportunity to learn patience.

Two Kinds of Patience

Someone has said that there are two kinds, or stages, of patience, "practiced" patience and "dispositional" patience. Neither are natural, neither come without struggle. How do we practice patience? When we feel irritated or when we face a situation where we know we have been irritated before, we make voluntary efforts toward self-control. We consciously redirect our thinking toward being content with the present situation and seeing how we personally can benefit from it. In practicing patience, I am working on myself to keep myself patient, to change my thinking and



A Father Practices Patience

It was evening, just time for dinner, when we discovered that we needed milk. The hour was five fifteen, and the store would close at six, so it was decided that I should go immediately, hoping to be back very soon since dinner was almost on the table.

As I rushed down the sidewalk toward the car, my four-year-old son called to me from the doorway that he wanted to go along. So I jogged back up the sidewalk, intending to scoop him up in my arms and be gone. But it seems that on that rainy day Tommie had discovered the joys of walking under an umbrella. He was not to be whisked up in papa's arms through the drizzle to the car; he must walk down the sidewalk at a leisurely pace, holding his own umbrella. For this purpose an umbrella must be sought.

I recognized immediately that here was my opportunity for patience.

Mama found an umbrella after a moment or two, and Tommie walked ceremoniously down the sidewalk and across the street to the car under his umbrella, while papa walked beside him getting a little damp, since it is more trouble than it's worth to walk under an umbrella held by a four-year-old. Getting into the car was complicated since Tommie didn't want me to hold the umbrella for him, but also didn't want to put it down while he got in, and of course he didn't know how to fold it like big people do. The solution he found was to get as close as he could to the open door, then jump in, abandoning the umbrella to the street. I picked it up, folded it, and slid damply into the driver's seat.

We arrived shortly at the corner store and parked about fifty feet from the entrance. Again I began with the assumption that I would carry Tommie quickly inside, get the milk, and be gone. But—patience again!—the umbrella had to be dealt with, and we walked slowly toward the store.

At last we entered the store, located the dairy counter, and immediately discovered that the milk supply had been sold out. There was nothing to do but make our way back into the rainy darkness, Tommie under his umbrella and I trudging along side and above, trying to guide him around the puddles, and back to the car, to drive to the next nearest store.

This time, happily, we were able to park just a few feet from the door, and since there was nothing but clear sidewalk between, I persuaded Tommie, with firmness in my voice, that he had practiced using his umbrella enough for today, and that the umbrella was not needed this time. We found our milk, and soon were headed home, where the umbrella was used one last time to get from the car to the front door of the house, where Mama met us with a cheery face and delicious dinner.*

What attitudes might this father have taken toward the new adventure of his four-year-old? He might have told the child firmly at the start that they did not have time for the umbrella, though the father did not realize at this point how much time the umbrella would take. And once he had consented to the child taking his umbrella, would he not have been selfish to deny him this simple pleasure—simply

my attitude to be pleasing to God even though things are not to my liking and I can do little or nothing to change them.

Practiced patience becomes dispositional patience if practiced long enough and well enough, because I have changed myself to such an extent that I no longer feel any impulse to impatience but am able to rejoice in the Lord in any given moment, whatever the situation. Even if it be one that might otherwise provoke impatience, I will still be patient. How? Because I can tell myself that I belong to God, and whether the present situation is to my liking or not, God will be with

me in it and *I have no reason or right to be disturbed.*

But it is important to distinguish this clearly from teeth-gritting endurance, in that what I am struggling to do is not just endure a situation unhappily until it is past but to draw pleasure and profit from it.

It is also important to distinguish between the practicing of patience and simple self-control. It is not that self-control is not good but it is *not sufficient*. Practicing patience includes self-control—I tell myself that I must not be upset, that I must keep calm, I must not be irritated or disturbed; but in practicing patience I am actually struggling against my

God does not require us to APPEAR patient but to actually BE patient. There is a difference.

feelings of impatience. One who is very self-controlled may justify himself in feeling steamy, vengeful, irritated, disturbed, so long as his feelings do not “show.” He may be literally “boiling inside” and show little or no emotion. But is this

because of his own lack of patience? This is often true, that “real time” is not the issue, that the things irritating us do not require as much *time* as they do *patience*.

Or the father might have adopted an attitude of “teeth gritting endurance.” In teeth gritting endurance, he would feel impulses to deal abruptly with the child, to force him, against his will, to give up his umbrella, to disregard his childish concerns and regard only the father’s, and perhaps to become angry with the child. But perhaps prudence counseled that if he behaved in these ways, he would have a beastly and uncooperative child on his hands during the entire trip, and so he said to himself, “It isn’t worth it. I shall be patient.” And so he grit his teeth and bore with him. Why the teeth gritting? Because he really did resent the child coming along and causing him this delay and unnecessary inconvenience. In other words, he was quite impatient and was only suppressing impatient behavior, not controlling the impatience itself. His first desire was to depart from the present moment, to get away from the situation with the slow four-year-old and his dreaded umbrella. Had he been sufficiently a good actor and have maintained a cool exterior—that is, if he did not actually grit his teeth or sigh or roll his eyes—then an observer might have been misled into thinking that he was actually patient.

But patience is not teeth-gritting endurance. In real patience, we are at ease, content, at peace. Patience is rejoicing in the Lord.

How might one be helped to be patient in such a potentially irritating situation?

1. *Ask yourself, What is my most important priority? What is of the greatest long-range importance?* The father could have relaxed by considering how much more important it was that he show a right spirit to his child, even if they missed out on the milk. Bringing himself to reckon realistically with the values involved might have caused

any anxiety and resentment to disappear, he showing a patient and fatherly spirit by walking happily beside his happy four-year-old in the rain.

2. *Relax.* Being tense often makes one *feel* under pressure. And muscle relaxation is largely within our voluntary control. Had the father tightened his grip on the steering wheel, or the muscles in his jaw, he would have only strengthened his impulses to impatience. But by relaxing and thinking about the situation he could see that there was no real reason to be anxious.

3. *Analyze the situation and change your view of it.* The father could overpower his feelings of impatience by going right to the center of the irritation, namely, Tommie’s preoccupation with that umbrella, and find a way of looking at it that would replace the adverse emotions of resentment and anxiety with happy ones. So he could look at Tommie and his umbrella with different eyes: he could see them not as a threat to his relatively trivial project of purchasing milk, but instead have contemplated the beauty of sharing in the child’s enthusiasm of learning something new, and the delight of growing up and getting initiated into such adult things as walking with an umbrella. With this attitude he would feel no cause for irritation or impatience.

4. *Physically do something that will change your attitude toward what is making you impatient.* Again, the father could have engaged himself with the child in helpful and instructive conversation, thus in a physical way focusing his attention on teaching the child rather than on satisfying his own impulse to feel impatient.

All of the above might be called techniques for controlling and transforming our impulses to impatience and practicing patience.

* Adapted from “The Strengths of a Christian,” by Robert C. Roberts, published by Westminster Press, copyright 1984.

Lord, Increase Our **PATIENCE**

patience? Is this the conduct we would expect of a saint of God? It may be a step toward it, but it is *not* patience.

God does not require us to *appear* patient but to actually *be* patient. And there is a difference, a great difference. "But let patience have its perfect work..." (James 1:4).

The solution to impatience is not self-control but *self-transformation*, an actual change in our attitude and disposition so that in the same situation where we used to feel aggravation we no longer feel any irritation or impatience. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). The "new creature" is not the old one fenced

The solution to impatience is not self-control but self-transformation.

in and bound up but a whole new disposition, with new desires, new interests, new loves, new aspirations. Self-control may be the old creature in all its unholy ugliness; patience is the new nature, with *one* overpowering desire: to please God. That done, nothing else matters.

This is what Paul advised, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:23); again, "whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Cor. 10:31). And Peter wrote, "If any man speak ... if any man minister, let him do it... that God in all things may be glorified" (I Pet.

4:11). Jesus could say, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29).

Does this attitude make a difference? It does. But remember, the situations will not change; the change will be in *us*. We will be so thoroughly changed in disposition through practicing patience that we no longer feel any impulse to impatience. It is not that everything will be to our liking, but that we have changed our concerns so completely that impulses which formerly upset us we no longer notice.

Patience puts us above the situations of our lives. It means that our spirit is no longer at the mercy of every disruptive, unhappy impulse that threatens us. We are at peace, rejoicing, steady, fixed, unmovable, under the control of a higher impulse, part of an eternal program which, if followed through, will carry us into the Kingdom of God.

How to Conquer Impatience

Let us look at a few details that often affect our patience and see how we might handle them.

1) *Be realistic about time situations.*

One of the prime factors in our impatience is often our unrealistic view of time. We are a time conscious people, and we ought to be. But at the same time we must be realistic. Only so much can be done in a given amount of time, and sometimes that "so much" is not as much as we would like. To make matters worse, everything does not work out according to our plan; we feel hindered, delayed, thwarted, frustrated. It is but another form of impatience—or an opportunity to practice patience.

It may help us to analyze: What does God require me to do with my time? After all, my time—my life—is His, not mine. If I am delayed, if I am hindered, that need

not hinder me spiritually. I have no reason to feel thwarted, frustrated, impatient. For if my goal is to please God, whether I am doing what *I* would choose to do or whether I am forced to do something I would choose *not* to do (like standing in line, or waiting for an appointment, or suffering because of someone else's carelessness), what is lost? God is pleased if only I am patient, humble, obedient, accepting—not fighting—what I cannot change. This is what will qualify me for a place among His children, and so this is all that really matters.

2) *Make up your mind that you do not have to have everything to your liking, that you do not have to be "in control" of every situation.*

What reason have we to have everything to our liking, more than anyone else? If something is beyond our ability to change, it is not our responsibility to change it; that part is *God's* task. And since we ourselves, our time, and everything we have belong to God, if there is a seemingly needless delay, the problem becomes His, not ours.

3) *Ask yourself, What really matters?*

If we have set our goal to have everything just exactly our way, to have others do everything just exactly *as* we would like them to and *when* we would like them to do it, we are sure to be frustrated. But if we have set our heart on performing well our own duty to God, we will realize that we can please God just as much if things are *not* to our liking as if they are.

So much depends on our attitude. The thousand details of every day can teach us patience, or they can frustrate us. The choice is ours. For there is no situation of life that cannot be a way of serving... praising...glorifying God. There is no situation of life that needs to irritate

or annoy us. Committed to God, every situation can help to prepare us for eternity.

And—think of it!—if what we are doing is preparing us to live eternally, should we not rejoice in it? Whoever heard of anyone becoming irritated or impatient or frustrated when doing what they were enjoying?

4) *Am I too concerned about trifles?*

We may find, looking closely, that we cause ourselves much needless irritation by insisting on details which in the long term hardly matter at all. Of course we think our way is better, but is it? The point is to separate what concerns our duty to God from what does not. We might ask ourselves, Is what is important to me *important to God*?

5) *Can I let go, and let God?*

This phrase, popularized in recent years, is very meaningful if understood. Some aspects of our lives are to a great extent beyond our control, i.e., problems of aging, our health, our finances, the economy of our nation, the government of our nation, the future of our children, etc., etc. In these we should “let go, and let God” take over. If our strongest instinct is to be “in control” and have everything our way, we will find that, spiritually speaking, we are defeated. We can learn a valuable lesson in submitting, realizing that if God allows something there must be good in it—here is a lesson of far greater value than anything we could accomplish by having our own way.

Patience Wins

The patient spirit can accept whatever is, hopefully, gratefully, trusting God that it is for good and within His will. If God has allowed it, if it is all right with Him, it should be all right with us also. With this attitude, we will feel no

spirit of impatience or frustration, only happiness and contentment.

We will find that sometimes our impatience comes from a desire for something other than what is. We are, in reality, distrusting God. If we can change something that is disagreeable, we should do it. But if we cannot, we must accept it as His will, trust Him for strength to bear it, and grow under it, and realize that we can grow just as well—perhaps better—in a situation *not to our liking* as in one we might design.

Our Christian goals make us persons with a passion for the Kingdom of God, a desire that cannot be satisfied this side of eternity. The consequence of this passion is a desire so strong that no impulse of the flesh can overpower it—if we keep it on our minds, if we keep reaching for the character God requires of us. We want life, and we want it so intensely that we are willing to sacrifice anything, *anything, everything* to obtain it!

We are patient not because we are aimless, not because we are drifters, not because we have no strong motivations, but because we *have* all of these—plus a greater goal and greater reason for being patient, a reason so dominant that no circumstance of life can interfere. We are like the great Apostle who was “straining forward” (Phil. 3:13-14), and will reach the point where we do not even notice the things that used to bother us, so changed will we be in disposition, so content in serving God.

The Psalmist said (Ps. 40:2), “I waited patiently for the Lord and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.”

How comforting it is to know that God surrounds His people with a wall. From one viewpoint it is a wall of protection. But if the wall in the course of time becomes so high that we cannot see over it, then we

begin to be anxious about deliverance from the narrow sphere of influence and service in which we are enclosed and find it hard to understand if we have truly accepted the situation in which we were placed. But God has a purpose in our detainment. We read: “The

Patience puts us above the situations of our lives. It means that our spirit is no longer at the mercy of every disruptive, unhappy impulse that threatens us.

steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord” (Ps. 37:23).

The basic rule of Christian orientation should be that he continue in the place where God placed him until God lifts the “pillar of cloud” (Ex. 23:21). If we hope only in the Lord and in everything seek His guidance then we will receive strength to endure. “But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil” (II Thess. 3:3). Any undertaking not according to the will of God will show itself useless, incurring loss of time and strength.

Patience is a word of freedom. For when we have learned to be patient, we are no longer frustrated but *free*—free to enjoy every situation of life to the maximum, free to live above our surroundings, free to live within the love of God, and know that every situation, however disagreeable, is working for our long-term good. However unwanted

(Continued on page 24)

Isa. 63:1	<i>Who is this that cometh from Edom, With garments all red from the fray? 'Tis Christ who in judgment now sitteth, In righteousness gains victory.</i>
Ps 72:9	<i>He asks for a world-wide dominion, All nations must bow at His feet; He demands all the earth for possession, To fill it with glory replete.</i>
Num. 14:21	
Ps. 72:11 Zech. 14:9 Isa. 9:7; 32:17-18	<i>Earth's rulers submit now before Him, The nations bow down to His will, Compelled to His kingship acknowledge, His mandates of peace to fulfill.</i>
Zech. 2:10-12	<i>Jerusalem stands forth triumphant, In glory outshining the sun; The throne of the Lord is established, The reign of His glory begun.</i>
Isa. 2:2-4	<i>The law now goes forth from Mt. Zion, While blessings descend from our God; Jerusalem shines forth in glory, Earth's capital, ruling in love.</i>
Ps. 48:1-2	
Zeph. 3:14-17	<i>The nations, now freed from their thralldom, Rejoicing, can lift up their head; A strong One has brought them redemption, Has freed them from sorrow and dread.</i>
Jer. 31:12	
Ps. 46:9 Isa. 33:21 Isa. 52:7 Isa. 11:9	<i>No more will the cannon's roar frighten, No tidings of war can alarm, For Christ is now reigning in Zion, A strong One to banish all harm.</i>
Rev. 11:15	<i>Just listen! what songs of rejoicing, What music is filling the air! For now is earth's sad conflict over, God's Kingdom established so fair.</i>
Isa. 40:2	
Isa. 35:5-6	<i>The eyes of the blind He has opened, The ears of the deaf are unstopped, The tongue of the dumb is rejoicing, The lame one now leaps as an hart.</i>
Rev. 21:23 Isa. 35:1	<i>Glad earth shines resplendent in beauty; The desert blooms forth as the rose; The land is majestic in glory; All people rejoice in repose.</i>
Isa. 65:18	
Rev. 11:16-17 Rev. 5:12-13	<i>With angelic songs they're proclaiming Glad praises to Him on the throne: "All glory to God in the Highest; Sweet peace," for God's Kingdom has come.</i>
Matt. 6:10	<i>The prayer of the Savior is answered, God's will upon earth now is done; Let His be the pow'r and the glory, Forever and ever, Amen!</i>



Garbage In Garbage Out

One of the marvels of the modern world is the computer. But its marvel is limited to the mind behind it, both in accuracy and in scope. Underneath, a computer is amazingly ignorant. It knows only what it is told.

For this reason, a simple statement has been popularized among computer programmers which bears more truth than fiction: "GIGO," or in other words, "Garbage In, Garbage Out." If the wrong information is entered into the computer, wrong information will come out. The computer can be no more accurate than the human mind or hand behind it. If the computer gives a faulty answer, the problem is not with the computer but with the human programmer or operator who input the wrong information. The computer is only a tool.

Haven't we noticed how this same principle is at work in our lives? We often hear, "You are what you eat," and in a sense it is true. The fruit, bread, beans, or meat we feed our bodies is actually converted into the bones, tissue, skin, and

energy we need to live. Why, then, should anyone want to feed on garbage?

But isn't the "garbage in, garbage out" principle even more applicable to our spiritual lives? Jesus spoke seriously of what comes out of the human computer (mind) in these words: "Listen to me, all of you, and understand this: nothing that goes into a man from outside can defile him; no, it is the things that come out of him that defile a man...For from inside, out of a man's heart, come evil thoughts, acts of fornication, of theft, murder, adultery, ruthless greed, and malice; fraud, indecen-

cy, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly; these evil things all come from inside, and they defile the man" (Mark 7:15, 21-23, NEB).

Jesus is saying that what comes out of our heart is vitally indicative of our spiritual well-being. Should we not, then, be concerned with the impressions we allow to go *into* that heart? Should we not watch diligently what we allow to *enter* our minds? It is the same GIGO story of the computer: Garbage in, garbage out. What we put into our mind determines what we are morally, ethically, and spiritually, and this determines our actions, which in turn will determine whether we are accepted or rejected by Jesus when He comes.

What steps can we take to have clean and pure mental "output"? The answer lies in what we allow to go *into* our mind. The apostle Paul was vitally aware of this when he wrote, "Finally, brothers, fill your minds with everything that is true, everything that is noble, everything that is good and pure, everything that we love and honor, and everything that can be thought virtuous or worthy of praise" (Phil. 4:8, JB).

If we keep the garbage out of our minds, we will not have to deal with the effects of it in our lives.

Paul realized that if one is to have a character that incorporates these excellent qualities, one's mind must be feeding upon them.

How easy it is to relax, to become slack, to think that it doesn't really matter what we think about. How easy it is to pick up the newspaper and browse at random, or to allow our eyes to register the sights of Babylon, whether on the street or in the marketplace. How easy it is to feed upon an entertainment that is tainted with lies, immorality, slander, and the praise of man rather than of God.

How can we *not* be affected by such "garbage"? We deceive ourselves if we think that we can eat

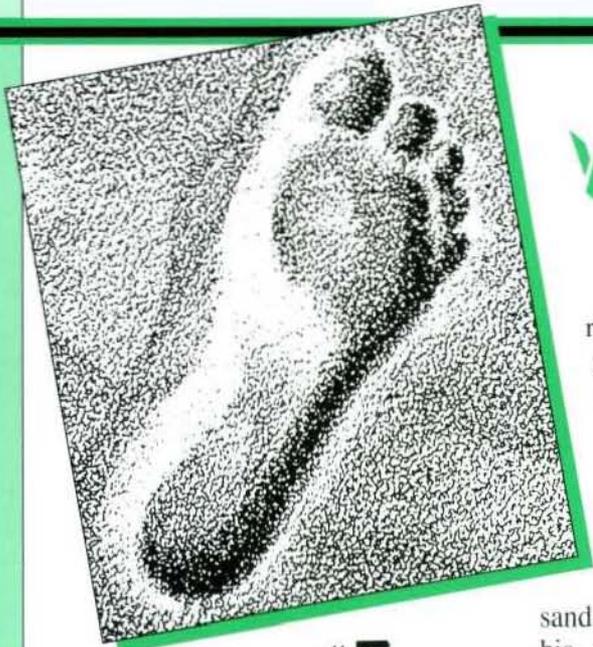
steadily—or even dabble in—the world's garbage, and not suffer the effects of unrighteous thoughts and behavior.

We may not deceive ourselves intentionally. Bad habits may come upon us slowly, almost imperceptibly. Perhaps our routine takes us by the "trash dump" almost daily. If possible, let us change our route—or if we cannot, let us fill our minds so full of the promises of God and the higher elevating thoughts, of whatever is "pure, and right, and lovely, and admirable" that the garbage cannot find any place inside our mind. This is what the apostle Paul referred to when he said we should bring "into cap-

tivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Notice that he did not say *the majority* of our thoughts, or even *many* of our thoughts, but *every* thought.

What a challenge! But what an opportunity! For if we keep the garbage *out* of our minds, we will not have to deal with the effects of it in our lives. In this way, too, we can keep our minds from producing more garbage. Imagine the horror of having only "garbage" to present to our Lord in the day of Judgment!

If we don't want our lives to *produce* garbage, let's be sure that we don't allow it to enter our minds. MM



WHOSE FOOTPRINT?

"Well, my boy, do you remember the other day that you were laughing about Robinson Crusoe's dismay at discovering that there were other persons on the island beside himself? How did he know? Did he see them?

No. But he discovered *one track* of a bare foot in the sand, and he knew that it was not his own. He knew that only a human being could have made it, and he knew that whoever made it could not be far away, because the tide had not yet reached it. All those things he *knew* to be true, although he had not seen a human being within miles of the island. And all that knowledge was gained from a mark in the sand".

If one print of a bare foot in the sand is absolute proof of the exis-

tence and presence of a human being, what are we to suppose when we see the footprints of the Master covering the whole wide world? We see on mountain and valley the print of God's fingers. We see millions of plants and flowers and trees that only God could make grow. We see all the rivers and springs of the world fed from the sky. We see a great universe, perfectly made and ordered, from the tiniest speck to the greatest of all the worlds. With the eye of our telescopes we see a hundred billion galaxies, each composed of billions of stars. What do all those things mean—those millions upon millions upon millions of footprints on the clay of the world? They mean *God living, ruling, directing, creating!* They mean *God* and nothing else! —Selected

"F

ather," said Thomas, looking up from his studies. "How do you know there is a God?"

"Why do you ask that question? Do you doubt the existence of God?" asked the father.

"Well, I heard one of the professors say that we could not be sure that there is a God. Is there any way really to know?"

CAUGHT AWAY

It is not uncommon to hear of people being "caught away" with some new or sensational movement.

The promises which the God of heaven holds out to His faithful children are breath-taking enough to cause us to be caught away, so to speak; caught away *from* everything that is low, sinful, disagreeable and fleeting; caught away *by* the hope of a gloriously active, eternal future with increasing sensations of celestial pleasure, honor, untarnishing wealth and renown. Should not such promises give wings to our feet, so that we will eagerly tread the path of trial and duty?

Each sincere Christian has been caught away by noble aspiration. He is governed by the higher prin-

ciples befitting his calling. He does not live on the dull and common level, giving in to feelings of resentment, slights, jealousies, impatience, bitterness, selfishness. His calling brings a peace of mind that surpasses understanding (Phil. 4:7). The glorious future God has planned is his all-in-all, and he knows that if he lets the disagreeable traits of his human nature control him, he will have to forfeit that future.

The apostle Paul had a singular experience of being "caught up" in vision to what he described as a "third heaven," where he heard words that "it was not lawful to utter" (II Cor. 12:1-4). The beloved apostle John also was caught up to behold in wonderful vision the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21:1-5).

Beloved of the Lord in life, John had great privileges. See him leaning on the Master's breast at the Last Supper. He was intent on following Jesus' instruction closely in life. He would never have been "caught up" in vision to behold that new world if he had not first been "caught away" from the things of this world, wholly absorbed in living the Christ-life. Not forever could he remain on

bleak and barren Patmos, but in the fullness of time he pictured himself walking with his beloved Master through the jeweled gates and on along the golden-paved streets of the New Jerusalem, where sparkles the fountain of living waters (Rev. 7:17).

Moses, too, was "caught away" by the promise of being an immortal ruler in a world-wide and everlasting kingdom. That was the deciding factor that enabled him to choose the humble life of self-denial and discipline, serving the true God and rejecting the honors of being crown prince of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-25). The same bright hope buoyed him over the trials of forty years of solitude in the wilderness and another forty years of leading a rebellious people through their desert wanderings.

Paul could live above the weight of his chains because he was "captured" by his sublime hope. He said, "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I

The promises of God should give wings to our feet, so that they will eagerly tread the path of trial and duty.

press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:12-14, NRSV).

Even in prison he could see the "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17), "while we look not," he said, "at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (v. 18).

Joseph lived his life, not merely as second ruler of Egypt but as a ruler under God, knowing that he could one day be co-ruler of the entire earth, a joint-heir with "Shiloh" (Christ) in His eternal kingdom (Gen. 49:10), among many faithful and loving brethren.

The three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace did not despair but trusted God to deliver them (Daniel 3). By their strong and unflinching faith they were transported forward to the time when they would shine as brightly as the stars of heaven in the Kingdom of God (Dan. 12:3).

Abraham was caught away above his sore testing, rapt in his anticipation of the fullness of his name, "father of high ones" and "of multitudes," with whom he shall spend a joyous eternity. Among others who were "caught away" were Samuel, faithful in much and

faithful in little, and David, who looked beyond to "fulness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:11; 36:7-9).

Included also in those caught away is Micaiah, the lone prophet of God, who fearlessly spoke the unwanted truth to waiting kings. Even in the presence of God's enemies, he said, "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (I Kings 22:19). Above their vengeance, he was "caught away" in hope—he was serving God, not men.

When Jeremiah's feet were sinking in the mire of the dungeon, his first thought quite naturally was the preservation of his life, but beyond that, his thoughts were leaping away to the time when God's people would be to him "a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth" (Jer. 33:9); when there should again be heard in Jerusalem "the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his mercy endureth for ever" (Jer. 33:10-11). Hopeless as were his surroundings,

he was already dwelling in thought in the time when Judah should "be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. 33:15-16).

The early Christians were "caught away" by their sublime hope of future rewards. They lived in radiant expectancy; their faces shone. Their happy watchword when they met or parted was "Maranatha!" meaning "The Lord is coming." This hope dominated their lives and kept them steady during trying times.

Are we all enthused by our hope of living in the world to come? Do we show by our daily living that God's law is paramount, is *everything* to us? Is our hope bearing us above the trials of life, proving that our affections are centered on things above? Do our minds reach out for the grander things which will endure? Do we contemplate the position we can fill in Christ's kingdom, and the joyful assignments that may be ours during the transitional period—and which may even begin during our lifetime?

Are these promises, the honor, power and glory of the future which we individually can share, in the foreground of our anticipation? Have we been "caught away"? MM

*I cannot say,
'Beneath the pressures of life's cares today
I joy in these;*

*But I can say
That I had rather walk this rugged way
—If God be pleased.*

God's Spiritual Creation

The River and Trees of Eden

Men have searched long and eagerly for the river of Eden which has four heads, also the tree of life of which one may eat and live forever. Finding neither, they have pronounced the Bible unreliable, not considering that the error may be in their own interpretation rather than in the Book itself.

We make no attempt to direct men and women to some obscure spot on the face of the earth where they may pluck delicious fruit from the tree of life, to eat and live forever. Neither do we offer assurance that they may look upon a literal river which parts into four heads and waters the wide world. But setting aside any literal construction of the narrative, we shall consult the Bible to learn of its spiritual significance.

Life cannot be maintained without water. Equally important are the waters of Eden to the maintenance of spiritual life and health.

When the first man and woman to come out from the "dry and thirsty land" (Ps. 63:1) entered the Garden of God to work for eternal life, they found the river of Eden providing water for their thirsty souls.

What is this river?

Water is used frequently in the Bible as a symbol of the spiritually life-giving, life-sustaining knowledge or wisdom of God.

The Psalmist makes reference to this river when he says, "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water" (65:9). Though full of water, the river of Eden does not yet reach beyond the limitations of the "garden"; the world at large remains dry or destitute of the water of life, the time being yet future when the river shall part into four heads and cover the entire earth.

Jesus' conversation with the woman of Samaria reveals some properties of this water. He had access to "living water" to quench her thirst, the same water that flows in Eden, of which if a man drink, it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-15). The water from Eden's river never disappoints those who hunger and thirst after righteousness: "for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Isaiah invites rich and poor, high and low, "Come ye to the waters,...buy...without money and without price" (55:1).

Other qualities of this "living water" are made known to us by the Revelator, who says, "He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal;" its Source the "throne of God." If we bathe our souls in this pure river of life, it will cleanse away all filthiness of the flesh and heal every spiritual infirmity.

What is the cleansing medium? Jesus Himself answers: "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). The Word of God applied to our daily life can and will wash us and make us clean from the stains of sin, as commanded (Isa. 1:16-17). This water must be used liberally and continually, as we find in Ephesians 5:26-27, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that

he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." This is the high attainment of every member of the Church, the Bride, which is to be wedded to Christ at His return.

This water, the words of eternal life, will heal our every spiritual infirmity. "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions" (Ps. 107:20). This spiritual water applied daily to our sores of selfishness, envy, sensitiveness, pride, foolishness, and every evil will heal them so completely that they shall never once be mentioned to us at the Day of Judgment.

We learned from a text in Revelation that the Eden waters are "clear as crystal" (22:1). This is deeply significant. Despite the endless amount of man-made creeds which have been formulated through the ages in the name of religion, the river of life has remained free from contamination; it has retained its crystal purity. Human tampering with the Word has in no measure polluted or corrupted God's way of salvation. The river of life flows on forever, unaffected by false theology, for it proceeds from the throne of God.

Always from the garden the invitation is extended to "Come... And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

Outside the Garden of the Lord flows another river. The word of the Lord came unto Ezekiel, saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet,

and fouledst their rivers" (32:2). This river of spiritual Egypt (the land of darkness) affords no cleansing to the soul, for its waters are fouled by the false doctrines and teachings of men. Death is as certain to those who partake of this muddy stream as is life to those who drink from the river in Eden.

The Tree of Life

We find according to the Genesis allegory that the Lord planted the tree of life in the midst of the garden (Gen. 2:9). The tree of life is

***The Word of God
applied to our daily
life can and will wash
us and make us clean
from the stains of sin.***

not unlike the river of life. Both offer wisdom, by means of which one may gain eternal life. Eating of this tree now will assure robust spiritual vitality. Vigorous spiritual life, in turn, grants us the right to continue partaking of that tree until we have gained knowledge by which to perpetuate our existence eternally.

The Wise Man exhorts, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life...She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her" (Prov. 4:13; 3:18). This grand knowledge of God, this message from the Almighty, if obeyed, is what gives life (Prov. 3:13-18).

For ages man's supreme desire has been to secure for himself hap-

God's Spiritual Creation

piness and peace, life, riches, and honor—yet his desire goes unfulfilled. But this wisdom provides the means which the God of Heaven assures us will satisfy these aspirations. Why should we hesitate longer to eat of the tree of life?

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Beside the tree of life is another prominent and significant tree in the allegory in Genesis: the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

One of the grandest provisions of the Almighty in His infinite wisdom and justice is that He has made

In all ages the Lord God sets before man "a blessing and a curse," "life and good, and death and evil."

man a free moral agent with the ability to choose his present course, thereby determining his own future destiny. In all ages the Lord sets before man "a blessing and a curse," "life and good, and death and evil" (Deut. 11:26; 30:15). This choice is symbolized in Eden by the tree of wisdom which assures life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which consigns to eternal death.

When the first man who was called out of the masses of humanity entered the Garden of Eden and covenanted to serve God, he was thoroughly instructed: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou

shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17). Through all succeeding ages the command has remained firm and the judgment pending. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is ever-present, its fruit attractive and continually available; however, it is strictly forbidden to all who would escape eternal death: "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

If at any time during our probation day we defy the rules of the garden and venture forth to partake of this mixed tree, we become persons of divided loyalties, men "who are half and half" (Ps. 119:113, Moffatt), "the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways." We attempt to serve both "God and mammon" (Luke 16:13), trying to be "partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils" (I Cor. 10:21). This renders us subject to the death penalty unless we reform. Therefore let us constantly beware of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Trees of Righteousness

We have studied the plants which thrive in the Lord's spiritual garden or vineyard, plants which represent His people. Let us now examine carefully one kind of these plants: trees.

Divine phraseology employs two similes in reference to trees. In one sense, as we have seen, men and women till the garden and partake of the fruitage there accessible, good or bad, as their will or desire dictates. In another sense, they are themselves the trees, either good or bad.

Those who shun to partake of the forbidden fruit become "trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord" (Isa. 61:3). They compose the good trees of the allegory which

are "pleasant to the sight, and good for food" (Gen. 2:9).

This same metaphor occurs repeatedly in the Book. The future rejoicing of the faithful is expressed in such figurative language: "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands... Break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein" (Isa. 55:12; 44:23). Trees singing and clapping their hands is a figurative, not a literal use of the term.

Again we read of these spiritual trees: "The trees of the Lord are full of sap;...The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon" (Ps. 104:16; 92:12).

The Psalmist gives a detailed description of the good man who abides close by Eden's waters in the garden of God: comparing such a man to a vigorous, growing, fruit-bearing tree: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:1-3). The man who finds his delight in the Eternal's law, who shuns the counsel of the ungodly and avoids the sinners' way, is compared to a tree growing luxuriantly by a river.

Similarly we read in Jeremiah 17:7-8, "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the

river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." This is the one characteristic of trees of righteousness which sets them apart from all other trees: they never cease from yielding fruit; in season and out of season, through stormy blast or scorching sun, they go on constantly bearing fruits unrivaled either in quality or quantity. And from where do they draw their vital nourishment? From the river of God, the life-giving waters of wisdom by which they are planted.

The Day of Recompense

No power in heaven or earth save the hope of eternal life is strong enough to impel men and women to become trees of righteousness, growing and bearing perfect fruit in the Garden of God. No other power is sufficient to impel men and women to shun the tree of good and evil and partake exclusively of the tree of wisdom. This hope, stated in the allegory, is confirmed by every inspired writer.

The same tree of life which belongs to the garden of Eden is found also in "the midst of the paradise of God," His eternal, established Kingdom. Said Jesus Himself, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God....Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 2:7; 22:14).

The Revelator also saw in vision the tree of life growing on the banks of the river that was pure as crystal: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and

yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2). The leaves of this tree of life shall be health and healing, both spiritual and physical, to all mankind.

When Christ returns to inspect the fruit of His trees and pronounces the faithful "trees of righteousness," this promise shall be realized. They shall be permitted to remain in the garden, the "paradise of delights," and partake of the tree of life for evermore.

Not so the unfaithful; for when the Day of reckoning discloses their imperfect fruit, the Judge will order their destruction. Then shall the axe be laid at the root of every unrighteous tree (Matt. 3:10).

This impending fate of all evildoers is a stern reminder that the seeming sweet fruitage of the forbidden tree has the bitterest of aftertastes. All who hanker after sin today and whose taste remains depraved shall pay the price tomorrow.

An Expanding River

After Christ has dealt with the laborers in the garden, eliminating the false and elevating the true, He will proceed with the work of world transformation. His ultimate worldwide Kingdom of peace and goodwill cannot be realized by a state of perfection simply within the garden or Church. Universal righteousness must be achieved. This is accomplished by the spreading of Eden's waters. Not until the Millennial reign of Christ and the saints will the river of Genesis part into four heads and flow to the earth's extremities. Ezekiel envisioned this river of knowledge rising to the ankles, then to the knees, finally to the loins; and at last an impassable river (Ezekiel 47:1-5).

As a result of the swift spreading

of the river of God's knowledge, all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest (Heb. 8:11), and trees of righteousness shall flourish abundantly. Growth and development among the subjects of the Kingdom shall be as rapid as that of "willows by the watercourses"

As a result of the swift spreading of the river of God's knowledge, all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, and trees of righteousness shall flourish abundantly.

(Isa. 44:3-4). The waters of this river will impart spiritual and physical healing to the nations.

At the dawn of Eternity, which will follow the Millennial age, this planet shall be fully glorified, filled with happy, immortal beings. The river of life will continue to flow, its streams making glad the city of God (Ps. 46:4), and every inhabitant upon the face of the earth shall partake of the tree of life and drink of the river of pleasure for evermore (Ps. 36:8). Everlasting pleasures! Everlasting joy! Everlasting life! What an age to live for! What a time to live in!

The river and trees of Eden may be an enigma to unenlightened man, but they stand out in sharp and beautiful definition upon the pages of the Sacred Volume.

(To Be Continued Next Issue)

(Continued from page 13)

or unpleasant, it is only temporary; to use Paul's words, "but for a moment" (II Cor. 4:17-18).

We can decide immediately that situations will never be just as we would like them, not in this world. We can decide also that everyone around us will not do or be just as we would like them to be. We are not perfect—why should we expect them to be? And rather than try to change others, by far the more profitable option is that of *changing ourselves*. Here is something we can do—must do. And let us *be doing it* so that God can bless us, now and through the ages to come, so that one day He can look upon us with pleasure and say, "Here is the patience of saints."

Does life have to be a failure because we are forced to be inactive while others are busy and active in the service of God? Absolutely not. The greatest victory comes by being steadfast in hope and patient in waiting. Often waiting is much harder than feverish activity pulsing with life. It requires a great amount of determination to remain calm in the place where the Lord puts us and not be disheartened but ever submissive to His will.

James compared the patience we must have to that of the farmer who plants a crop and knows that he must wait for the crop to grow and mature. "Be patient, therefore, brethren unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:7-8).

As the apostles said to Jesus in Luke 17:5: "Lord, increase our faith," so may we pray, *Lord, increase our patience.* MM

"By his faith he is speaking to us still"—Heb. 11:4, Moffatt.

Words for the Living

Excerpts from the sermons, talks and writings
of Rev. L. T. Nichols (1844-1912).

Our Master is able to carry us through if we anchor to the old ship of Zion.



"The gospel is the power of God unto salvation"; it must be a power in us.



We must be building all the time, building a holy temple in the Lord.



If we leave our work before it is finished, we will never get the pay.



We must look to ourselves and see what type of fruits we are producing.



If we are not sensitive to sin, if we do not feel when we go backward, we are dead. "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Such are past feeling and cannot have hope.



Whenever the trumpet sounds—whether it be against sympathy, pride, pettiness or whatever it is—work.

God is developing a pure, holy, white city. We can be part of that city, beautiful and admired in that Day, if we will do all to the glory of God.



Blessed be God! by Him actions are weighed. Until we consider that He weighs actions and not words, we will be proud and in God's sight know nothing.



Everything around us matures and then decays. We ourselves are decaying, going toward the tomb. In a few years even the youngest will be in the graveyard. Why not begin now to labor for this eternal home, where we can be surrounded by every good thing we can think of?



We must be crucifying our flesh nature all the time; a new creature is all that avails in the sight of God.



Get rooted and grounded in the truth of God or you will never be stable.



We must be strictly honest. All things of God are built up with honor.

A Time To Remember

(Continued from page 7)

row? What do we have to hope for, you and I? Humanly speaking, we have little but mortal woes. But when we remember God and what He is able to do, then our minds expand and we realize that the present with its struggles and trials is but a second in the mind of God, a second that is preparing us for an eternity of joy, and glory, and happiness past all comparing.

So David continues his song,

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it.

Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in it.

Then shall all the trees of the woods sing for joy.

"Shall" is the word of hope. "There shall be" is a promise as sure as its maker. And when God is the Maker, it is *sure*. Only God can say, "This shall be..." and *know* that it *shall*. It is the word that speaks to us of everything God has to give. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:3-4). God's Kingdom shall come, His will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven (Matt. 6:10). Then shall "the trees of the woods" sing for joy, and all that are near and far rejoice together (Ps. 67:4; 96:12-13), and "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10).

Meanwhile, we want to remember and hope, remember and work, remember and pray, remember and give thanks. We want to remember and look up—gratefully, expectantly—knowing that He who has promised is able, abundantly able to fulfill.

Truly it is a time to remember, and thank God.

Now and for ever!

MM

A Thanksgiving Arithmetic Problem

Start with the number of ungrateful lepers healed by Jesus 9

Multiply this number times the number of baskets collected after Jesus had fed the 5000 $\times 12$
108

Add the number of persons sent out by Jesus to minister and heal (Luke 10) $+ 90$
178

Subtract the total years of Moses' life at the time of his death $- 120$
58

Multiply times the number of years of Jewish captivity $\times 70$
4060

Subtract the number of years Jesus and His saints will reign on earth over mortal nations $- 1000$
3060

Subtract the greatest number added to the Church on one occasion in one day $- 3000$

Add the number of books in the Old Testament $+ 39$

Check: Now you should have the age of Abraham when he was first promised a son. 99

Divide this number by the number of Hebrew children who withstood the King's command in Babylon $\div 3$
33

Divide by the number of apostles of Jesus after His resurrection $\div 11$

Check: Now you should have the number of times Daniel prayed each day in Babylon. 3

Add the number of the chapter which is the shortest Psalm $+ 117$

Check: Now you should have the number of persons who were waiting in the upper room for the promise of Jesus, which came at Pentecost. 120

Multiply by the number of "blessings" in the beatitudes $\times 9$
1080

Add the number of fruits of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) $+ 9$
1089

Add the number of cities of refuge $+ 7$
1095

Add the number of chariots of iron Sisera used against the Israelites $+ 900$
1995

Add the number of loaves Jesus multiplied when He fed the 5000 $+ 5$
2000

Divide by the number of faithful spies $\div 20$
1300

Add the number in Gideon's band $+ 300$
1000

Divide by the number of evils Jesus enumerated (Mark 7) $\div 13$
1300

Now you have the number of folds of blessings you receive every day! 100

pared with the warmth and glow of Divine truth. The difference is wide. It is the difference between surmising and knowing. It is the difference between theory and fact. It is the difference between speculation and solid benefit. It is the difference between being a stranger outside God's realm, and a happy child of His love.

Philosophy may engage the mind; truth moves the heart. Only a true and living God can move us to an awareness of His greatness and His graciousness and a genuine exclamation of humble awe. For when our little minds begin to comprehend the wonders of His truth—the vast, immutable, eternal—the heart can only cry out, "Oh Lord God!"

Our greatest enemy is not something "out there." Our greatest enemy is our own senses dulled by marvels seen so often that they have grown commonplace. It is our own lack of perception of the greatness and power of God, our forgetfulness of Him who is the Rock, whose work is perfect, a God of truth and without iniquity (Deut. 32:3-4). Our greatest enemy is really ourselves and our unbelief, our willful blindness to what He has revealed. That is why we need to commune with Him, why we need to read His Word, so that we may learn to think His thoughts, so that we may become such individuals as He can love.

Let us never forget the greatness of God.

And when we see enough of His omnipotence and providence to be overwhelmed with awe; when we trust Him to protect us, lead us, direct us; when we worship Him from the depths of a heart humble and penitent—only then can we begin to imagine the joy we will experience one day to belong to Him, a part of His family forever.

MM

was overflowing with the goodness and praise of God.

And isn't it appropriate that our praise should overflow in singing? How appropriate that we should sing the goodness of God from overflowing hearts, hearts so full of God's goodness and mercy that they become fountains of living water splashing out on everyone! Just as Jesus said that "out of the overflowing heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34, NEB), so we sing to God when we sing from a heart filled and bubbling over with our gratitude and praise.

It is not by accident that the writings of the holy men and women of old abound with exclamations. The dedicated mind, the devoted heart, the heart bound to God in holy fellowship transcends the bondage of the earthly and touches upon the infinite. At such a time, language becomes useless. Then it is that "Oh" and "Ah!" come spontaneously, as when Jeremiah heard the voice of the Lord and responded, "Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child." Words failed him. Or the prophet Ezekiel exclaimed, "Oh Lord God, thou knowest." Or the apostle Paul exulted, "O the depth of the riches of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33). It is the expression of the inexpressible. It is the spontaneous note of praise from the soul overflowing.

Prophets and poets found themselves often on the brink of the infinite, gazing into depths they could not understand but which overwhelmed them and drew from their hearts such bursts of feeling as words cannot express.

The philosophies and traditions of men have no "Oh!" Their profoundest, most intellectual sayings are cold, stark, and lifeless compared with the goodness

Oh! Lord God

(Continued from page 2)

and too dear for mere words. Indeed, all the expressions in the world are not sufficient to relate what the heart hears and the inner eye sees in the presence of Omnipotence. It is not by accident that the writings of the holy men and women of old abound with exclamations. The Psalmist was always singing, praising, exclaiming, exulting in God's goodness, God's greatness, God's mercy, God's deliverance, God's holiness, God's perfection. Again and again he was singing, and can we wonder when we realize what he was thinking about, the realm in which he was living, the heavenly light in which he was walking? One could never guess his rough and rugged life by reading the Psalms. There is struggle, there is contemplation, there is distress; but there is also victory and achievement, solid delight and radiant hope. His soul

*Always make a firm
resolution to practice
yourself in patience.
Make it your object to
conquer yourself in this
matter. Call it to mind a
hundred times during the
day, commending your
efforts to God. You will
be very happy if you can
do this. But if you fail,
do not be disheartened,
but rise up and go on,
and try again.*

A Helping Hand

*If your brother has a burden
Why not lend a helping hand?
Maybe you're the one God's chosen—
Share his load and help him stand.*

*You may never know the blessing
That your acts of kindness brought,
Or the faith you helped to strengthen
When God's help through prayer you sought.*

There are no traffic jams on the strait and narrow way.

Empty buckets are fittest for the well of Divine grace.

Spiritual investments properly made will bear eternal interest.

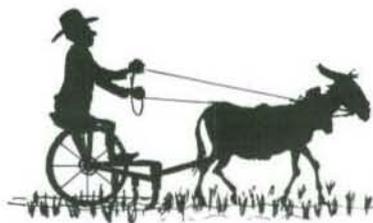
It is a fine thing to have your own way—provided you have accepted God's way as your own.



Grudges Cost Too Much!

Not what happens to us but our reaction to what happens has the greatest effect on our lives. Usually by holding a grudge we harm ourselves more than the person toward whom the ill feeling is directed. It spoils our own happiness and peace of mind, while the other person may not even be aware of the problem.

The dictionary defines a grudge as "a strong feeling of resentment or malice held against someone, ill will."



The story is told of two farmers. One had just moved to the community, and wishing to get acquainted with his neighbor, waited at the fence while the older resident was driving his mule down the row of corn. When they met, the new neighbor said, "I notice you drive your mule by pulling the lines and yanking him right and left. Where I come from we don't use the lines, we just say 'gee' and 'haw.' It's much easier."

"I know," said the old farmer, "that's the way we usually do here. But you see, this mule kicked me six years ago, and I haven't spoken to him since."

The farmer may have been hurt by the mule, but he was punishing himself by his resentment every time he drove the mule.

James has the only answer for this problem: "Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door" (James 5:9); and, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

The next time you are tempted to hold a grudge, remember the old farmer and his mule—and don't punish yourself by holding a grudge.

It isn't worth it.



*Have you become a prisoner of your mind?
Has it built bars of steel, with you behind?
Have anger, fear and worry forged the bars
That keep you from the glory of the stars?
You've bound yourself—old hurts and vain regrets,
Old failures that the stronger man forgets;
Oh, show your strength! Cast off the ball and chain!*

*Forget the past! The future lies ahead!
Before you like a dream life's vistas spread.
You can be free. It all depends on you!
With thoughts you mould your life, the things you do.*

*Material circumstances, ill or well,
Are just an outgrowth of the thoughts that dwell
Within your mind. Heal now those ancient scars
And keep before you the glory of the stars!*

—Author Unknown

