

Megiddo Message

The hope of the godless
comes to nothing.....
They are leaning on
a spiderweb.

—Job 8:13-14, NLT

Egomania

Consciously or otherwise, we are all naturally and instinctively self-centered. The common term for this trait is, what the dictionary defines as "An immodestly high opinion of one's own worth."

An appropriate response from our peers, tossed quickly with an air of superiority, might be, "Who do you think you are?" Or, translated meaningfully, they are saying, "You are not what you think you are." Our old nature immediately recoils and prepares to defend itself, and the battle is on. Who is this that thinks we are inferior? "I think I am..." such and such. The trouble is, nobody wants to hear what we have to say.

And if the facts could be known, they have, with some variations, the same inner battle.

It is so natural to see ourselves as the most important figure in the world. Modern psychology teaches one to build up his or her self-esteem, and in some this may be needed. But the basic quality is inborn. Someone has estimated that the average person spends 90 percent of his waking moments thinking about himself and working to build up his ego ideal in one way or another. This may be exaggerated, but we all know that forgetting ourselves is about the most unnatural work we can attempt. Instinctively we plan and think around ourselves. We are the center of all that happens to us. Our little wants, and needs, and likes and dislikes; our problems and pains are supremely important in our little sphere. If someone needs a really good opinion, they should by all means consult us. And everyone should realize that no work is quite so satisfactory as our own. If something is wrong with what we did, there is a very good reason.

And so we go through life congratulating ourselves at every opportunity, pursuing our own ideas of self-fulfillment, the meanwhile investing heavily in our opinion of ourselves. It is nothing more or less than egomania, a bright, shiny notion of who we would like to be and what we would like others to think we are. We'll do almost any-

thing to see how big we are. We are sold on ourselves.

As Christians we must ultimately arrive at that perfect peace which no insult or injury can disturb. But before we reach that point, we have to learn to live without being preoccupied with ourselves. Our ego ideal must become lost in God and His purposes for us. If we have turned our lives over to God, to be subject to His direction and control, then we are not our own. And anything we may do is not our own. We are responsible to Him for all we have. This is not easy, but it is vital.

So we should turn the question to ourselves and ask in all honesty, "Who are you? What is there to support your fine opinion of yourself?" If our old nature is insulted, so much the better; it must die anyway.

God has created us with an instinctive concern for ourselves. It is this inborn desire which causes us to love life and to want more life. It is this same desire that makes us willing to surrender present ideals for broader purposes and nobler goals, even those which God sets before us. God wants us to think of ourselves, and when we work for Him we are in reality working for ourselves—we will get all the benefit. But we have no right to be preoccupied with ourselves apart from God. *"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think"* (Rom. 12: 3). There is reason for this warning: We need it.

What if the Lord Himself should ask us: "Who do you think you are?" What would we answer? Have we the humility of Job to reply, *"I am become like dust and ashes"*? (Job 42:6). Or are we just speechless, feeling too small to answer?

God has promised the greatest possible exaltation to the humble, those who are willing to relinquish their fine opinion of themselves and see themselves as His servants, His children—and His heirs. To such He has promised an eternal place in His kingdom.

No little reward for letting go our egomania! □

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 (2 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, with the help of God, of applying to 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 Jesus Christ will soon return to rid the earth of all sin and suffering and inaugurate an eternal and worldwide kingdom of peace and righteousness, until God's will is done here as it is now done in heaven.

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.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

Editorial

EGOMANIA 2

Sermon

TRAVELING TOWARD SUNRISE 4

Article

THE LITTLE WORD "NO" 8

Quotables 9

Pondering the Word 10

Articles

FAITH THAT HAS POWER 11

ANOTHER LOOK AT THANKSGIVING 14

Book Feature

THE GREAT APOSTASY (Part Two) 16

"And It Came to Pass..."

A Change • New Doctrines • New Practices •
Religious and Secular History Confirm

Poem

LIFE'S LESSONS 18

Articles

DARE TO BE MICAIAH! 20

Poem

"WATCH YE, THEREFORE" 21

Spiritual Maturity

ARE YOU TASTE-TESTED? 22

Questions and Answers

WHY WERE NOAH'S FAMILY PRESERVED? 23

Poem

DAILY GRINDING 24

Letters 26

Back Cover

BE THANKFUL 28

November 1997
Volume 84, No. 10

Megiddo Message

A religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church, L. T. Nichols, *Founder*; Newton H. Payne, *President and Editor*; Ruth E. Sisson, *Executive Editor*. Artwork and design by Margaret A. Tremblay. Subscriptions Manager, Donna R. Mathias.

The Megiddo Message is available in microfilm from University Microfilms, Inc., Serials Acquisitions, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

The Megiddo Message (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July/August issue) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Telephone: 716-235-4150. Periodicals Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year (eleven issues) \$5.00. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

URL: <http://www.megiddo.com>. E-mail address: megiddo@servtech.com.

Unsolicited manuscripts for publication are not accepted.

Bible Quotations: Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version. Other versions are identified as follows: NEB—New English Bible; NIV—New International Version; NASB—New American Standard Bible; RSV—Revised Standard Version; TLB—The Living Bible; JB—The Jerusalem Bible; Phillips—The New Testament in Modern English; Moffatt—The Bible, A New Translation; TCNT—Twentieth Century New Testament; NRSV—New Revised Standard Version; NKJV—New King James Version; Knox—The Holy Bible authorized by the Hierarchy of England, Wales, and of Scotland, tr. by Monsignor Knox; NLT—The New Living Translation; NCV—The New Century Version; RHM—The Emphasized Bible; A New Translation (J.B. Rotherham); New Catholic—New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible.

Note: If you wish to remove label on cover, warm with hair dryer and carefully peel off.

Occasionally we hear people speak of traveling toward sunset, and aging people are advised to grow old "gracefully." From the human point of view, the aging process is inevitable, hence the advice is timely. Human life being as it is, our normal expectation is birth, growth, maturity, gradual decline and ultimately death. And from the viewpoint of the average man or woman, that ends all. Death is final.

The Word of God describes the same pattern: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2).

The Psalmist was equally confident of the fleeting nature of human life: "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish....Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling" (Ps. 49:12, 14). This

stark proposition confronts all that segment of humankind who follow the line of least resistance and live their lives with no thought of God or of the life-pattern which He designed for those who would escape death and gain everlasting life in His new world.

A well-known preacher of the last century tells how he was once walking along the seashore with his little grandson when they met an elderly minister. The old man was very disgruntled and, to add to all his troubles, he had recently suffered a slight sunstroke. The little boy listened as the two preachers conversed, but did not pick up all the details quite correctly. When at last they left the grumbling old man, he turned to his grandfather and said, "Granddad, I hope you never suffer a sunset!"

But "suffering a sunset" is the only prospect outside the hope the Bible offers. A line in the familiar hymn, "It Will Never Grow Old," pictures the normal progression of mortal life in these words:

*In life's weary conflicts, there's fainting and care,
Each year the gray deepens a shade
in the hair...*

To think otherwise, from a human point of view,

would be to indulge in wishful thinking. But there is hope for a very select few superwise men and women, as the following line says:

*But in the blest book where my name is enrolled
I read of that land where we'll never grow old.*

Though the usual pattern is graying hair, bending forms, dimming eyes, arthritic joints, physical weakness, deteriorating hearts, high blood pressure, general decline, and ultimately death, yet there is a way out.

All loyal servants/sons of God can have a much brighter prospect. All such are traveling toward sunrise. Although clouds and darkness may be around, it is always bright ahead. The Divine promise is: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). The trend of mortality can be reversed.

Instead of each year taking its toll, bringing them nearer to the "king of terrors," age

*Our prospect is
bright. We have no reason to
sorrow as others who
have no hope.*

only makes them stronger. The angel that appeared in the open tomb at the time of Christ's resurrection was described as a "young man," yet he may already have lived a million or more years in immortal splendor.

If we are daily living at our best, we are traveling toward sunrise and coming continually nearer to that happy day when for us mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

Travel Companions

In our journeying toward sunrise we are in the company of a very select group of hopefuls. There was the patient Job, who said: *"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another"* (Job 19:25-27). He was traveling toward sunrise, and had no doubt but that the sun of the better day would rise, and that he would arise from death's slumber to share in that better sunrise.

Job trusted in God and knew that his great Defender would not disappoint him. He

knew that his Redeemer lived, and that Christ would stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though his temporal life should end, that would not adversely affect his chances of eternal salvation. While he was confident that he would eventually be placed entirely out of the reach of death, and realized the fulfillment of his hope was yet far distant, still he was confident of the reality of that hope.

The captive Daniel was looking ahead when the Divine voice spoke to him saying, *"But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days"* (Dan. 12:13). Daniel was confident that his work for the Eternal was not going to prove a journey down a dead-end road. When he defied the decree of a heathen king and prayed three times daily to his faithful God, he was traveling toward sunrise, and was prepared to take the consequences.

Though his enemies might take his temporal life they could do nothing to take away his hope of the brighter tomorrow toward which he was traveling.

The prophet Malachi was traveling toward sunrise when he wrote the book bearing his name. Relaying the Eternal's promise, he actually prophesied a sunrise: *"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings"* (Mal. 4:2). One of the modern versions replaces the word "wings" with "rays," which strengthens the thought of sunrise: *"the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his rays."*

Our prospect is bright. We have no reason to sorrow as others who have no hope. We are journeying toward the dawn of a new day. While a spirit of hopelessness pervades thousands at the present time, our hope is bright. We know that the turmoil of our times is only the sign of the dawn of a better Day. As Jesus advised His loyal followers, *"when these things begin*

Traveling Toward Sunrise

by Kenneth E. Flowerday,
Pastor of the Megiddo Church, 1958-1985



**While a spirit of
hopelessness
pervades
thousands at the
present time, the
believer's hope
is bright.**

**Who can properly
assess the value of
"everlasting joy"?**

to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Jesus was aware of the absolute certainty of the blessings awaiting His faithful followers. He said, as recorded in John 4:36: "And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." The prospect is not eternal oblivion but eternal life. "He that reapeth...gathereth fruit unto life eternal."

For this reason, the attitude of the active life-seeker should be to look ahead. As our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols wrote in the chorus of a song:

*Look ahead, look ahead,
Keep the wondrous prize in view;
This will help us to work and our
zeal renew,
Working hard till we gain that day.*

We are traveling toward sunrise. The promise of Isaiah 35:10 is: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Who can properly assess the value of "everlasting joy"?

Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, showed he was traveling toward sunrise when he wrote, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not 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" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Paul was looking ahead. Though living in the present he was looking at the future.

The apostle Peter showed he was looking beyond the uncertainties of the present to the glory beyond when he said, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye

rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet. 1:7-9). Peter was looking ahead; and we today share the same bright hope. We, too, can look ahead with joy unspeakable and full of glory!

John the Revealer, though exiled on forbidding Patmos, was still looking ahead, confident that he was traveling toward sunrise, and was rewarded by being permitted to hear words that no other human being has heard. In vision he saw a preview of the great events that will transpire when God's plan on earth begins to take shape, and one part of that revelation centered on that new heaven and earth where human perplexities, human limitations, even death itself would no longer exist.

The vision is recorded in Revelation 21:3-4: "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

A cynic once described human life as "a miserable episode on one of the minor planets." All he could see ahead was darkness, gloom. He was traveling toward sunset, not toward sunrise.

But as dedicated followers of Christ, we are traveling toward sunrise. Our life need not be a half-joyful, half-miserable existence, but each day we should look forward with joyful anticipation to the glorious sunrise that is now approaching. Never before in the history of God's dealings with the people of this earth did any group of people live who had such a bright prospect as we have. The notable events which prophets and sages and holy men and women of old looked forward to by the eye of faith, are now at our very doorstep. We are living in the era when some of us can hope to live to see the Apocalypse

of the Son of God, the beginning of God's great work of cleansing the earth from the accumulated evils of man's age of misrule, and the beginning of the Kingdom of God.

We have the bright prospect of being made equal to the angels without ever experiencing physical death. The Divine promise is, "*We shall not all sleep.*" Some living at this end time will be lifted into immortal life without experiencing physical death. How this prospect should enthuse and invigorate us! How it should make our feet fly and our hearts burn with joyful expectancy!

We are traveling toward sunrise, but traveling has its cost. If we are going to walk, we must rise to our feet, make the effort to actually put one foot before the other, and walk.

If we are going to drive we must see that there is gasoline in the tank, and expend the effort to drive.

If planning to travel by bus we must make the effort to get to the place where the bus stops and climb aboard. We know we cannot continue to sit in our easy chair in the living room and expect that the bus will come and pick us up. If we plan to travel by air we must get to the airport, meeting the plane's schedule, then with ticket previously purchased we may board the plane. Likewise traveling toward sunrise requires planning and the expenditure of effort.

Fellow travelers, we may at this moment be at the very point where faith will be turned to sight, hope to glad fruition, expectancy to joyful realization. We do not know God's timetable. But let us redouble our effort that our journey may end at that glorious sunrise, and that we may be among those of whom the heavenly angels will sing, "*The marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride hath made herself ready.*" □

O my heavenly Father, grant that whatever happens today I may take it to You.

Today I will have decisions to make:

*Help me to ask Your guidance. And grant me the
humility and obedience to take it when
You give it.*

Today I will have problems to solve:

Help me to ask Your light upon them, so that I may see a clear way through them.

Today I will meet something hard or difficult to do:

*Help me to ask Your strength, so that I may be able to do what I could not do
without You.*

Today I will have temptations to resist:

*Help me to keep close to You in thought, and to remember Jesus, who because
He was tempted is able also to succor those who are tempted.*

*Help me today to decide everything according to Your will, to take everything as in
Your presence, so that You will not have anything unworthy to set down to my
account today; so that I will have nothing to regret. AMEN.*



The Little Word



A SMALL word, but what a difference it can make. Occasionally it may answer a question of life-or-death import; again, it may be only a small decision. But always it is definite. There is no such thing as "almost no" or "just about no." No is a simple, straightforward negative.

Many of the troubles and sorrows in the world today may be a direct result of someone's inability to say "no." The youth who finds the temptations of the world more than he or she is able to handle is very often one who never learned to say "no." The business-man may suffer severe losses because he lacked the ability to say "no." The mother who finds her young son difficult to restrain very often may trace her problems directly to her own inability to say "no" to him. A diabetic person may place himself in mortal danger simply by failing to say "no" to tempting foods.

Yet, to follow Christ is not to follow a negative religion. Just as there must be negative and positive poles to a magnet, so there are positive and negative aspects to following Christ. There are times when we must say yes (when we might naturally prefer to say no!) and times when we must say no (when we would very much rather say yes). So be it; this is part of our discipline; this is part of the cross of Christ. Did not Jesus call it a cross? Did not He say there would be denials and disciplines along the way? These are His words: *"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23). *"Deny himself...take up his cross daily"*—there will be some noes to say, as well as many yeses; negatives, as well as positives. The positives will have to do with matters of faith and obedience; the negatives will call for a rejecting of whatever God calls wrong or evil, and which will end only in misery and defeat. Should not any sane man or woman want to say "no" to such?

We are living in a permissive society, a time when much that was formerly considered evil goes unchallenged. At such a time it is not easy to go against the current mores, to stand up and say "no" when one is convinced that something is contrary to God's way. But that is exactly what must be done. That is exactly what we must do.

Our age may be more permissive than many before us, but we are not the first who have had to learn to say "no." The Bible projects many examples of men who

were able to say no at a crucial time in their lives. Abraham said no to the natural desire to stay in his own comfortable home and with his own people when God called him to go out not knowing where he was going. Years later he was able to say no again—this time to the natural impulse to spare his son Isaac; but Abraham could do it, *"accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure"* (Heb. 11:19).

Moses said no to the impulse to stay in the affluence and security of Pharaoh's household, *"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"* (Heb. 11:25).

Joseph said no when a temptation to immorality was suddenly thrust upon him. The woman offered herself, and Joseph might have been enticed; but his no was absolute. There was no excuse for doing wrong. *"How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* (Gen. 39:9).

We can be sure Daniel had many opportunities to say no in the heathen environs of Babylon's court. We know of one example, when he was confronted with delicate food from the king's table. With strong conviction he resolved that *"he would not defile himself with the royal food and wine"* (Dan. 1:8, NLT), and he did not.

Daniel's three companions said no to the temptation to save their lives by bowing before the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Their answer was a challenging affirmation: *"We have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up"* (Dan. 3:16-18, NKJV).

Years later Daniel was still saying no—this time to his natural desire to buy safety at the price of compromise, by obeying the king's decree against public worship. We read, *"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime"* (Dan. 6:10).

These men of God were human, just as we are. They, like ourselves would have found it much easier to compromise even if just a little—to avoid criticism or reprisals. But they did not.

We so easily forget that the law of God contains both

"Thou shalt's" and "Thou shalt not's." The pressures of the world around us are so pervasive and persistent that Paul warns against letting the "world around [us] squeeze [us] into its own mold" (Rom. 12:2, Phillips). In an age when "anything goes," this can so easily happen. We forget that the law of God still stands, and God still means what He says, and that we must go against the tide by saying no to evil and yes to what He calls good.

Solomon gave a wise injunction in this matter—which he did not heed, but which stands on record as advice for us. It is this simple method of dealing with temptation: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Prov. 1:10). Even if "everybody does it," that gives us no license or liberty whatever, for do we not read elsewhere, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil"? (Ex. 23:2).

Saying no is no one-time decision; it is a decision we must make and keep making all through life. However, with practice it does become easier to say. In the words of the familiar hymn, "Each victory will help you some other to win." We must remember also that this works in reverse. Each time we fail to say no when we should have, it will be that much harder the next time.

God does not call us to do the impossible, nor does He ask anything that is not for our good both now and eternally. But He does give specific orders as to what we are to do and not do, what we are to take part in and what we are to have no part in. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord," is a positive command with a negative application. Again, "Love not the world." We are to come out from the world around us, its ungodly ways and ambitions; we are to have no love for it, or the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life (2 Cor. 6:17; 1 John 2:15-16). These commands leave no room for compromise.

What will happen when we use all our power to say no to evil, even when we cannot see the way ahead? God will "make a way of escape" and we shall be able to bear whatever comes. And as surely as we say no to what God abhors, He will say yes to us in blessing us with a hundredfold of blessing now and in the world to come life everlasting. □

You Can Have A Revival...

*If all the sleeping folk will wake up
And all lukewarm folk will fire up
And all the dishonest folk will confess up
And all the disgruntled folk will sweeten up
And all the discouraged folk will cheer up
And all the depressed folk will look up
And all the estranged folk will make up
And all the gossipers will shut up
And all the dry bones will shake up
And all the true soldiers will stand up.*

Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and do your best will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content and a hundred virtues which the idle never know.

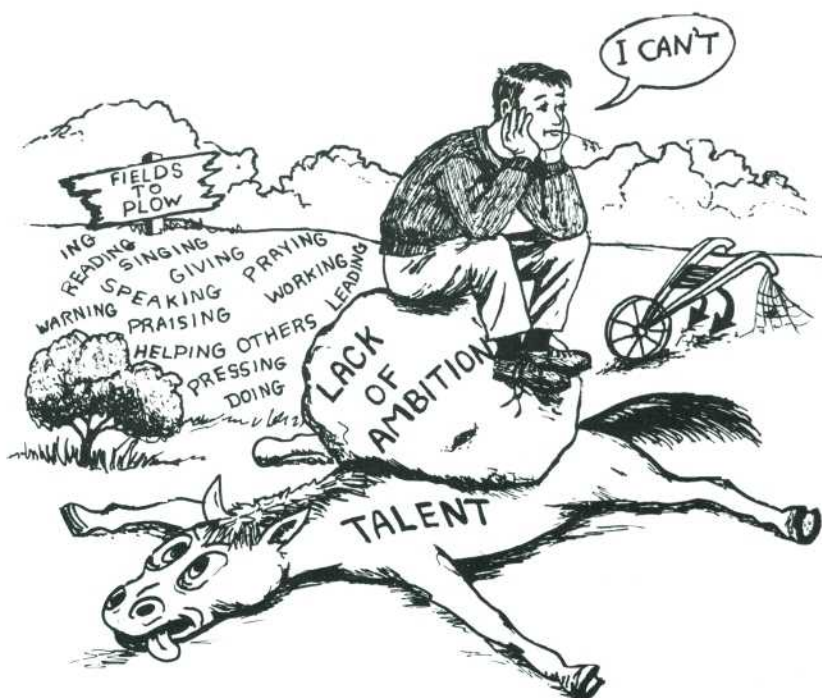
He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

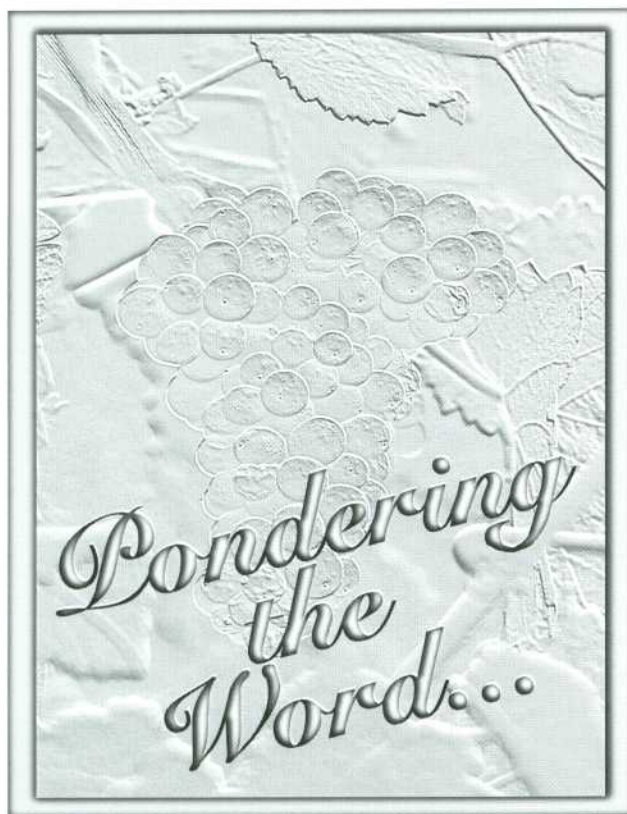
One of the greatest mistakes we make is to think that if we could just solve some particular problem or change the outward circumstances of our lives, we would be happy. This is not true. The place to change is within ourselves.

One thing you can give and still keep is your word.

Whatever you love most, be it pleasure, business, money, family or God, THAT is your God.

Don't expect a thousand-dollar answer to a ten-cent prayer.





Let me obey your demands perfectly so I will not be ashamed. —Psalm 119:80, *Everyday Bible*

David had a particular fear of shame, disgrace. He wanted to avoid at all cost any deceit, any covering up. Had he not learned from the lessons of his life? The worst he could picture was to stand ashamed before God, the disgrace of a hypocrite.

How could that disgrace be avoided? "Let my obedience to thee be perfect." He wanted above all to be true, sincere, sound, obedient. Nothing less could satisfy the God he served, or prepare him for that great meeting at Judgment.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. —2 Corinthians 5:10

Ever vivid in Paul's mind was the picture of his accountability. Each one of us, he says, must stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Christ will judge you. Christ will judge me. And the law of the universe will hold: We shall reap what we have sown.

It will be a moment on our own. We shall stand there alone, with only the record of our life to speak for us. It is an awesome thought, yet Paul was anticipating it with joy. What greater moment is there in

one's career than the moment of triumph, the moment of victory, the moment of recompense!

The point for us to remember is that the future depends on the present. We shall receive for "the things done in the body." We are now writing our own sentence of judgment. Considering all this, "what manner of persons ought we to be?" (2 Pet. 3:11).

It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.
—Lamentations 3:22-23

How striking is this assurance, especially as it follows monstrous surges of despair. In Lamentations are some of the richest confessions of faith in God's goodness. Present clouds of distress may be black, but the bright sunlight of God's goodness comes streaming through, and it is all the brighter for the darkness that preceded it.

Why are God's mercies ever new? They do not last, they are ever changing. God's goodness meets the immediate needs of the hour. His gifts are living and suited to the need. They are never stale. There are new mercies for each new moment. Just as God keeps the old world green by renewing it every spring, so He refreshes and invigorates His people with His day springs of grace. His people can awake every morning with joyous thankfulness as they anticipate the entirely new mercies of the new day. "Great is thy faithfulness."

Daily mercies are recurring reminders of God's faithfulness. By giving us daily bread He proves His faithfulness to us every day, just as He did for Israel in providing daily manna. Each new day also speaks to us of God's patience with us, His interest in us, His concern for us, His confidence in us. Why would He continue to extend our days if He did not know that it is possible for us to make use of them? With each new morning, His mercy says, "Go on—I will be with you."

Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. —Psalm 63:3

A mother asked her young son what lovingkindness meant. "Well," said the child, "when I ask for a piece of bread and butter and you give it to me, that's kindness. But when you put jam on it, that's lovingkindness."

Certainly God shows His lovingkindness to us continually. David valued the lovingkindness of the Lord even more than life itself. What would life be worth without the favor of God!

David could not imagine life without God. To see Him, to serve Him, to love Him, to worship Him, to rejoice in Him who was all his salvation and all his desire—this was the height of glory for David. How deeply do we feel for the lovingkindness of our God? □

Faith THAT HAS Power

Men and women who choose to follow the Master undertake a vocation that demands more of their mental powers than any earthly enterprise. The way is straight, it is narrow; and its travelers are instilled with a sense of urgency. But, as if to counterbalance the difficulty, Jesus and all the sacred writers furnish help and instruction in such an inspiring manner that just to understand their beautiful and stirring utterances impels one to quicken his pace forward. In a few words, He speaks a volume of meaning: *"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed,"* He said, *"ye shall say to this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you"* (Matt. 17:20).

We do not for a moment think that Jesus had any reference here to the removal of literal mountains. Jesus understood human nature and therefore applied this term of *"mountains"* to man's weaknesses such as unbelief, despair, frustration, ignorance, lust, covetousness, and, in fact, every besetment of the carnal mind. They are mountains in the sense that they plague our lives; they stand in our way and hinder our spiritual growth. Mountains they are, formidable and defiant—but conquerable.

Now, it may seem to us that there are mountains which cannot be moved. Such obstacles as a physical handicap, the grief sustained in the loss of a loved one, or a haunted memory because of past sins, are real. There is no denying their existence. But in reality they are not mountains. It is our improper attitude toward them that hinders our progress and is the mountain.

Consider, as a case in point, a physical handicap. Today we cannot be healed miraculously, as, for instance, the man at the Gate Beautiful, or the man born blind. But such handicaps are not really the mountains, for we can learn to live with them. We can learn to bear our handicaps in a right spirit. Instead of chafing about that which cannot be helped, let him who has some such trial attack the mountain of self-pity or indolence and use whatever senses or faculties he has to the best advantage, and, without question, he will be able to live usefully and radiantly.

"In just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And a righteous person will live by faith....We have faith that assures our salvation."

—Heb. 10:36–39, NLT

Worthy of mention in connection with physical handicaps is the example of Helen Keller. Deaf and blind since the age of 19 months, she found life an "exciting business." Her enviable record of accomplishments in behalf of others puts to shame countless numbers of humanity who possess all their faculties. Many men and women with lesser afflictions can take courage and surmount their difficulties.

In our daily duties it is not uncommon to be faced with tasks which we have no desire whatsoever to perform. We may dislike them, and dread the thought of doing them, yet, as so often is the case, when we set our mind to get the task done, and go at it with a will, the dislike and dread disappear and the work soon gets done. Our mental reaction toward a difficulty determines whether we shall succeed in mastering the problem we face, or fail.

In many respects the problems of our inner life may be treated in this manner. By direct attack a man of strong will and faith can conquer the mountains that confront him. Ignorance can be dispelled by diligent study; frustration or disappointment can be removed by a better understanding of God's will and a realization that all things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. 8:28). The principal necessity is faith, and with faith these things are possible.

The apostle Paul enumerated some of the difficulties which he encountered constantly (2 Cor. 11:23-33). To many of us any one of these hardships would prove to be a mountain, but Paul did not allow these things to hinder him in the good work which he was doing. Whether it was persecution, peril among false brethren, or the daily care of all the churches, he endured hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Though he knew that everywhere he went bonds and imprisonment awaited him, he was fearless.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Paul asked, and after

*This is a time to keep
our faith in lively exercise,
our lamps filled with the
oil of a firm belief in
God's promises.*

naming over such mountains as tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword, he said, "In all these things we are more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:35-37). In the two following verses he relates his resolution or persuasion that nothing would separate him from the love of Christ. In other words, no mountain would stand between him and serving God. Even the "thorn in the flesh"—he prayed thrice for its removal. But after receiving God's answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee," he learned to endure.

The reason for Paul's triumph was in his deep faith and conviction. "I know whom I have believed," he wrote to Timothy, "and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

The Old Testament also records noteworthy examples of faith and the removal of "mountains." All Israel feared Goliath and thought it impossible to conquer him, but David slew him. In Babylon no one would dare to disobey the king's decree, but Daniel and his three companions, in time of crises, chose to serve God, refusing to do any homage to heathen gods. Not only were they delivered but were also promoted. Nehemiah's building the wall of Jerusalem is an unusual demonstration of removal of a mountain. The Jews needed a wall. They wanted a wall, but feared to go ahead. Nehemiah's faith and determination brought results.

The greatest need in these last days, is for faith, for it is only by faith that our mountains of sin are overcome. Especially was that faith

strong in our founder, Rev. L. T. Nichols, who challenged the mountains of religious ignorance, superstition, and theological tradition. Conquering these, he disclosed the truth of God's Word, in both precept and example, to his people that they might gain faith and remove their mountains of sin.

Faith is the most essential element in the Christian's life and we should at all times strive to increase it.

Though to us it may appear small as a grain of mustard seed, yet if we direct it properly, if we determine to remove our mountains of sin, whatever they may be, we shall surely succeed.

Faith is an indispensable element in the life of a Christian. Witness the great number of times its importance is stressed throughout the Scriptures.

Anyone familiar with the workings of the world of finance knows what an important place there is filled by the element of faith. This same principle of confidence should hold good in our relation to the Eternal and the rewards He has offered. True, we have never looked upon the face of God or heard His voice, yet we have very good reasons to believe such a Being exists. To disbelieve it would be to take the untenable position that the visible universe with its symmetry and smoothness of working, the earth, and the myriads of varied forms of life upon it all came about by unguided chance. If such were true we would be witnessing the phenomenon of a creation without a Creator, a design without a Designer, direction without a Director, effect without Cause.

One may refuse to accept the Bible as the Word of God on the grounds that its claim to Divine authorship cannot be backed up by other writings of the time, that believers depend solely on the statements of its authors, who—though honest—may have been misguided zealots ascribing natural phenomena to the Divine. But to establish

the authority of the Book it is not even necessary to search back to its beginnings; its words when taken at face value prove it true. The lofty, straightforward character of its teachings at once demonstrates to the open mind that it does not reflect the thought-pattern of the age in which it was produced—for example, compare the Bible with Homer's "Iliad"; even today it is still far ahead of the times.

When the Old Testament was written, polytheism was all but universal among the people of the time; yet Moses and the prophets of Israel, without exception, declared unequivocally there is but one God who made heaven and earth, and created all things.

Even before astronomers were speculating whether or not the sun, moon and stars were merely lights hung in the sky, periodically lighted and extinguished, the prophets Divinely inspired had knowledge of the multitude and magnitude of the heavenly bodies, and of the might of the Hand that created them.

Only in recent years have scientists suggested that other heavenly bodies may be inhabited by intelligent beings, yet nearly two thousand years ago the apostle Paul made it plain that he worshiped a God "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14-15).

At the time the Bible was written it was universally believed that the earth was flat—and indeed it has been little more than a hundred years since this belief had many supporters—yet the words of the prophet Isaiah have been on record over 2500 years to the effect that the earth is a sphere: "He sits over the round earth, so high" (40:22, Moffatt).

Especially is this fact evident in the sublime standard of character set forth by the authors all through the Divine writings.

God said to Abraham, "Walk before me and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1); and Jesus, in the first century, declared: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is per-

fect" (Matt. 5:48); and the apostle Paul wrote, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith...unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

The conclusions of self-confident men, educated above the average of their time, have always been accepted as authority in their respective lines. At the same time, the Book declares that man at his best estate is only vanity, that his wisdom is foolishness with the Almighty, and that God's thoughts are as much higher than man's thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth. This position alone shows conclusively that the Bible is not of human origin, for man could not be induced to so belittle himself.

Now that we have established a premise in favor of faith in the Bible as the Word of God, let us think further on the importance of that faith at such a time as this. In the first verse of Hebrews 11 we read, "Now faith is the substance (*"ground or confidence"*—margin) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." We have not yet received the reward of immortality or seen anyone who has. Our bodies are still mortal, corruptible; we are subject to disappointment, old age, disease and death. Our only ground for confidence that we can escape these limitations of mortality and live for ever comes through our faith in the promises of God. But this faith, to be a moving factor in our lives, must be so strong that it will admit no doubt; for "the just shall live by his faith." A living, active faith is the thing the just one lives by, hence he cannot possess life or be a spiritually animate being without it.

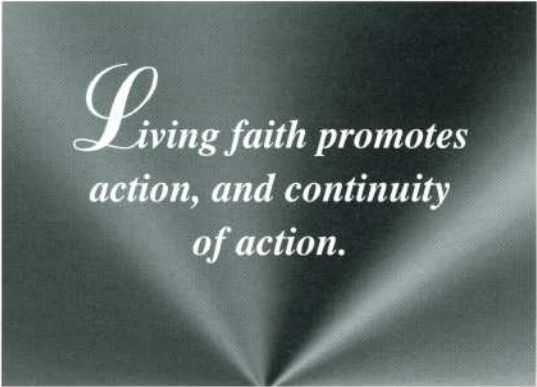
This living faith promotes

action, and continuity of action. To surge ahead for a spell, and then halt, or recede and draw back, will get us nowhere. The words of the Apostle in 1 Thess. 4:1 are clear and forceful: "Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more." Stagnant water would be unfit to quench one's thirst. Likewise a stagnant Christian is of no use to the Eternal; growth and action are indispensable virtues. The only faith that will avail is a faith that worketh by love, a faith buttressed by works of righteousness.

The statement of Hebrews 11:6 that "without faith it is impossible to please him" is but another way of saying that if any man draws back the Almighty will have no pleasure in him. This warning against drawing back into perdition seems especially fitting for our day. Some nineteen centuries have elapsed since God communed audibly with men through the medium of angels, hence the attitude has developed that His voice will never again be heard on this earth. Scoffers have arisen, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). "But," continues the Apostle, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (v. 10)—a thief to those who are not looking for Him.

Now is the time to hold on to our "confidence which hath great recompense of reward," to believe that He that "shall come will come, and will not tarry," and spend every day preparing for that auspicious event.

This is a time to keep our faith in lively exercise, our lamps filled with the oil of a firm belief in God's promises and our lights brightly burning, our confidence in His Divine promises unshaken, and our watchword for victory the firm determination that we will not be of those who "turn their backs on God and seal their fate." Rather, we will "have faith that assures our salvation." □



*Living faith promotes
action, and continuity
of action.*

Another Look At *Thanksgiving*

Dear Father, help me to be grateful. Teach me to see through Your eyes, to think with Your mind. Help me to spend always with Your deepest concerns in view. All that I have and am is Yours, even my whole life.

What are you thankful for?

In our hedonistic society, with its overemphasis on "things," it is easy to direct our thankfulness toward perishables—if indeed we are thankful at all. Those who have so much can come to take even these things for granted.

Jesus gave us definite instructions on what our attitude toward the material world should be. It is ours to use, He said, but never to abuse. It is ours to enjoy, but never to set our heart upon. It is ours to turn to spiritual profit, but never to greed, or pride, or selfish ends. He said it simply and directly in these words: *"Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things"* (Luke 12:29-30). There it is. Appreciate food and drink, but do not set your heart on them. They are good, they are necessary—but they are not to be at the center of our concern. What should be the focus of our lives? Jesus tells us very directly what our first concern must be: *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness"* (Matt. 6:33). This is, in practical terms, what it means to love God. Then He adds His promise, *"All these things shall be added unto you."*

Most of us can say that we have experienced personally the meaning of *"all these things,"* and we should be thankful. But God forbid that this should be the extent of our gratitude.

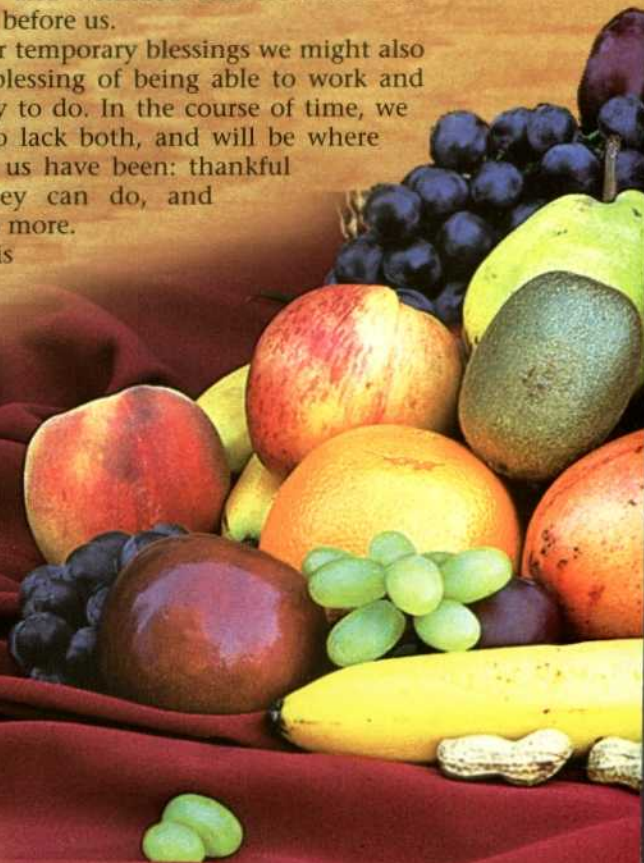
Give thanks for the things money can't buy. Houses, food, clothing and other necessities of life are replaceable if they are lost. Surely we should thank God that we have them; many do not have even these. But if they are lost, money can replace them. What about the things that money can't replace—a happy home, a loving family, good health, a contented mind? These are not for sale at any price.

When we are tempted to be frustrated with some "thing" that will not work as it should, let us instead thank God for the things that money can't buy.

Give thanks for the things that you will not always have. Some good things in life are only for a season, a very short season. If you still have them, thank God, but do not complain when they are removed. All things are not forever. Indeed, many blessings are very temporary in nature. The energy of youth, vigorous health, a strong mind—how fleeting are all these. How rapidly they escape from our grasp and we become gray and wrinkled and slow like our grandparents before us.

Among our temporary blessings we might also include the blessing of being able to work and having plenty to do. In the course of time, we shall come to lack both, and will be where many before us have been: thankful for what they can do, and longing to do more.

Also in this category are



our parents, our children, our homes, even our friends. Let us thank God for them while they are ours. They will vanish far too soon.

And when they are taken away, let us be ready to say with the grateful Job, *"The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord!"* (Job 1:21).

Give thanks for the things that time can't steal. "Life is like a journey taken on a train/ with two passengers at each windowpane." So go the first lines of a poem. While we can't slow the train, we should make up our minds to enjoy the trip. We can appreciate life whatever it brings us. We can even be grateful for hard times, difficult times, strained times, trying times, because they make us stronger and increase our faith.

*Give thanks for the things
that are eternal. Our
greatest treasures
are the things*

that money won't buy and time can't steal. Thanksgiving should be a time to be grateful for them.

Think about the eternal realities that are ours through the Word of our Omnipotent Creator. Time only makes them sweeter and more meaningful. The truths contained upon its pages shine brighter and brighter the more we read them, cherish them, learn them, love them.

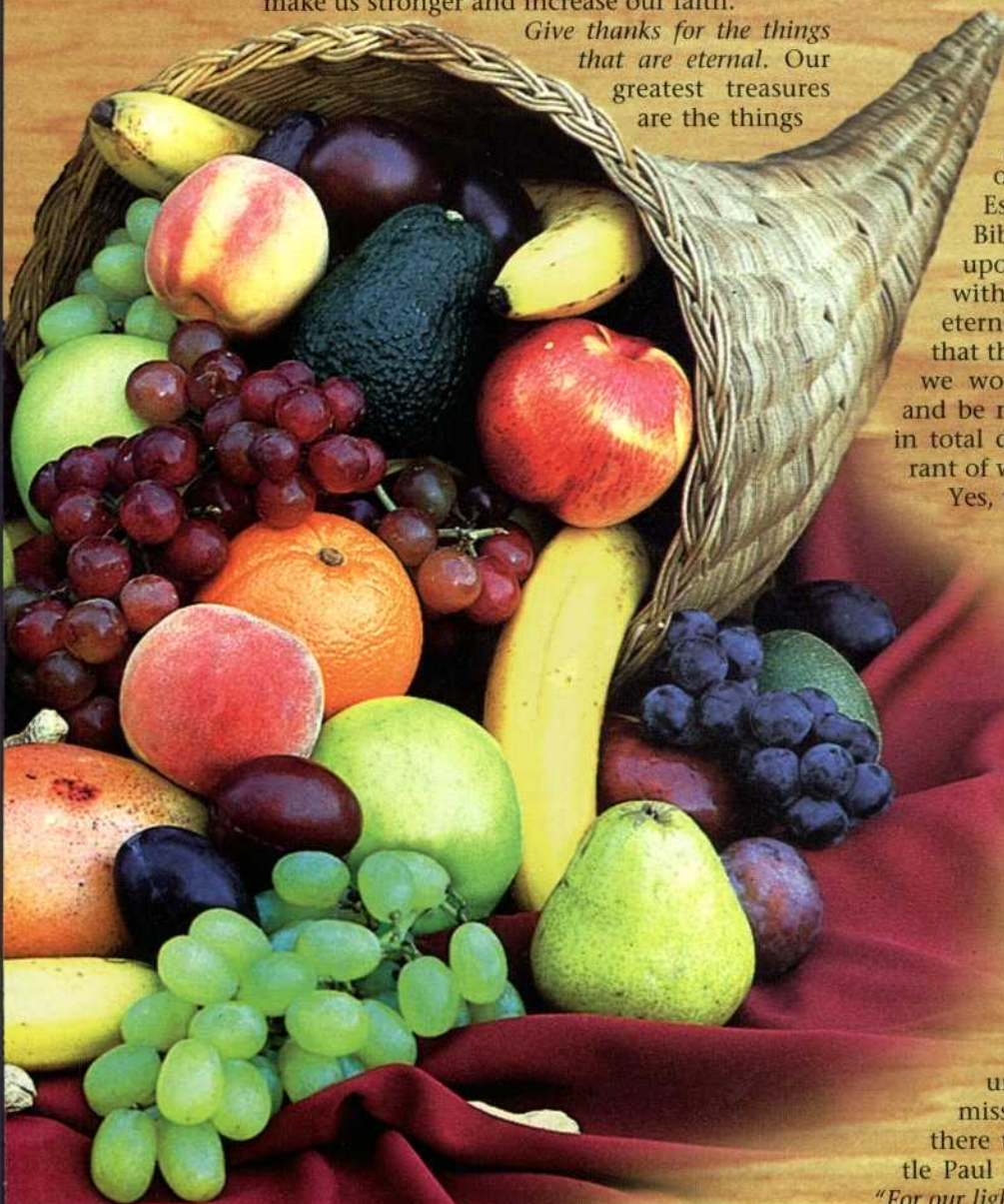
Thank God for the fellowship of the believers, both those we know and have known personally, and those we have met upon the pages of Holy Writ. Such friends grow dearer with the passing of time, and closer in the bonds of Christian love. These are our true family, yet, when we think about it, what a small part of it they are! Think of the unnamed saints of old, plus the multitudes of angels on other worlds—we will need Eternity to get acquainted with all the members of God's heavenly family!

Especially are we thankful for the Bible. Without it, we would be lost upon the sea of life, hopelessly adrift, with no knowledge to guide us to the eternal port—we would not even know that there is such a port! Without the Bible we would know nothing, have nothing, and be nothing. Like the masses who grope in total darkness, we would be wholly ignorant of what God is doing in our world.

Yes, thank God for His Word!

And never must we forget to be thankful for hope—real, sure, vibrant hope. Hope of everything beyond, hope of everlasting joy, everlasting peace, everlasting happiness, everlasting life. None of us can afford to forget it for a moment. It is our backbone, our sure support, and our only prospect of a life beyond this brief span.

No matter how life has treated us, there is a better world to come, a world where we shall "never grow old," never be sick, never grow tired, never experience anything unpleasant or unwelcome. Whatever we have missed here will be recompensed to us there ten thousandfold. Perhaps the apostle Paul says it best in these familiar words: *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."* □



THE GREAT APOSTASY

Part Two

a-pos-ta-sy *n. pl. a-pos-ta-sies* 1. Abandonment of one's religious faith, a political party, one's principles, or a cause. [Middle English *apostasie* from Old French from Late Latin *apostasia* defection from Late Greek from Greek *apostasis* revolt from *aphistanai* to revolt *apo-* *apo-* *histanai* to stand, place.]
—The American Heritage Dictionary

apostasy: an abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed; a total desertion or departure from one's faith, principles, or party.
—Webster's New International Dictionary

apostasy: a term generally employed to describe a complete renunciation of the Christian faith, or even an exchange of one form of it for another, especially if the motive be unworthy. In the first centuries of the Christian era, apostasy was most commonly induced by persecution, and was indicated by some outward act, such as offering incense to a heathen deity or blaspheming the name of Christ.
—Encyclopaedia Britannica

"The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but...they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." —2 Timothy 4:3-4, King James Version

"A time is coming when people will no longer listen to right teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever they want to hear. They will reject the truth and follow strange myths."
—2 Timothy 4:3-4, New Living Translation

"AND IT CAME TO PASS..."

God had spoken, and His Word was destined to be fulfilled. But fulfillment did not come as one great *d y n a m i t e*

explosion. It was gradual, as the light of day fades slowly when the sun has set; an interval of twilight while the darkness slowly envelops the land.

So it was with the sunset upon the day of spiritual enlightenment as the night of ignorance and superstition settled over all mankind. It was not the event of a moment; it took centuries.

The Roman Empire, into which the early Church had come, was a land predominantly pagan. There were various grades of religion. The philosophers recognized some supreme deity, though vaguely. The religions of the poets and artists were aesthetic, finding expression in a variety of deities: Zeus, Apollo, Venus, etc. These deities were thought of as the personified forces of Nature. Then there was the religion of the common people, a superstitious worship of malignant gods, demons, devils, also men-gods and god-men. Also there were the

mystery cults, in which abominable rites were practiced.

Actually the ministry of Christ touched only an obscure corner of the Roman world. Yet the triumph of His resurrection imparted such indomitable conviction to the apostles that these men, aided by the power of the Holy Spirit, launched the greatest missionary venture in history. Tremendous things had happened—oh, that the world might hear of them! And so they went forth, zealous men of faith and courage, covering the miles from Palestine to Macedonia, from Italy to Spain, proclaiming everywhere the message of the one true God, the resurrected Christ, and the coming Messianic Kingdom. Wherever they found ears to hear, they established churches where men and women, fired with the zeal and vigor of living faith, proclaimed the message to others. Thus Christianity flourished and spread in the first century, despite intermittent and severe persecutions from over-zealous Jews and Roman authorities.

But as the Church grew, there came

A Change

Slowly, at first almost imperceptibly, there came a change in attitude. Earnest and alert members of the

Church could sense a subtle shift in emphasis, a weakening of moral stamina, together with alterations in basic Christian thinking and belief. What was it all about? Even Paul could see it in his day. *"The mystery of iniquity,"* he wrote *"doth already work."*

There were several reasons. First of all was the effect of time. The impact of Christ and His apostles was receding further and further into the forgettable past. This meant that less and less firsthand information was available. Connections were lost, and old stories, told and retold, lost their meaning as men became more and more involved in the present cosmos.

Secondly, the power of the Holy Spirit, which had brought conviction to thousands during the early days of the Church, was no longer present to convince and convict and *"confirm the word."* Its purpose having been accomplished and the written message of God having been completed, it had been withdrawn.

There was yet another cause of the change. As the Church grew, it came more and more into contact with secular-minded people of the Empire. Men and women were converted to Christianity who were as much and more concerned with the affairs of State as with the affairs of the Church. This point is verified by historian Donald Spence, who treats the subject of primitive Christianity. He writes:

"For the first 150 years of its existence, the story of Christianity is the story of a separate people: of something apart from the Empire. But after the death of Marcus their numbers and influence brought the Christians into daily contact with the Government in Rome or in one or other of the provinces" (*Early Christianity and Paganism*).

The very contact with the life of the nation proved infectious, for the rites of polytheism were so closely interwoven with all aspects of business and pleasure that one could scarcely escape their influence without breaking completely with the Imperial system. Jesus and His apostles had taught the neces-

sity of such a separation, that Christians were to live in the world without being of the world. But their warnings were laid aside as new converts pursued daily life in much the same manner that they had when worshipping with the pagans.

The change in Christianity was accelerated by those who became its new exponents. Lacking the proper understanding of what the teachings of Jesus really were, they intermingled their own opinions. The message of the Gospel became the property of those who fashioned and interpreted it to suit themselves.

Perhaps the most serious factor among the causes of the apostasy was the contamination of Christian faith itself. As Christianity spread, it came more and more into the hands of the educated and cultured part of Roman society. Because of its sound, sensible foundation and clear thinking, it held special appeal to the minds accustomed to principles of reason and logic. But these were men whose training had been grounded in the thinking of Greek philosophy: and quite naturally they interpreted Christian teaching according to their ideas—their education, their rhetoric, their theology, their reasoning. Furthermore, they saw in Christianity a message which could be combined effectively with their thinking and presented to the world with an even stronger appeal than either philosophy or Christianity could have had alone.

Greek philosophy presented an insidious—and deadly—challenge to the true faith from its earliest days. Paul solemnly warned Timothy against its corrupting influence: *"Have nothing to do with pointless philosophical discussions—they only lead further and further away from true religion"* (2 Tim. 2:16, Jerusalem Bible). Also to the church at Colosse he wrote: *"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, [which are] after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ"* (Col. 2:8).

But as time passed, the warnings were disregarded, and what Paul

had foreseen became reality. The message of Christ was fresh, it was plain, it was simple. But it was too simple. And as the first and second and third century thinkers began to debate and discuss and reason and write upon it, treating the true message as though it were the wisdom of this world, slowly there developed a new doctrine—wider in its appeal, but totally transformed in message and thinking. It was not philosophy, and it was not mysticism, and it was not Christianity, but a combination of all three.

This "new" faith, incorrectly called "Christianity," was presented to the world as such and soon became the religion of the State.

The secular victories of the new religion were many.

1) The new faith presented an easier way of life.

2) The new faith was acceptable to a broad cross section of people, providing temporal security and promoting peace and order and unity in a deteriorating Empire.

3) The "Christian" Church became the civil and sacred authority, a position it would hold for centuries to come.

4) The new religion, accepted by Constantine as the property of the State, could spread freely to all.

But let us emphasize: Christianity as a power within the Roman Empire was not the teaching of Jesus and His apostles. It was Christian in name only, for it was paganism and philosophy in new guise.

New Doctrines

The new Christian Church, as a result of its joining with the ideas of philosophy and paganism, adopted in the early centuries many new beliefs which came to be officially recognized at the various councils of the Church.

New doctrines centered around new ideas and concepts of God as a spirit or essence, rather than a real being; of Christ as a being eternally existent with His Father; of Christ as part God and part man by nature, or all God; of the Holy Spirit as a personal visitant

(Continued on page 19)

Life's Lessons

*I learn, as the years roll onward
And I leave the past behind,
That much I had counted sorrow
But proves that God is kind;
That many a flower I longed for
Had hidden a thorn of pain,
And many a rugged bypath
Led to fields of ripened grain.*

*The clouds that cover the sunshine,
They cannot banish the sun,
And the earth shines out the brighter
When the weary rain is done.
We must stand in the deepest shadow
To see the clearest light;
And out of the stygian darkness
Comes the brightest blaze of light.*

*The sweetest rest is at evening
After a wearisome day,
When the heavy burden of labor
Has been borne from our hearts away;
And those who have never known sorrow
Cannot know the infinite peace
That falls on the troubled spirit
When it sees at last release.*

*We must live through the dreary winter
To see the burst of spring;
And the woods must be cold and silent
Before the robins sing.
The flowers must be buried in darkness
Before they can bud and bloom,
And the sweetest, warmest sunshine
Comes after the storm and the gloom.*

*May we live and learn life's lessons,
Leave the painful past behind;
For there's coming a bright Tomorrow
Which will give our heart and mind
Sweetest rest from toil and labor
After all the toilsome day,
And the Master will repay us
Who will work, and watch, and pray.*

THE GREAT APOSTASY

(Continued from page 17)

rather than a special power direct from God. All ideas did not occur immediately. Discussions and debates were long, often heated, even violent at times as one school of thought contended He was "very God." Some thought of Christ as having literally descended from God; others said He was the Logos; still others debated whether He was created or uncreated substance or spirit.

Other new doctrines centered around salvation. Some readily adopted the pagan idea of atonement, using Christian terminology, and pictured Christ as suffering once for all men. As far as attaining to salvation, the old idea of the immortal soul was generally accepted, though not a teaching of the Bible. The councils even defined what happened to the man who died at various points of life, inside or outside the Church.

The immortal-soul concept evolved quickly into a vivid picture of living spirits, enjoying the ephemeral blisses of a heavenly realm or suffering the eternal agonies of a burning hell. And along with hellfire came its chief agent and wildly described superintendent, Satan.

So the false doctrines grew and multiplied, while the light of true religion faded steadily, with fewer and fewer loyal adherents proclaiming its unchangeable truths.

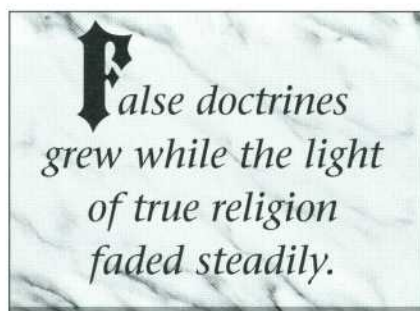
New Practices

Along with the new doctrines came a whole set of new practices—many of them borrowed or bought directly from the pagans.

There was reason for the adopting of pagan practices. Christianity was spreading in a world that was predominantly pagan, and in order to secure the loyalty of people firmly established in pagan practices, the Church thought it expedient to welcome the pagan people without unduly disturbing those customs to which they were attached. Pope Gregory I followed the pattern when he adeptly

instructed his missionaries not to destroy innocent pagan customs which seemed inconsistent with Church doctrine, for they could be woven into the fabric of Christian ceremony.

Pagan temples were closed, and the worship of idols forbidden. But pagan deities were far from forgotten. For instance, as pagans had worshiped Isis, mother of the Egyptian god Horus in her aspect as the mother of Horus, now Isis could be identified with the virgin



Mary holding the divine child in her arms.

It was the policy of the Church to take over pagan festivals endeared to the people by tradition, and to give them a Christian significance. For example, Mithraism had been a formidable rival of Christianity. The birthday of the god Mithras was observed on December 25; that date was also recognized as the Nativity of the sun god Sol. It was also the season of the old Saturnalia, the most immoral feast that ever disgraced pagan Rome. The Church fathers, recognizing the strong appeal of these December festivals for the pagan world, took counsel and decided that they could retain them and Christianize them by placing the celebration of Christ's birth at that time (how accurately fulfilling Daniel's prophecy that "times and laws" should be changed!)

The changes were too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say that the Divine prophecy was abundantly fulfilled.

Religious and Secular History Confirm

It is assuring to note that secular history and religious history con-

firm the literal happening of what the Bible had forecast.

We will quote from several.

"The Church was in the beginning a community of brethren. All of its members were taught of God, and each possessed the liberty of drawing for himself from the divine fountain of life....But the writings of these very apostles forewarn us that from the midst of these brethren, there shall arise a power which shall overthrow this simple and primitive order."

—*The History of the Reformation*,
by D'Aubigne


"Evidently the same feeling was working in Tertullian at Carthage as actuated Hippolytus in Rome; a persuasion that the church in the persons of its responsible leaders had left its first love, and was sanctioning a more lax and easy way than had been set forth as the pattern of life by the Apostles and the teachers of the first hundred years of the existence of Christianity as a religion and a life. These troubles arose from the changed conditions, notably from the numbers and social position of the Christians, who were now largely recruited from the class which would naturally participate freely in public life. Hence the problem: Were Christians to 'come out from the world'...or were they to go on a worldwide mission by more or less adapting themselves to Roman society, its ways, its laws, its customs? The Church, face to face with this new and changed position, chose the second alternative; to use the graphic language of a modern scholar. 'She marched through the open door into the Roman State, and settled down there for a long career of activity.' To do this the Church in some way had to abandon its old discipline, its apostolic simplicity."

—*Early Christianity and Paganism*,
by Donald Spence

"There were those in the first ages of the church who modified their religion of Christ by joining it with the Oriental philosophy, in regard to the sources of evil and the origin of this material universe.... Hence there necessarily arose

(Continued on page 25)

Dare to Be Micaiah!



The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, as one man the other prophets are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs, and speak favorably." But Micaiah said, "As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me." When he arrived, the king asked him, "Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?"

"Attack and be victorious," he answered, "for the LORD will give it into the king's hand."

The king said to him, "How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"

Then Micaiah answered, "I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.'" The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?"...

The king of Israel then ordered, "Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon the ruler of the city and to Joash the king's son and say, 'This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.'" Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

—1 Kings 22:13-14, 17-18, 26-28, NIV

Picture yourself as a prophet of the Lord living in the ancient city of Samaria. The date is about 850 BC.

King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah have agreed to join forces in an attack on Ramoth-Gilead. Their plan has been enthusiastically endorsed by Ahab's entire religious establishment, "yes men" who pose as God's spokesmen. King Jehoshaphat, suspicious of the arrangement, asks if there is not a dissident opinion. Reluctantly, Ahab summons you, Micaiah, into his presence.

Ahab's attendants arrive and march you into the presence of the king. And there you stand, face to face: King Ahab and Prophet Micaiah.

Now any sensible advisor would caution you to be careful in such a situation. After all, Ahab is the king, and did he not denounce Elijah as the national troublemaker when the country had no rain for three years? Yes, Ahab is a worshiper of Baal. Then, too, Ahab is the king who coveted Naboth's vineyard and happily confiscated the property after Jezebel arranged for Naboth's murder.

Ahab is the king who endorsed evil of all kinds. According to the Bible stenographer, there was never a man so willing to sell himself to do wrong in the eyes of the Lord as Ahab. What could such a man be expected to do to anyone who dared to oppose him?

Ahab tells you his story. He wants you to believe it, and he wants you to approve it and give it God's blessing.

So, Micaiah, think it through: Do you really want to risk your life by refusing to encourage a military expedition on which this

king of wickedness has set his heart? Why stir up the wrath of a ruthless tyrant who already hates you? Why be a fearless fool standing alone against hundreds of state-certified prophets? Aren't they all members of the ordained clergy? Why venture a solo voice against this unanimous chorus?

Yet, you do it. You keep that solo voice and speak out loud and clear for one reason: because you have promised God that you will speak His Word faithfully. So you do it unhesitatingly and without questioning. You know God's mind, God's purpose, and God's truth. And your faith in God gives you the moral courage and spiritual strength to oppose anything and everything that is in any degree wrong. You can ignore the trembling of your knees, the palpitating of your heart, the tremor in your voice, because you know that you are on God's side.

You deliver the unwanted message, faithfully and fearlessly, then wait for the consequences, knowing that God is with you.

This is true moral courage.

Who will be Micaiah today? Who today has the courage to stand by the Word of the Lord no matter what? Do you? Do I?

◆ *The Prerequisites*

Courage requires work. Before we can be like Micaiah, we have work to do. First, we must develop unshakable convictions. Read the record of the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, and see what made them conquerors.

Then, courage requires discernment. Not every cause is worth fighting for. Not every doctrine is worth defending. Not every issue of life can be turned to the glory of God. It is possible to spend one's energy in fruitless, empty, profitless pursuits. One must continually be discerning which battle can be fought for God, and which should be left alone.

Another prerequisite of moral courage is humility. If I cannot forget totally my self-image and become God's servant, I cannot hope to muster the moral courage to be true to Him. For at times there will be opposition, either from within my own heart or from my surroundings. I must be willing to give up my will, my idea, my ambition, to support His cause.

Another prerequisite is prayer. We must be constantly in touch with our source of power. Without it we are no better than the rest of the animal creation. We need God to help us, to guide us, to fight our battles for us. We need God to give us the strength to add courage to our faith. We need God to help us discern between the issues we must defend and those we must ignore.

Altogether, it is a great calling to be like Micaiah. Who will answer the call? Who will be aroused by the words of the Sunday School song (revised):

*Dare to be Micaiah,
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!*

"WATCH YE, THEREFORE"

*Set a watch upon your lips,
That they tell no idle tale;
See that nothing from them slips
That will not for good prevail.
Use them oft to help a brother
Up the strait and narrow path;
Never just to harm another—
Never as a tool for wrath.*

*Set a watch upon your feet,
Making sure that they obey;
Taking you to joys complete
In the coming endless day.
Teach them to avoid the places
Where the sinners often meet;
And that nothing more abases
Than to sit in scorner's seat.*

*Set a watch upon your eyes,
Lest they wander here and there.
Keep them ever on the prize;
Let them view the Kingdom fair.
Eyes in covenant ne'er linger
On the sordid, sensual, vile;
But they look to where God's finger
Writes of glories all the while.*

*Over the affections, too,
Set a guard that naught may pass
Able to endanger you—
Drawing you from God. Alas!
Let them rest on things more certain
Than the present, filled with strife;
Then when time has dropped its curtain
You will gain eternal life.*

*Most of all, guard well each thought;
For the thought precedes the act:
And when in subjection brought,
Thoughts make living right a fact.
Let not hate or envy enter;
Neither pride, nor love of wealth;
But on God's commandments center
Ev'ry thought—and all is well.*

—Liot L. Snyder



Are You Taste-Tested?

One striking measurement of our spiritual growth is a check on our tastes. We might call it the "taste-test." What do we really like? What "tastes" good to us? What do we consider right or wrong? What are our standards? Are they those of the common run, or do they reflect the influence of God upon our lives?

In Paul's prayer for the Philippian church (Phil. 1:9-10), he exhorts them to abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment that they may "approve things that are excellent," and he prays to that end. This "approving" requires the developing of a sense of taste, the powers of discrimination to know bad from good, and — most importantly—better from best. According to some commentators, this "approving" process was used also for assaying metals. It implies the ability to distinguish between the good and the worthless.

The great Apostle would have us develop an appetite for those things that are excellent or "best." Learning to desire and love the things that are excellent and best, acquiring a taste for them, is an essential part of growing into holiness. We are not naturally strong in this way; we do not naturally love and approve what God approves, or despise and dishonor what He despises and dishonors.

It was a problem then; it is a problem now. The pagan environment of that day, like our own, offered something for every taste. When one reads a description of a moral climate such as is reflected in Romans 1, with its unbelievably low moral tone, he cannot help hearing overtones of 20th century culture. There was—and there is—

great need for discrimination and the cultivation of a proper taste—a taste for the highest.

Paul reaffirms the same concern a little farther on in his letter (Phil. 4:8), where he says, "*Finally, brethren, whatever is true...honorable...right,...pure,...lovely...of good repute...if there is any excellence...let your mind dwell on these things*" (NASB). The word translated "think" in our Common Version involves more than a fleeting thought or an occasional consideration; it implies steady attention over a span of time. Specifically, it means a "habit of thought."

Appetites are not developed by occasional exposure but rather by continuous and repeated experience. If I give my attention to spiritual matters one day a week and fill all the other six days with secular concerns, can I expect to have a deep hunger for things sacred? Likewise, if I fill my mind with music and entertainment that does not glorify God, or that appeals to the low and base, I will soon find that I have little taste for that which is truly God-glorifying.

It is advice of great wisdom to avoid anything that in any way cheapens the sacred or dishonors God or godliness. Going further, we should avoid anything that does not in its fullness, honor God and the things which He approves. If we do less than this we run the risk of losing our taste for things Divine.

A woman who was seeking to be spiritually perceptive once wrote: "Whatsoever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things, whatever

increases the authority of your body over mind, that thing for you is sin."

Unfortunately, it is possible for us to be like the grocer who bought butter that was tainted with leeks. An elderly lady stopped along the road to the store and picked some leeks which she first offered the storekeeper to taste—which he did. Thereupon she offered him the butter for sale. When he tasted the butter, he did not detect any taste of leeks—because his sense of taste was already distorted. He gave his approval to the butter, not realizing that it was strongly off-flavor. Sin is much the same. We sample just a little, then more, and soon we have no sensitivity to even greater sins. And to make the matter worse, we lose our sense of taste for what is good.

It is a serious problem. It is possible to have our judgment so tainted that we do not sense the "exceeding sinfulness of sin." Consequently we come to approve, without even realizing it, some things that are morally suspect.

This has happened to many youths in our world today. They grow up in an amoral, totally secular culture and receive their education in a climate of permissiveness that ought to be appalling. But they are not appalled—because they have never known anything else. The result is that they come to share the moral values of their society.

How shall we counteract this insidious influence in ourselves? By concentrating on those "things that are excellent," until our appetite demands the very best—a pure heart and a pure mind. □

WHY WERE

Noah's Family Preserved?

"At the time of the flood, why were Noah's family preserved? Is there any evidence that they were righteous?"

We are not told that any were righteous except Noah himself. *"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God"* (Gen. 6:9). Again we read the words of the Lord to Noah: *"Thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation"* (Gen. 7:1). From the account, it appears that all others of the time were exceedingly wicked. *"God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually....God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth"* (Gen. 6:5, 12).

So God declared that He would destroy the wicked people by water (Heb. 11:7). To make a way for Noah to survive the flood He gave a special command: he was to build an ark, and he was to build it precisely according to the plans provided by the heavenly Architect (Gen. 6:14-16). Though we are not told in Genesis, it appears that Noah was to be a preacher-builder. While he was busy building the ark, he was to be talking to the people, for we are told in the Epistle of Second Peter that *"Noah [was] a preacher of righteousness"* (2 Pet. 2:5) during the time that he was completing his God-assigned task.

Noah obeyed God. We read, *"Thus Noah did according to all that God commanded him, so did he"* (Gen. 6:22).

When the time was right and the ark was complete, we read that *"Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his son's wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood...and the Lord shut him in"* (Gen. 7:7, 16).

Why might Noah's family have been preserved? Perhaps some of them were righteous, we are not told. But there are other reasons why God might have seen fit to preserve them.

First, God knows the end from the beginning, and He knew they would be the progenitors of people who would seek and serve Him. Looking into the future God could see people He wanted: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, and many more who would seek and serve Him faithfully. All of these were descended directly through Shem, Noah's son. In fact, the entire Israelite people came through that line, and among them were many faithful servants of God. Had Noah's sons all died in the flood,

this race would not have been.

Second, Noah's wife, sons, and sons' wives, even though they might not have been righteous, were willing to go into the ark. This showed at least a measure of faith—more than could be said of the thousands who must also have heard the preaching of father Noah, yet refused to believe.

Third, the Bible tells us that Noah built an ark *"for the saving of his household"* (Heb. 11:7, RSV)—this is said as a tribute to Noah's faith and obedience. Apparently God wanted this *task done for this reason*. Perhaps it was because God saw that Noah needed companionship, and they were the ones chosen.

Whatever the exact reason, we can trust that God knows what He is doing, while we, with our limited vision, can judge only by what we can observe at a particular moment in time. What looks impossible to us because of our limited lifespan is within close range to the Almighty to whom *"a thousand years are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night"* (Ps. 90:4).

There are many instances in the Bible where God was willing to tolerate wicked men and women for the sake of a few righteous ones whom He wanted to preserve. He was even willing to spare totally the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if ten righteous ones could be found therein (Gen. 18). But ten could not be found. We have a parallel situation in our own age, where the longsuffering of God waits, just as it did in the days of Noah *"while the ark was a-preparing"* (1 Pet. 3:20), and withholds judgment so that all who will serve Him are given adequate time and opportunity.

How great is God's mercy!

♦ As in the Days of Sodom

"Can you tell me where to find in the Bible the verses that refer to the last days before Jesus comes? The one I am thinking of goes something like this: As it was in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, so shall it be in the last days before Jesus returns. I can't remember where I read it."

Jesus did compare the time of His second coming to the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, also to the time just before the flood, in the days of Noah. The passage is found in Luke 17, verses 26-30. *"As it was in the days of Noe,...Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot;...Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed."*

◆ Women Speak in Church?

"Would you please explain the following text: '...Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak' (1 Cor. 14:34, NIV). Why are they not allowed to speak? Does this apply to us today?"

Surface reading of Paul's words in his letter to the Corinthians gives the impression that the Apostle did not allow women to speak in the Church. However, the context reveals another thought.

In First Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14, Paul was addressing a specific issue: the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit, particularly the gift of speaking in tongues.

Apparently some members of the Church had been using the gift for unedifying purposes, and Paul wanted it known that *no* unedifying speech should be allowed. To correct the problem, the inspired Apostle saw fit to forbid all women in the Church to speak in tongues (it is possible that Paul recognized certain women as major offenders, and saw this as a practical solution; we are not told). At the same time, he placed restrictions on the use of the gift among men: 1) Only one man should speak at a time, 2) No man should speak in tongues at any public meeting except an interpreter be present. This would put an automatic check on the misuse of the gift.

These are Paul's words: *"Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize what I am saying. When you meet, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in an unknown language, while another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must be useful to all*

and build them up in the Lord. No more than two or three should speak in an unknown language. They must speak one at a time, and someone must be ready to interpret what they are saying. But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting..." (1 Cor. 14:26-28, NLT).

Then, addressing the women in the Church on the same subject, he said, *"Let your women keep silence in*

sound impressive, but it could not be classified as "edifying."

Had the Apostle been saying that it was wrong for women to speak in the Church, he would have been contradicting his own statement made in his letter to the Galatians, in which he wrote that in Christ Jesus *"there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in*

Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal 3:28-29). Paul could not have had one standard for the Church in Galatia and another for the Corinthians.

God has never discriminated against anyone because of race, nationality, color or sex. All exist as He designed and created them. The prophet Malachi recognized this fact when he wrote, *"Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?"* (Mal. 2:10). Whether a believer was a Greek or a Jew, a slave or a master, a woman or a man, did not matter. In the sight of God and among the true believers, all shared an equal opportunity for salvation. All enjoyed the same privileges in Christ.

This is not to say that women were frequently in positions of leadership. The social system being what it was, it is likely that very often women were not as free to serve in the church as men were. But the very fact that in a few instances women were known to have taken teaching and leadership roles shows that they were not excluded from such types of service just because they were women.

Many times their helpfulness roles were not clearly defined. The apostle Paul had women helpers in the churches he founded, and he singled out some for special commendation. To the Philippian Church he wrote, *"I entreat thee also,*

Daily Grinding

A pebble was thinking: "It's all a grind, a dull, deadly grind." But before long the pebble glowed with light in the hands of the cutter, and another gem was added to the world's store.

"It's nothing but a grind, a soul-killing grind from morning till night." A slab of glass was speaking. But under the grinding the glass became a lens by which scientists could better view the stars.

Do we groan with the grinding? As men and women who have had our minds enlightened by the Word of God, we should rejoice, for it is the daily grind, dull and purposeless though it may seem, that rounds off our rough edges.

Before we can be a part of God's eternal building, we must submit to the grinding, the polishing, the shaping which He directs. God has no use for sharp, unworked stones.

There are so many kinds of evil to be rubbed off. There is pride, which goes before destruction. And there is anger, which rests in the bosom of fools. Read what the book of Hebrews says about bitterness: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

The grinding may seem harsh, or the rubbing dull and monotonous; but let us thank God for every moment of it, knowing that He is preparing us to shine.

the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak [in an unknown tongue]" (v. 34).

But remember that the expressed purpose of both commands was that all speech be *"edifying."* Unintelligible language uninterpreted might

true yoke-fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel,...and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. 4:3). We are not told the nature of their Christian work, but these women were fellow helpers in the work, and worthy of having their names written "in the book of life."

Another time Paul made special mention of Phoebe, "Our sister,...a servant of the church" at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1), and said that she should be received as a saint. The Jerusalem Bible describes her as a deaconess, while the New English says, "She holds office in the congregation at Cenchrea." In the same list of salutations, Priscilla was recognized as a helper with her husband Aquila, who taught Apollos "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:26). When sending greetings to them at the close of his letter to the church in Rome, Paul even mentioned Priscilla's name ahead of Aquila's, and commended them highly for their self-sacrificing labors in his behalf. "Priscilla and Aquila my

helpers in Christ Jesus: who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house" (Rom. 16:3-5).

Paul also had honorary mention for "Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord" (Rom. 16:12, NIV).

We have no evidence that Paul excluded women from the work, either in teaching or other labors. Where he found women able to help, he encouraged them to participate, for with him all converts, men or women, were one in Christ.

Even in Old Testament times, women were not excluded from active roles. Miriam, the sister of Moses, was described as "a prophetess" in Exodus 15:20. Apparently she was a leader among the women. Among the Judges who served in Israel before the days of the kings was a woman named Deborah. She went to battle with Barak, to support him (Judges 4 and 5). Huldah was a prophetess in the time of King Josiah, a woman held

in sufficient esteem that the king sought her counsel and judgment (2 Kings 22:13-20).

Hannah expressed in prayer God's supremely fair standard of judgment in these words: "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3). And many years later, Peter reinforced the same point, saying, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35). All, whether male or female, are accepted according as they "fear" God and "work righteousness."

This passage is meaningfully translated in the Philips Modern English Bible: "God does not discriminate between people, but...in every nation the man who reverences him and does what is right is acceptable to him!"

Paul did not turn away sincere, God-fearing women who wished to fill a vital and active role in the Christian Church. Nor do we today have any Scriptural authority for limiting the role of leadership to men. □

THE GREAT APOSTASY

(Continued from page 19)

among them a multitude of opinions, which were extremely foreign to the precepts of Christ. As these extraordinary opinions required proof which it was not easy to find in the writings of the Apostles, recourse was had to falsehoods and impositions. Hence, as each one endeavored to accommodate his own philosophical opinions to the Christian religion, it was the necessary consequence that various systems of religion were produced. The noble simplicity and the majestic dignity of the Christian religion were lost, or at least impaired when the philosophers presumed to associate their dogmas with it. It appears, from a variety of testimonies, that they much preferred Plato, and embraced most of his dogmas concerning God, the human soul, and the universe...

"The new species of philosophy adopted by Origen and others, did immense harm to Christianity. For

it led the teachers of it to involve in philosophic obscurity many parts of our religion, which were in themselves plain and easy to be understood; and to add to the precepts of the Saviour not a few things, of which not a word can be found in the Holy Scriptures...

"Genuine piety was supplanted by a long train of superstitious observances, which originated partly from opinions inconsiderately embraced, partly from a preposterous disposition to adopt profane rites and combine them with Christian worship....It would require a volume to detail the various impositions which were, for the most part successfully practiced by artful knaves after genuine piety and true religion were compelled to resign their dominion in great measure to superstition."

—Ecclesiastical History, by Mosheim

"During six hundred years the gospel was the way of truth and salvation, but the Christians insensibly forgot both the laws and

example of their founder....True religion lay buried under a senseless mass of superstitions, and was unable to raise her head."

—Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, by Gibbon

Taking the Bible in one hand and history in the other, we can see that the Bible is Divine. The God of heaven could and did inspire His holy men to foretell events hundreds and thousands of years before they occurred.

Jesus had delivered to His apostles the pure, unadulterated truth, which they had carried to the world. The God of heaven had inspired men to write what was true. But Church leaders, more intent on popularity and power than on purity and truth, altered their message to suit their own fancy, until the original truth was no longer discernible, and "true religion lay buried under a senseless mass of superstition, and was unable to raise her head." □

(To be Continued Next Issue)

LETTERS

No Barriers

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). This is one of my favorite verses. It expresses in a few words the formula for success in the quest for eternal life. We may not have much money or possessions to hold our affection, but our affections can still be on the things of this world, if we are not careful.

We can allow the daily affairs of life to outweigh our interest in Divine things. And to go one step further, we can be allowing our job or some other situation to upset or anger us. And getting upset or angry over something which will soon pass away is the quickest way I know to put a barrier between us and God. Paul said later on in Colossians 3, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men." We should do everything we do to the best of our ability, because in reality we are doing it for the Lord. At the same time we must keep in mind that all these things are temporal and not worth getting angry about.

Yes, if we are ever going to con-

quer sin we must bring our minds under control. We cannot be keeping a vigilant watch if our minds are on everything but the business at hand. Jesus said that all evil proceeds from the heart, that is, the mind, so to bring the mind into subjection is to win the war.

I remember reading in the Message about Demas, a New Testament character whom Paul mentions three times. First Paul characterizes Demas as "my fellow laborer." Second he merely says, "Demas greeteth you." Then finally in his first letter to Timothy he says, "Demas hath forsaken me." And that is the last we hear of Demas. He was a failure. He failed to gain control of his mind and ultimately the lure of the world was too strong for him. The lesson for us is that the pull of sin is too strong for any of us, if we do not have control of our thoughts.

Paul's advice to Timothy is as good for us today as it was for Timothy: "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may

appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:13, 15-16). Reading, exhortation, meditation are all necessary, but they become profitable only as we submit ourselves wholly to the Word.

Tennessee

S. Kincannon

Clever or Wise?

Many people today are very quick and smart, others very clever, but that certainly doesn't give them wisdom. It also works the other way around. If ever anyone had wisdom it was King Solomon and for years the Lord was with him. However, at the end of his life he lost his wisdom, and was not very clever, as we read that his strange wives turned his heart away from the true God and he worshiped idols. This must be the saddest of all tales, to have wisdom and not use it. Much better to start in a small way and through God's word become clever, be wise and get wisdom, and in the end—eternal life.

England

J. Treharne

Christ the Savior Is Born

Is This (Foolishness) for CHRISTIANS?

ORDER YOUR LEAFLETS TODAY!

Give Your Friends the EVIDENCE!

☐ Please send me the following leaflets in the quantities indicated:

of Dozens

_____ Christ the Saviour Is Born
_____ Is This (Foolishness) for Christians?

_____ Dozen ordered @ \$1 per dozen \$ _____
_____ Postage and Handling \$ 3.00
_____ Total Enclosed \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

(This offer available in the US and Canada only.)

Place this form in envelope with payment and mail to:
MEGIDDO PRESS, 481 Thurston Road,
Rochester, New York 14619-1697

The Joy of Autumn

*There's a gladness in the Springtime,
There's a promise in the air,
There's the joy of budding blossoms,
And God's love shows everywhere.
There's a gladness, too, in Summer,
When the skies are fair and blue,
When the birds and beasts and flowers
All proclaim that promise true.*

*But the gladness of the Autumn
Is the greatest of them all,
When the fields are white with harvest,
And the leaves begin to fall.
Then we have the sweet fulfillment
Of the promise of the Spring;
Then our hearts are full of gladness
For the beauty of our King.*

*Let us praise Him for the promise,
Let us thank him for the Spring
For the joy and hope of Summer
Let us all His praises sing.
For the beauties of His goodness,
Shown in color rare in Fall,
Let us sing a loud thanksgiving
To the Giver of it all.*

Prayer To Kill Selfishness

O God of Heaven and earth: We thank You that nineteen hundred years ago You revealed the perfect example for mankind in the person of a carpenter. Through His courage, through His piety, His love, His obedience, and His victory over selfishness, sin, and death, You showed us the perfect man.

"Teach us that our own pathways of life must lead on into the way of Christ, yielding and obedient. Wavering, unwilling to make the choice, we hesitate. We humbly confess it. Cause the spirit of Christ to dwell in us, that we may kill selfishness and be children of God who love our fellowmen. This we pray in the name of Christ. Amen."

We pass but once through this our mortal life, as pilgrims and strangers, not another chance beyond our allotted space of time. Shall we spurn the offer and drift on the oars of indifference and carelessness, or wait till the shadows creep over us and lose everything, or shall we grasp each moment and make it count toward a rightful claim to that land of endless day?



Infinite toil would not enable you to sweep away a mist; but by ascending a little, you may often look over it altogether. So it is with our moral improvement: we wrestle fiercely with a vicious habit which could have no hold upon us if we ascended into a higher moral atmosphere.

Cultivate a "holy indifference" to life—it does not matter what we are or what we do so long as it is God's will at that moment.

Contemplating a mountain or an endless sweep of ocean can help us see our true size.

A kindly deed is a little seed that groweth all unseen, and lo, when none do look thereon, anew it springeth green.

The place where you stop to admire yourself may be the place where you stop permanently.

Integrity means:
living up to the best in yourself;
having the courage of your convictions;
being true to yourself; for if you are false to yourself, you cannot then be true to anyone.

Obstacles are things a person sees because he has taken his eyes off his goal.

Failure is the line of least persistence.

When the Bible speaks, the argument is over.

*When you think of the joys you are able to share
With your friends or your neighbors or people who care,
And whatever good health has been keeping you there,
Be thankful.*

*For the freedom that's given the sound of your voice,
Plus the right to embrace any faith of your choice;
When the good things of life give you cause to rejoice,
Be thankful.*

*So for all of your blessings, the least to the best.
And the ills you've escaped, along with the rest,
To your heavenly Father by whom you've been blessed,
Be thankful!*

