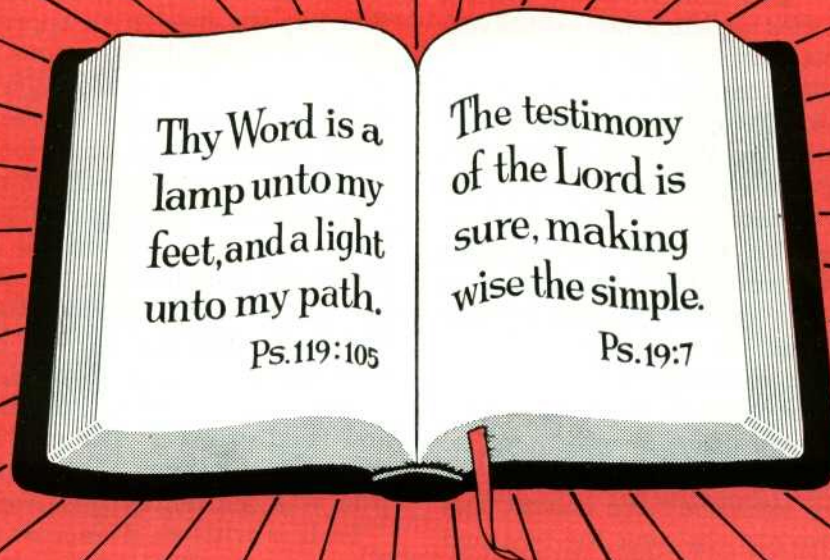


Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



Let's Call It Paganism
Teach Me, O Lord
The Sabbath of the Bible
The Marks of the Christian Life
Index for 1978

Exclusive?

TO BE exclusive is to be unpopular.

But there are many "exclusives" in this world. A key is an exceedingly exclusive sort of thing. If it isn't exclusive, who wants it? A key that will open any lock, or a lock that will open with any key would be of little use to anyone. We are glad that keys are exclusive.

Garden seeds are exclusive. Each seed will produce only one type of plant, only one. There is no need to wish for a turnip seed to produce a head of cabbage, even if the seeds look almost identical. But aren't we glad? Aren't we glad that when we plant a certain type of seed we can know exclusively what type of plant we will get?

In dealing with the physical world, all of us are exclusive; the options are limited by our human inabilities. We can't have everything, only a choice of things; and when we make a choice we *include* something and *exclude* something else. We can't eat all kinds of foods; so we choose. And in making that choice, some foods (probably those we like least) are excluded. We only need one house to live in; and in choosing that one house, we exclude all others. When we choose which type of auto we will drive, or which clothes we will wear, or which item we will purchase, aren't we being exclusive? We choose, and we trust that we are choosing the best and excluding the inferior, or less desirable, or less appropriate.

Our most significant choices—and exclusions—are in matters pertaining to our eternal salvation. Here again, we can't have everything; something must be excluded. And why not make choice of the best—exclusively? Isn't the wisest person the one who is most "exclusive"? Isn't it wise to select just the *right* type of reading material, to the exclusion of all that is questionable or debasing? Isn't it wise to select just the *right* type of clothing, to the exclusion of all that is immodest or unrepresentative of our great cause? Isn't it wise to select just the *right* type of conversation, to the exclusion of all that is unnecessary, cheap, frivolous—or

worse? Isn't it wise to select just the *right* friends, to the exclusion of all who might hinder us? Isn't it wise to be exclusive, when we aspire to becoming the elect of God, even the sons and daughters of the Highest?

Exclusive? Yes! exclusive of anything and everything that is less than the very BEST. Then the BEST will be ours—forever. ●●

First Things First

ALMOST everyone at some time has the responsibility of earning a living. In this way we develop an appreciation for the value of material possessions and the necessities of life. This is necessary and good; but it is possible that that appreciation may become overdeveloped until too much of our interest is centered on the things of this life.

Jesus gave a very pointed lesson on proper values. He said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). He followed this statement with the parable of a rich man who prospered and planned on more and more prosperity: "I will pull down my barns, and build greater." The rich man's life was centered on "things," but he soon found out who was Master in this world.

So it is with us. *Things* of this world can disappear so quickly. Even life itself is ours only by the grace of God.

Jesus continued by saying, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment" (Luke 12:22-23). And then He summarized His lesson, saying, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (v. 31).

First things must come first. There are greater things to be gained than more and more of that which sustains and comforts the body. We are here for a purpose; what we do now is determining our eternal destiny. What are we choosing—"things" or God? ●●

MEGIDDO means

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

We believe

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

Bible Quotations in this issue:

Unidentified quotations are from the King James Version.

Other versions are identified as follows:

NEB—*New English Bible*

NIV—*New International Version*

NAS—*New American Standard*

RSV—*Revised Standard Version*

TLB—*The Living Bible*

TEV—*Today's English Version*

Phillips—*The New Testament in Modern English*

Berkeley—*The Modern Language New Testament*

Weymouth—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

Megiddo Message

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Let's Call It Paganism

IF A faithful first-century Christian brother could chance to visit our land during this season of the year, he would probably guess quite easily that it is Saturnalia season. Yes, he might think our nation quite as pagan as ancient Rome. The spirit of revelry, the drinking, the feasting, the merriment, all would be too familiar; and he could probably tell us the significance of a good many of the common decorations, though the gay-colored lights and the luminous tinsel might puzzle him. But if someone should tell him that this festival was not Saturnalia but a celebration in honor of the birthday of his Lord and Master, he would probably stare at his informer in wonderment. What conceivable connection could there be between Saturnalia and Christ?

To many of us the event just comes and goes, and we give the far-flung paganism little thought; but "'tis the season to be jolly" is the message greeting one at every turn. Though some retain a religious meaning in the background to justify it all, even many of the celebrators agree that the festival has gone full-circle pagan.

Foremost among the promoters of the season are the commercial interests of the land. There is much to be gained in dollars and cents, and no merchantman wants to miss his share. On the first day of the Christmas shopping season, our local newspaper reported as follows:

"Business was brisk. The horses were frisky. Santa said he had come by plane from the North Pole just for the lighting of the Liberty Pole holiday lights.

"Downtown it was the traditional opening day of the Christmas shopping season. And shop they did. . . . 'It was the biggest day I've seen in my four years here,'" said one merchant. "It looked like an excellent crowd," said another. "The people have been coming through the doors since we opened," reported a clerk. "The store is crowded." It was the beginning of a "very merry Christmas" as merchants all over town were "made merry by the jingle of the cash registers."

So it goes, year after year. Along with the extra shopping, partying, decorating, gift-giving, and get-together comes an occasional stern reminder not to forget the "real meaning of Christmas," but the whisper is faint in comparison to the blatant noise of the commercialism. Indeed, a "real Christian meaning" is hard to find anywhere—because it isn't there. The irreverent manner of celebrating is, in fact, quite close to the "real meaning" of the date—much nearer than formal Christian churches like to advertise. But facts are facts. Christmas is a holiday rooted deep in paganism, and the pagan manner of celebration befits the date.

Long ago, when the Saturnalia was supposedly "christianized," the festival retained many of its time-honored customs.

When people talk of putting Christ back into Christmas, they express a desire for the impossible—how can you put *back* something that was never *there*? The leading article in a foremost religious magazine last year was entitled: "Let's Give Christmas Back to the Pagans." This could be done, if everyone were like-minded.

Origin of December Celebration

December 25 was not observed by the earliest followers of Christ. Only after two or three centuries, when enthusiasm and zeal for the unadulterated teachings of Christ had all but vanished, did professing Christians begin to adopt beliefs and practices from their non-Christian neighbors.

The church at Rome was especially plagued with the problem. Rome's official religion was dominated by the worship of the god Saturn; and during December, an annual, week-long feast was held in his honor—called, appropriately enough, the Saturnalia. The final day of the Saturnalia was the Brumalia, meaning "the first day of winter"—which fell on December 25 on the new calendar of Julius Caesar.

The Saturnalia was not the invention of the Romans, however. It had its roots in the mystery religions of ancient Babylon, in rites and rituals so pagan that no decent magazine or paper today would even allow some of them publication space.

Official Christendom of the Roman day frowned on the Saturnalia celebration for quite some time, though its observance was popular among many in the church. It was a once-a-year time of pleasure, a time of masquerading in public, a time of sumptuous feasting, of giving gifts to one another for good luck, and general all-out revelry.

During Saturnalia season, the Romans decked their halls with boughs of laurel and other evergreens and kept small lamps lighted to ward off the demons that they believed to be hovering nearby. Such practices were nearly universal through the Empire, and thoroughly pagan in origin.

Quite naturally, the Saturnalia celebrating was

more exciting than serious religion in the flagging Christian church. Much to the consternation of the more dedicated of the church leaders, many who claimed to be Christian were also enthusiastic Saturnalia-keepers. What was the solution to this embarrassing problem? There was nothing to do but to forbid any Christian to keep the holiday. So the church issued the order: No Saturnalia celebrating for any who wished to retain their standing in the church.

But it was a futile gesture at best. It soon became obvious that the ban was worse than useless; so, in the eyes of the practical—and non-spiritual—church leaders, the next logical step was to somehow “christianize” the Saturnalia. They did this by attempting to point the December 25 festival away from the rebirth of the physical sun and toward the “Sun of Righteousness.”

(Continued on Page 6)

Let Us Pray . . .

Merciful God, our heavenly Father, we need Thee every hour, but of all hours this is the most desperate. In this hour of worship we shall be reminded of duties neglected, of callings unattended, and of instructions ignored. Help us to be moved by Thy spirit of holiness, that there may be created within us now the sources that send us from Thy presence, to serve through faithful and obedient discipleship.

Grant that we may never tire of continual watchfulness and so not give Thee our best. Warn us when we offer to Thee only the ragged edges of our talent or the leftovers of our energy. Pardon us when we fail to redeem the time given us and expect of Thee a full day's pay. Inspire us to the full use of our minds so that we will not sell out to easy solutions. Encourage us to do more than play with life, lest at times we demonstrate that we do not want to be responsible.

Open our eyes to Thy light; open our ears to Thy will, and set our feet upon the path of obedience. Make us responsive to human need, and embarrassed by neglect and indifference.

We thank Thee for Thy Word, the Bible, and for our understanding of its teachings. We thank Thee for its precepts and promises, and for the direction that it gives to our lives. Help us always to heed its directions, to follow closely within the limits of its guidelines, shunning everything

that it condemns, giving ourselves the freedom to do only the things which it permits.

Help us to carefully avoid indulging in any interest which Thou canst not condone. May we as active Christians keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to take no part in their pagan practice of celebrating our Lord's birth at this season of the year, the event once known as the Winter Solstice in honor of the Unconquered Sun, and later as the Roman Saturnalia.

May we carefully guard against learning the way of the heathen, of the people of the world who know not Thee, not only in the matter of celebrating this so-called Christmas, but may we not cater to any demand of the flesh which appeals to us more than the doing of Thy holy will. The people in olden days set up idols in their hearts and worshiped them, and set the stumblingblock of their iniquities before their faces; warn us against any such surrender to an unholy interest; it surely will make us pagans in Thy sight, and unfit us for a place in the world to come.

Our Father, we wait in Thy presence this hour for we are mindful that Thou art Creator and Sustainer of life. We are incapable of living at our best and wander aimlessly when we do not listen to Thee. Silence the things which beg for our attention, and may our ears hear Thy Word, and may our hearts respond to Thy voice.

Grant us an awareness of Thy presence, power and peace. We breathe our prayer in the name of the Lord of our lives, even Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Christians could now observe the day with clear conscience—if they just remembered that they were perpetuating the memory of the Sun of righteousness rather than the sun-god!

How well this idea succeeded can be judged by the date that is still celebrated, and the manner of the celebrating—with the same midwinter greenery, merry-making and lights of the Roman Saturnalia. In the fourth century, an additional and even greater church stamp of approval was given the December 25 holiday when the date was officially proclaimed as the birth-date of Christ. This was convenient for the Christians who still celebrated with some reservations; now the Saturnalia was the “Mass of Christ,” Christmas.

But the change was in name only. The celebration continued to bear all the marks of the old winter solstice. When some more pious persons complained, the Pope tried to ban the more riotous revelry, but the enthusiasm for the popular festival continued unabated.

During the fifteenth century, the holly, ivy, and evergreens were still going up every Christmas, the torches were lighted, and strange masked dancers called “mummers” clowned in the streets. Ridiculous ceremonies were performed in the churches; the Europeans exchanged gifts, as had their Roman predecessors, now in the name of Christ, as types of the holy birthday presents rather than as pagan goodluck tokens. But the great winter festival included the long bouts of eating and drinking and general merriment.

This was the general practice. However, there were a few dissenters. In England the Puritans and Pilgrims refused to observe Christmas. It was banned under their Commonwealth government. They also objected to many of the customs of the event as relics of pagan days, even though they had long since had sacred meanings applied to them. If the Puritans had had their way, there would never have been a Christmas celebrated on the American shores. The observance of Christmas in any manner was illegal around 1621, not only in Plymouth but also in Boston and in the entire Massachusetts Bay Colony. Gradually, however, Episcopalians and others who felt strongly about celebrating the season brought it back. Very slowly it became permissible. However, it wasn't until 1856 that it became a legal holiday.

Our Attitude Today

There are those who justify the festival because it brings so much joy and happiness to so many people. But is there no other way to find joy? Someone has suggested that the wilted, dying,

flaking Christmas tree is an appropriate symbol of the Christmas joy. As soon as the gifts are given and the party is ended, the spirit dies: It fades quickly as the unpaid bills begin to come due, and the hangover continues to ache, and the seasonally higher crime, suicide and divorce statistics come in. The joy is so shallow, so momentary. It brings a spark of happiness for a time, but the aftermath registers little real pleasure.

Perhaps one of the worst connections of the Christmas festival today is the displacement of Jesus Christ by the Santa Claus lie. “We worship Santa rather than Christ,” says an outspoken Catholic layman. “Whereas the true lesson of Christmas is a message of divine mercy and sacrifice, Santa is the front man for greedy corporations and the tutor in greed for millions of American children. He is the saint of ‘gimme.’”

This same man says that one of the “great disillusionments” of his life was when as a child he was finally told there is no Santa Claus. He vowed then that no child of his would ever have to suffer such a blow. “In years that have followed,” he says, “I’ve discovered many more and many better reasons for puncturing this over-inflated figure. The child, whose unformulated motto in life is ‘What’s in it for me?’ can scarcely overlook that, according to the information he receives, it is the jolly old elf rather than the Babe who delivers the tangible goods.”

The legend of Santa is also rooted deep in pagan tradition. Let's call the whole festival what it is: paganism.

The pagan background of the date and practices of Christmas are generally well known. However, the Roman Catholic church and most Protestant churches take the position that this mixing of paganism and Christianity is good, that it made heathen practices Christian.

Is this right? How does God feel about the mixing of that which is pagan with that which is pure and holy?

We can find our answer in the annals of ancient Israel.

They Worshiped Other Gods

Surrounded by pagan people who worshiped pagan gods, the Israelites were constantly tempted to idolatry and the pagan practices that came with it. Baal was the sun-god, and the prophets of God spared no words denouncing all the paganism associated with his worship. When Gideon was called to lead Israel, God told him to “throw down the altar of Baal, and . . . cut down the

grove that is by it" (Judges 6:25). The grove was a cluster of trees considered sacred in pagan worship. God told Gideon to *destroy* the altar and the grove, not to rededicate them to the worship of the true God. There could be no mixing of pagan and true.

In Jeremiah 10, we read another denouncing of pagan practices, "Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen. . . ." Then the prophet describes the manner in which the idol worshippers would fell a tree, set it firm, decorate it and finally bow down to it as a religious symbol. God does not say this practice is all right, if the worshiper keeps in mind the true God, but He says plainly through His Prophet: "Learn not the way of the heathen." Paganism and holiness could not be mixed.

Likewise, paganism and holiness cannot be mixed today. And when it comes to the December holiday festivities, every serious believer in Christ will keep himself entirely separate—physically, mentally, and emotionally. He will have no desire to worship at the shrine of paganism.

Our Greater Temptation

But unfortunately, the celebrating of December 25 is not the only form of paganism threatening us today. Paganism is anything foreign to God and holiness; we may not like to think of them that way, but all our old evil ways and propensities to sin are pagan. And when we serve them rather than serving God, when we hold to our own ways and revel in them, we are participating in paganism; we are following the way of those who know not our God. There is only one difference between our paganism and that which we see in the world around us: Those who have made no commitment to God are free to pursue their own ways and incur no penalty; we who have made a covenant with God, we are responsible.

This is the arrangement the Great Creator has established. He demands the wholehearted loyalty of those who have pledged it. Is He not the Creator of the universe, a self-existing, omnipotent, all-wise and all-powerful Being who has lived through the countless aeons of the past and will continue to live through all time to come? By His own declaration, He is the one eternal God, who requires help from none other and who can help and save to the uttermost; "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after

me, I, even I, am the Lord; beside me there is no saviour" (Isa. 43:10-11). "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me" (Jer. 27:5). He is the Great Creator, who has "made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he

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(FOOLISHNESS)



for

CHRISTIANS?

causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures" (Jer. 51:15, 16).

Is it not our highest, noblest privilege to worship so great and magnificent a Creator? Can we wonder that when the time came for Him to reveal Himself to a few select members of His human family, He declared Himself to be the one and only God, the only Being to be supplicated and worshiped?

"Thou Shalt Not . . ."

When the Law was given on Mount Sinai, the very first commandment had to do with the one God and His worship: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:2-3). And the second command is similar, forbidding the forming of any rival: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:4-5).

But such single-eyed, straight-forward obedience was not the natural bent of human nature. And it was not long before Israel *did* have other gods before the true God and other images before which they were bowing down. While still in the wilderness, while they were yet being sustained by manna from heaven and being led by the visible cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—even less than forty days after they had received the stern and exacting law of God, while Moses was yet in the Mount, the people said to Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Ex. 32:1). Even then they wanted a god they could see and touch.

The danger was ever-present, being the practice of all the neighboring peoples, and again and again Moses warned them. The Lord their God required their first and undivided loyalty. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, . . . the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Ex. 20:5, 7). "Thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14).

And we should never forget that the Lord *their* God is the Lord *our* God, and He was and *is* a jealous God; He must be first in our affections always.

And when He entrusts His saving knowledge to anyone in any age, He holds them responsible. We must not handle it lightly; we must not handle it deceitfully; we must not handle it indifferently. The God who sponsors it demands all of our loyalty, all of our allegiance; He will not be satisfied with a divided interest.

Danger, Danger

Again and again Moses warned Israel of the danger facing them. When they should be established in the new land which the Lord was giving them, the danger of imitating the pagan practices of those around them—and among them—would be multiplied. "I will deliver the inhabitants of the land into your hand; and thou shalt drive them out before thee. Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee" (Ex. 23:31-33). "*They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me.*" Well did God know the weakness of humankind; well did He know the tendency to compromise and co-exist. If they associated with them, they were certain to be contaminated with their evil practices.

They were not even to learn how the pagans worshiped! "When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, . . . take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the Lord thy God" (Deut. 12:29-31). There could be no mixing with paganism. The command was plain: "Thou shalt not." If anyone should tempt them saying, "Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet" (Deut. 13:2-3).

When Joshua took over the leadership of Israel, God's demands did not change: "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left; that ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: but cleave unto the Lord your God. . . . Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain

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Teach Me, O Lord

OF ALL the prayers recorded in Scripture, none is more frequently needed by me than this: "Teach me to do thy will, O God." This was the prayer of the Psalmist, and I want to make it my prayer also.

"Teach me to do THY WILL." I do not need to be taught to do *my* will. By nature, by instinct, or whatever name I give to the force that lies ready to control me, I can do *my* will. Having my own way is the easiest thing in the world. Putting "I" at the center of my thinking, planning, deciding, and living is no problem at all. Having my way is just "doing what comes naturally."

But to do Your will—for that I need help! I require a thorough re-education and re-orientation of life. I must enroll as a disciple of Him who said, "I do always those things that please" the Father. I must be willing to visit the classroom where God's people in other ages learned this lesson. I must enter Gethsemane where Jesus prayed, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Teach me to follow Him, to give up my will entirely, to do Thy will, O God!

"Teach me to DO thy will." My problem is not so much *knowing* Thy will as it is at the point of *performing* that will. I *know* better than I *do*!

I know that I must die to myself in order to live to You, but that is painful. It's hard to take up the cross! I know that I am to be holy, but it is so much easier to merely be conventional and nominal as a Christian. It is so much easier to take things as they come, without thinking too much about tomorrow. I know I ought to trust my life to Your directing, and think more about what I can do to please You than to please myself, but—but that isn't like me!

I know I ought to pray more, but it's so hard to find the time. I know I could do less talking about secular issues and spend less time reading things that do not profit, but these things are so much easier, and so much nearer, and take so much less effort. It is so easy to keep occupied with the marginal interests of my own existence.

O God, it's not my ignorance of Thy will that

threatens me; it's the gap between the *knowing* and the *doing*.

"Teach ME to do thy will," O God. It's so easy to insert another name into the prayer. Teach my friends to do Thy will, my children, my wife, my husband, my brethren, my parents—teach them all to do Thy will. But me—?

Yes, I would have everyone to do Thy will. How prone I am to see the great needs of others, all their defective commitments, their huge rooms for improvement, and to forget my own.

No, it's not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, Lord, that is in need. Teach ME to do Thy will. For I must give an account of *myself* unto Thee!

So, "Teach me to do thy will," O God. For only Thou art great enough, in Thy wisdom, in Thy patience, in Thy love, to supply the need in my life. Only Thou art able to bless. Only Thou art able to forgive. Only Thou art able to save from everlasting to everlasting.

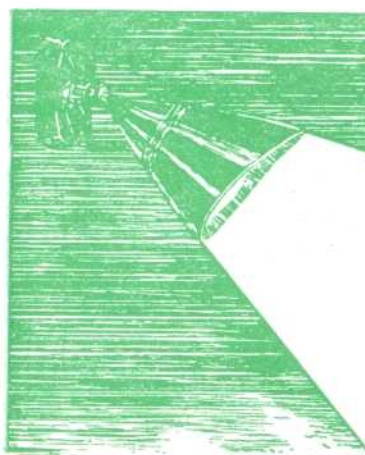
I am so small, Lord, so weak, so in need of Thy help and Thy knowledge. I come to Thee to learn. TEACH ME! ●●

Slow me down, Lord. I am going too fast;
I can't see my brother when he's walking past.
I miss a lot of good things day by day;
I don't know a blessing when it comes my way.

Slow me down, Lord. I want to see
More of the things that are good for me.
A little less of me and a little more of You,
I want the heavenly atmosphere to trickle through.

Let me help a brother when the going is rough;
When folks work together life isn't so tough.
Slow me down, Lord, so I can talk
With some of Your angels. Slow me down to a walk!

—Author Unknown



SCRIPTURAL SPOTLIGHT

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"—Philippians 2:5.

THE APOSTLE Paul is addressing himself to a small church congregation in Philippi. The church is young. The Apostle himself had been instrumental in its founding—which had not been achieved without suffering, for he had been severely flogged and then imprisoned during his first visit to Philippi. But his efforts had met with a degree of success. Now a small community of believers gathered regularly there to strengthen themselves in the faith of Christ.

Leaving the church at Philippi, Paul had traveled on to other fields of adventure, which had brought him eventually to a prison in Rome. It is from this latter place that he is writing to the Philippian brethren. It is another of those letters in which he refers to what evidently weighed heavily on his mind: the care of all the churches. It was one thing to start a church, but quite another to keep it going. These little groups of Christians were tiny islands in a vast sea of paganism, and could easily be engulfed. All around them, in streets and houses, in markets and shops and buildings, at every corner of their lives, were sights and scenes, ideas and standards of conduct against which they must for ever battle. It was the problem of inhaling paganism or heathenism with every breath they breathed.

Would they stand—would they survive—would they resist the steady, insidious pressure of their pagan environment?

We can understand the anxiety of a man like Paul, so interested in their welfare, so helpless to strengthen or help them, confined to a Roman prison. What could he do but write? And so he poured out his soul in his letters, letters which have come down to us as a part of sacred Scripture.

The theme of Philippians is that of many others of his letters. It is the ever-present pertinent question, What does it mean to be a Christian? What should be one's outlook in life? How should

one behave who is "in Christ"? What guiding principles should constrain and compel his conduct?

Paul did more than to give them a code of rules. He lay before them a principle which is the essence of all Christian living: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Let *this* mind be in you—how can such a command be obeyed? The first step is to give up one's own mind. We cannot have our own mind and the mind of Christ at the same time.

To have the mind of Christ, to look at life from His point of view, to react to the stimuli or the provocations of life as He would react, to aim at the goals that enthused and inspired Him, to consider fine and beautiful what He admired—all this transcends any set of rules. It is principle that draws one by its holiness and perfection. To have the mind of Christ in us is literally to look out at life through the eyes of Christ.

What was the mind of Christ? The Master Himself revealed His standards, first of all, in the Sermon on the Mount. What did He admire?

He pronounced a blessing on all who are willing to stay their entire trust in God. There would be blessing for those whose hearts are broken and contrite, for those whose spirits are meek and submissive to the control of the Highest. There would be abundant satisfaction for those longing for righteousness as a starving man longs for food. There would be blessing for those who act from motives that are absolutely pure, who are ready to be anything or nothing for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.

Paul himself tells of the qualities that possessed the mind of Christ: "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Could any humility surpass this, as He submitted to an ignoble death at the hands of cruel and heartless enemies? When He had given His life and been obedient even to

death on the cross, could any obedience surpass this? But see the honor that follows: "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (vs. 9-11). Could any other inclination of mind have achieved for Him anything greater than this? We know it could not.

We need more and more of the mind of Christ. It is that fine pattern of behavior which makes every act of life a beatitude, every thought a jewel, and every duty an act of praise. It is this Christlikeness which will gain for us a place in His Kingdom, where He will sit down upon His throne with those who, like Him, have overcome (Rev. 3:21). ●●

WATCH!

I will tell you of an incident pertaining to watchfulness. In our small town, Sunday is the most appropriate day for funerals and burials. Unlike a city, which has caretakers, many of the brethren give their service for grave digging, etc.

On a recent Sunday, after a funeral, the people were assembled at the graveside for interment of the body when all of a sudden a big snake came slithering down from the undergrowth and headed for the open grave. For a moment there was panic among the crowd, until the serpent was finally killed.

Keeping the cemetery and surroundings clean is necessarily being on the watch for the lowly intruders. Likewise, when we watch to keep out sin in all of its forms, we are keeping clean. No excuses here for unwelcome visitors.

The snake in the cemetery was a Blue Racer and harmless; but who wants to be disturbed by this unwelcome intruder? And my Christian friend, when we stand before the great Judge, who wants a sin or two clinging to the folds of his garment, just because he didn't watch closely enough?

Soon the great Master will come to rule and reign among men, and He will preserve and protect only those who serve Him. Let us take heed to the warning from Peter: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (II Pet. 3:11).

—From A Reader in Mississippi

JOYFUL - -

But Not JOLLY

We live in the era of the broad grin. Public figures it seems, vie with each other to see who can smile the longest. And while some of our people suffer in need, our politicians just smile and smile.

The press often displays page on page of brisk and cheery persons engaged usually in acts of empty vanity; the radio sounds forth daily the blithesome, carefree laughter of the world's paid giggle-artists who try to give the impression that they are just too, too happy, though their private lives may be despicable and anything but glad.

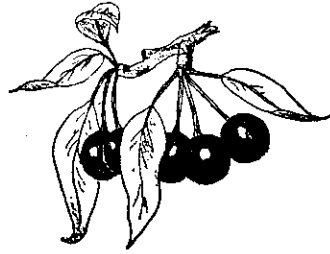
Too much of the twentieth-century empty, light-hearted merriment is covering a multitude of sins and real causes for remorse, though this fact seems not to occur to a majority of people who laugh and laugh through an empty, meaningless life. And this is the most ominous and foreboding hour since the days of Noah before the flood.

As striving Christians, we would do well to remember that the folly of the world ends in death. Empty laughing, bantering, jesting and joviality has no place in the life of the serious-minded life-seeker. Christians must be joyful, hopeful, radiant, even exultant in the prospect of attaining the goal toward which they strive. But such joy must be undergirded by sound thinking, solid determination, sober purpose, and serious responsibility in the knowledge that every man shall stand or fall before the Judgment seat of Christ as his works may merit. And what rapturous joy the serious aspirant feels in the prospect of acceptance in that Great Day! Only such joy is genuine and abiding. ●●

*Hold fast the Bible, though all else be taken;
Hold fast its promises safe and secure;
Never grow weary in sounding this token,
Sup from the fountain all healthful and pure.*

*Lamp for the feet which desire to be wary,
Guide for the youth that on Jesus doth call;
Hope for the humble and joy for the weary,
Stay for the godly, the best Book of all.*

Fruitful Fragments



The pessimist sees the work ahead; the optimist sees the result.

One's bitterest battles take place within himself.

Be careful! You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.

The big question is not whether God is on your side but whether you are on God's side.

Too many people sink because they are waterlogged with sin.

Question: If you don't believe in God because you can't see Him, why take your next breath of air?

Happiness has a unique way of seeking out those who are too busy to look for it.

When the head begins to swell, the mind stops growing.

The tongue is something like a worn tire—liable to slip if it goes too fast.

Trim yourself to suit everybody, and you'll soon be whittled away to nothing.

*Lord, grant a Mary mind to guide my Martha feet,
That those who see me may behold
Thy likeness, Lord, in me.*

*Christian, 'tis no time for sleeping,
There is work for you to do;
Jesus Christ, your Lord and Master,
Calls for workers—calls for you!*

*When faced with a mountain, I WILL NOT QUIT!
I will keep on striving until I climb over, or find a
pass through, or tunnel underneath—or simply stay
and start digging, and turn the mountain into a mine
of gold, with God's help.*

*Every new tomorrow
Is built upon today;
Now we lay foundations,
Now we chart the way.
We must use each moment
Wasting not a one,
Remembering the present
All too soon is done.*

*Some say that tomorrow
Never ever comes,
But there will be tomorrow
When today succumbs.
What really counts the most
Is how we use today
For soon 'twill be tomorrow—
No matter what we say.*

Reaching for the Eternal

I HOPE you are getting yourself all ready for an abundant entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour.

We are very close to that coming great event and all our thoughts and energies must be spent toward that end.

It is enjoyable to plan for the future in this present life, to set certain goals and work toward them. Some achieve what they set out after, through hard work and sticking to it. Others do not—not that they could not have done it but they lacked the right kind of gumption and plain everyday determination.

Well, our goal is not for this life but for the future. As strangers and pilgrims we can only make the best of life's offer here. Meanwhile, we are reaching for the eternal things. Our usual round of duties can be at times monotonous, but we can always improve the situation by the attitude we give toward them. The very thought that we are working for something by far better than what this life offers, prevents the sameness of our daily routine from deterring us. A song in the heart and a prayer on our lips I find to be a tremendous lift, and we are not likely then to fall into the gloom of things.

There is no reason for defeat in our spiritual lives. Pausing often to thank our kind heavenly Father for His patience and love, let us conscientiously be up and do our best to get rid of our faults and failures. ●●

—Contributed

MEGIDDO MESSAGE

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God."

The Sabbath of the Bible

REMEMBER the sabbath day to keep it holy." This was God's command to Israel. From this time forth they were to rest from their labors on the seventh day. And "because God says remember," says an Adventist, "we must not forget."

Was the Lord adding emphasis to this command by prefixing it with the word "remember"? Is the Sabbath to be remembered though all else be forgotten? In the minds of present-day Sabbatarians it is more forceful to say "remember" than to say "thou shalt" or "thou shalt not," hence the command is given precedence by the use of "remember."

A careful reading of the writings of Moses, however, does not support this view. The Sabbath command was only one thing Israel was to remember. They were to remember all the commands of the Lord; one was not above another. "Remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them" were the words of the Lord (Num. 15:39). Likewise, they were to "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt," and that it was God's great power that delivered them (Deut. 5:15). They were to remember the forty years "which the Lord thy God led thee . . . in the wilderness," testing them, proving them and teaching them that to obey is better (Deut. 8:2).

They were to "remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18); without Him they would have nothing. They were to "well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt" (Deut. 7:18). A God that could do such wonders could do yet more.

Israel had much to remember, much more than just keeping the Sabbath. And we today have much to remember. Jesus said "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32), and Paul said to "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:35); but neither Jesus nor Paul said that we should remember to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. No, the command to keep the Sabbath was for Israel, and it was not more important than any other command. When the nation of Israel ceased to exist, the

laws governing that nation ceased. The Sabbath command was but a part of a national law that passed away.

In this issue we will complete our study of the Sabbath of the Bible, showing that the entire Mosaic law was abolished, that it was not a perpetual law for all time. We will discuss the Sabbath as part of Moses' law and study that more important sabbath yet to come, the "rest that remaineth," symbolized by the Mosaic Sabbath.

IV. THE LAW OF MOSES ABOLISHED

"The Sabbath stands or falls with the law. If the law is still in force, the Sabbath is still in force. If the law is done away, then the Sabbath is done away. The Sabbath is an integral part of the law, and its future is bound up with it. What happens to one happens to the other." This quotation from a publication in support of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath intact speaks the truth, but the writer did not intend it to prove that the Law, including the Sabbath, had been abolished.

The Sabbath law, like the entire Mosaic law, was a wise institution for Israel, but under the Pharisees it had developed into "an intolerable interlude of joyless restraint," according to one writer. To the original command, the Pharisees had added 39 Sabbath proscriptions, making it almost impossible for anyone to "keep the Sabbath" in their eyes. It was for this reason that Jesus reminded them that the "sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). What had been instituted as a day of rest for all had developed into a ritualistic day where it became more important to watch one another for minute Sabbath-breaking than to honor the God who had given the law in the beginning.

In our last lesson we discussed the end of the law according to Jesus and Paul, showing clearly that it is no longer in force. But there is yet more evidence on the subject; if the writings of Jesus and Paul left doubt, the writer of Hebrews surely clears them away.

B. Paul and the End of the Law

It is to Paul that we are indebted for much of our knowledge concerning the end of the Law. Had we lived as close to the time of the end of the Law as did he, we would find the subject easier to understand. By putting together what Paul wrote in his various Epistles we can better ascertain his teaching.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul described the old Law as a "ministration of death written and engraven in stones" (II Cor. 3:7). There can be no question that his reference is to the Law, for none but the Ten Commandments were ever "written and engraven in stones." And it is also clear in the context of verses 7-11 that the Law was "done away." The text is plain. And if anyone should wonder whether the Law done away was "moral" or "ceremonial," Paul states plainly that it is the Law that was "written and engraven in stones" that was done away.

Paul again talks about the Law in his letter to the Galatians, emphasizing that it has been done away. From Paul's letter it is evident that many of the Galatian brethren were still holding to the letter of the Law, believing it necessary to "observe days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal. 4:10). They had listened to Paul and started in the way to follow Christ; now he finds them turning back to the law of Moses.

The matter was of such great importance that Paul wrote much on the subject. "O foolish Galatians," he addresses them, "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, . . . Are ye so foolish?" (Gal. 3:1-3). And again in chapter 4, he chastises them for turning away from Christ and following the old Law: "How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you. . . . Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good" (Gal. 4:9-17, NIV).

Nothing could be gained by turning back to an old law that was no longer in force, hence Paul pleaded with them to follow him as he followed Christ.

Continuing his dissertation of the Law versus Christ, Paul explains the two covenants by means of an allegory. He uses the historical account of Hagar and Sarah, with Hagar representing the covenant made on "Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage," and Sarah representing the "truth which came by Jesus Christ," which makes men free (Gal. 4:22-31). "Stand fast therefore in the

liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage," he pleads (Gal. 5:1). Paul appeals to them to stay with Christ and remain free from the law of Moses. The old Law was abolished; it had fulfilled its purpose. Salvation is available only through following Christ. Observing special days alluded to the sabbaths and feast days of the Law. Are you so foolish as to return to them? asks Paul. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5). One man may esteem one day above another, but to Paul one day was not above another. The seventh day was not above the first.

A careful study of the book of Galatians provides convincing evidence that Moses' law was not binding on Christians, hence the Sabbath law was no longer in force.

C. Hebrews and the End of the Law

"If the law is still in force, the Sabbath is still in force," says the above-quoted author. We are confident that the Law is **NOT still in force, hence the Sabbath is not in force.** The law given to Moses was a law for Israel and for Israel only: "The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day," declared Moses in Deut. 5:3. It was not a law or covenant before the nation of Israel existed, nor was it a covenant or law forever.

With the advent of Christ the Mosaic law became useless. It was no longer a teacher, for Jesus showed plainly that His law superseded it; it was no longer of value as a national law because Israel was no longer a nation, but a state under the laws of Rome. It had served its purpose and was now ready to disappear altogether. In the words of Paul, "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25).

These words, together with his letter to the Corinthians, make plain Paul's position concerning the Law: It was now obsolete; it had come to an end. It had been a "ministration of death, written and engraven in stones" that had been "done away," or as rendered in more modern translations of II Cor. 3:11, it was "fading away" (NIV); it "lasted for a while," (TEV); it was "temporary," (JB); it "faded away" (RSV); it "was soon to fade" (NEB).

All of these renderings leave no room for doubt that the Law came to an end—and when the

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Law ended, the Sabbath law ended with it. And where Paul leaves off, so to speak, the writer to the Hebrews takes up the subject, giving more evidence that Christians of that time and today are not under the Law. We will study some of his evidence.

1. Christ, our High Priest. The Levitical Priesthood was as much a part of the Mosaic law as was the Sabbath. Hence, if we were still bound by the Law and obligated to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, we should be following the Law concerning the priesthood.

The writer to the Hebrews shows clearly the end of the Law through the change in the priesthood. Christ is our High Priest, not under the Mosaic law but under the royal law, God's law that existed from the beginning. "For every high priest is taken from among men and appointed . . . before God, . . . he is called by God, as indeed Aaron was. So it is with Christ: he did not confer upon himself the glory of becoming high priest; it was granted by God, who said to him, 'Thou art my Son; . . . ' as also in another place he says, 'Thou art a priest for ever, in the succession of Melchizedek'" (Heb. 5:1-6, NEB).

The writer continues his discussion in Chapter 7 (also from the New English Bible), explaining the change in the priesthood, showing clearly that we are no longer under the Law: "Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for it is on this basis that the people were given the Law), what further need would there have been to speak of another priest arising, in the succession of Melchizedek, instead of the succession of Aaron? For a change of priesthood must mean a change of law. And the one here spoken of belongs to a different tribe, no member of which has ever had anything to do with the altar. For it is very evident that our Lord is sprung from Judah," a tribe which had no connection with the priesthood.

"The argument becomes still clearer, if the new priest who arises . . . [owes] his priesthood not to a system of earthbound rules but to the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. . . . The earlier rules are cancelled as impotent and useless, since the Law brought nothing to perfection; and a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God" (vs. 15-19). The old Law was cancelled "as impotent and useless," or as rendered by the Revised Standard Version, it was "set aside because of its weakness and uselessness." It had filled its place well, but it was now no longer needed.

The writer leaves no room for doubt that the old Law, including the Ten Commandments, passed

away with the advent of Jesus Christ, our High Priest. He clinches the argument near the end of the chapter: "Those other priests . . . are prevented by death from continuing in office; but the priesthood which Jesus holds is perpetual, because he remains for ever. . . . The high priests made by the Law are men in all their frailty; but the priest appointed by the words of the oath which supersedes the Law is the Son, made perfect now for ever" (Heb. 7:23-28, NEB).

The Law had been superseded by Christ's law as we learned in our last lesson. "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, . . . But I say unto you . . ." His statements were forthright and unequivocal. His law, His commandments took the place of Moses' law—including the Ten Commandments. There was no longer a Ten Commandment law as many would have us believe, but a law that was deeper, reaching even to the thoughts and intents of the heart; broader, covering nine of the Ten and more; and wider—wide enough to reach even to us of these last days. His commandments covered everything the Ten had in the old Law—with one exception: Nowhere did He command us to keep the Sabbath!

2. The old covenant or Law taken away. Throughout his Epistle, the writer to the Hebrews contrasts the two covenants. They are described as "first" and "second," and again as "old" and "new". These two covenants are the same as those illustrated by Paul in his letter to the Galatians, where he proves without doubt that the old covenant or law has passed away.

Using the account of Abraham's two wives, Hagar and Sarah, and their two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, Paul creates an allegory to show the end of the old Law. Hagar represents the covenant made on "Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage," and Sarah represents the "truth which came by Jesus Christ," which makes men free. Their two sons—both sons of Abraham—represent the children of the two covenants, whether Jew or Gentile. Paul denotes the covenant from Sinai by the "bondwoman," while picturing the children of Sarah as "free." The Sinai covenant (Moses' law including the Ten Commandments) is described as bondage, and says Paul, "Be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1); "Cast out the bondwoman and her son" (Gal. 4:30). The old covenant was no longer needed, it was "cast out," done away forever.

The writer to the Hebrews confirms Paul's words: "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9). When Christ took away the old covenant, He removed it completely. There was a complete change of the law,

an entirely new divine order with Christ at its head. Why? The old covenant, the law of Moses could not make men perfect. Outward obedience is not enough, hence the need for a new and better law, "the bringing in of a better hope . . .; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. 7:18-19). And with the old covenant, the old Law, went the Sabbath command. The Sabbath "stands or falls with the law," as before stated. The Law fell, and the Sabbath law ceased.

V. THE SABBATH AND US

Considering the abundant evidence in the Scriptures that the law of Moses terminated with Christ and with it the Sabbath command, the question arises: What shall we do? Should we still keep the seventh day? Or shall we observe Sunday as is customary in our land?

The arrangement as established under the law of Moses that provided for one day of rest in seven was for the benefit of man and has been followed down through the ages. Our minds and bodies need rest, and the interruption of the work-a-day schedule by one day of rest is profitable physically, spiritually and mentally. We need the spiritual uplift to be found in fellowship with others of like faith at worship services. A stimulating sermon and Bible study leaves us better prepared to face the world each Monday morning.

Why do we keep Sunday and not Saturday? First, because there is absolutely no proof that Saturday is the seventh day of God's week. Second, we do not keep it because the day itself is not important. In Romans 14, Paul makes a special point that whatever day we might choose does not matter. "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord" (vs. 5-6). Paul had earlier written: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1).

In keeping with the words of Paul, who received his ministry direct from Christ (I Tim. 1:12), we observe Sunday. This is the day set aside by our country and since it in no way conflicts with the law of God, we keep it as a day of rest and special worship services.

VI. THE SABBATH—A SHADOW

The Law was a "shadow of good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). What could be less permanent than a shadow? Yet the Sabbath was said to be a "sign for ever" and a "perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:16-17). How can this be?

The sabbath law was to be "for ever" and "perpetual" in relation to the Israelite nation. Exodus 31:16 states this fact plainly: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant." The law was specifically for the "children of Israel"—not for all men of all nations; and it was to be observed "throughout their generations." When the nation should cease to exist, the sabbath law of that nation would also cease.

This same "perpetual" arrangement of Israel's laws is mentioned concerning the yearly observance of the Passover, which was to be "an ordinance for ever" and "throughout their generations" (Ex. 12:14, 24, 42). There was a "perpetual statute" concerning the clothing and consecrating of the priests (Ex. 29:9); the daily offering of incense upon the altar (Ex. 30:8); the peace offerings (Lev. 3:14-17) and meal offerings (Lev. 6:20); also the manner of eating the shewbread (Lev. 24:8-9). Certain cities in Canaan were said to belong to the Levites for "their perpetual possession" (Lev. 25:34). We understand all of these to have ceased when the nation of Israel ceased to be; so likewise the Sabbath law. In no way could a "perpetual statute" of any nation exist beyond the life of that nation. The "perpetual statutes" of Israel are not in force today, any more than those of Babylon or of Rome. They were to be for the duration of that nation only.

A. The Sabbath—A Type of the Rest to Come

The law of Moses was a good law for the people of Israel. It was given for a specific purpose and it served that purpose well. It was not intended for all people of all time and when its purpose had been fulfilled it was withdrawn in favor of a better law.

The Law made extensive use of symbol, type and shadow, some of them pointing forward to aspects of God's plan to be fulfilled many centuries after the nation of Israel ceased to exist. The tabernacle, established under the law of Moses, foreshadowed the spiritual tabernacle, a new and better order of government not yet established. The Priesthood consisting of a high priest and other subordinate priests, which had charge of the Tabernacle, was a type of Christ and the saints. Christ as High Priest and the faithful of the six thousand years, those made "unto . . . God kings and priests: . . . shall reign on the earth" (Rev.

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5:10). They will be in charge of the spiritual tabernacle, the new order of government.

Likewise, the Sabbath was a type or shadow. Paul's words in Colossians 2:16-17 describe it as such: "Let no man therefore judge you . . . in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come." The Sabbath was but a shadow of something better to come, of the great, seventh day of rest to follow the six days of toil and labor. The Mosaic arrangement of six days of work followed by a seventh day of rest foreshadowed the entire plan of God for this earth.

As shown in the Genesis allegory, God purposed to work six days and rest the seventh. These six days are six one-thousand-year days, and the seventh day, the day of rest, is the Millennium. In observing the Sabbath every seventh day, Israel was to be perpetually reminded of this better, enduring rest to come. Originally the Sabbath law served to protect laborers from incessant toil and to remind all Israel that they were no longer servants in Egypt but servants of God Almighty. Through the provision of one day's rest in seven, God was teaching those who would fully follow His law that there was something better yet to come.

1. The rest that remains. The rest foreshadowed by the Sabbath is yet to come. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). The context of this chapter shows that this rest has not yet been accomplished. "For if [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day" (Heb. 4:8). The writer was here referring to the rest given Israel when they settled in Canaan, but was reminding them of a better time to come.

This text is frequently used by seventh-day Sabbath-keepers to support their contention that the Mosaic Sabbath must be observed today, but there is nothing here to support such a claim. Concerning this rest, the writer cautions us to "fear" lest we "come short of it," showing that it is something more than resting one day in seven. Anyone is free to rest on that day, and there is nothing to fear if they do not. But entering into the future millennial rest depends upon our every word, thought and action—and failure is something to be feared, as the writer states at the beginning of the chapter: "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

Hebrews 4 has no reference to the seventh-day Sabbath except as it is used as a type of the coming greater Sabbath, the eternal Day of rest.

2. A continual sabbath. To rest one day in seven

is a God-given principle and it is a good one. But for the Christian it is not enough to give one day in seven to God. Christians are duty bound to keep a continual sabbath, the spiritual sabbath. The Christian must rest from every evil every day—not just one in seven.

This continual sabbath is described in Isaiah 58:13-14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." We must keep this spiritual sabbath continually by not "doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words." This is a sabbath far deeper and more significant than the seventh-day Sabbath for which so many would contend.

"Blessed is the man . . . that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off" (Isa. 56:2-5).

When we keep our hands from doing any evil, when we rest from our own ways and choose the things that please God, we are keeping the spiritual sabbath.

In Summary

The Sabbath under the Mosaic arrangement provided rest for man and beast. It served as a memorial to Israel's servitude in Egypt and pointed forward to a better rest to come. The spiritual sabbath, which lasts through the entire Day of salvation, provides rest from sin to all who observe it and points forward to that future day of rest when all sin, sickness, and even death will be unable to touch those who rest from sin now. In that future Day of rest there will be rest for man because his warfare against sin is over; there will be rest for God because Christ and the saints will have assumed dominion over the earth; there will be rest for the earth when evil is subdued and peace reigns supreme. "Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest" (Heb. 4:11). ●●

Kathy
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We Need Discipline

YES, we need discipline. And I'm not thinking of the disciplining of the little ones that are entrusted to our care, although that too is essential. I mean we *parents* need discipline.

I know we like to think we are "beyond that stage," but we never outgrow our need for discipline. We do get beyond the stage of having someone standing over us and saying, "You do this, or else . . ." (a fact which is admittedly unfortunate for us at times). But all good living, and most especially *godly* living, requires discipline. It is that inner rein on our emotions that can keep us calm and controlled whatever the little ones contrive to do.

I was reminded of this the other day as I heard Gail's gentle voice floating in through the tiny opening in my kitchen window. "Cindy, dear," she called. I smiled as I watched Cindy drop her shovelful of fluffy snow and run to see what her mother wanted. Such a change! And in so short a time!

I knew the secret behind the change. Gail was learning—and so rapidly—what I worked so hard to master when my children were young. Many were the times when my nerves had been jarred as Gail shrieked at her four-year-old, to get into the house, or pick up her toys, or come to supper, or any other order which Cindy seemed delighted to shun. Finally an angry mother would stop her work and come out after the child. An unpleasant scene often followed, with little Cindy kicking and screaming as her mother dragged her to the house.

Not many weeks ago a frustrated Gail had rapped on my door, and I had told her a little of my own experience, thinking it might help her. Of course, when I held my first child in my arms, I was going to be the perfect mother. I had even attended classes on parent-child relationships, and had eagerly devoured books and magazine articles

dealing with child discipline, so felt fully prepared.

Up until the time Brenda began to creep, I thought I was doing quite well. But when Brenda was old enough to toddle about and get into every mischief conceivable, I decided that I didn't know very much about what to do with her.

I closed my eyes for a moment, and a picture of our three-year-old bundle of energy came before my mind once again, she who had caused me so many frustrations. The angry stomp of her foot, the defiant glare in her blue eyes, the impatient toss of her blond hair, all were scenes too familiar in our home.

One time, in my distress, I asked Neal's mother, who was visiting us, what I was doing wrong. "Could it be," she suggested discreetly, "that you are yelling at the child too much?"

Her words cut me to the heart. Surely I wasn't yelling too much at Brenda! Grandmother had forgotten how frustrating a three-year-old can be.

I tried to dismiss her suggestion, but her words kept coming to my mind, and I found myself mulling them over and over. And then I began to notice that occasionally—*quite* occasionally—I *did* yell at Brenda. Watching her in her better moods, I could not have believed it. But when the angel-face turned defiant and rebellious, well. . . .

"Yelling too much . . . yelling too much." Those words kept coming to mind at the most inappropriate times, it seemed. Like the time I came rushing into the kitchen to answer the telephone, and slipped and fell on the cornstarch which Brenda had dumped out on the floor and was enjoying squishing between her toes . . . I opened my mouth to yell. Another day I came in to find her up on the kitchen shelf digging into the middle of a fresh apple pie I had baked for company—again I started to yell. "Yelling too much"—I thought of those words again when I found her using her new magic markers to decorate our new bedspread.

So those words *did* apply. Yelling at her had become a habit I was hardly conscious of. Catching Brenda in a mischievous moment, I would scold and scold, then apply the needed measure of discipline. But that wasn't the answer. It wasn't working. The punishment might have been correct, but Brenda was "tuning me out" during the initial stage of the storm, thus the discipline was ineffective.

And what was the basis of the problem? My discipline wasn't disciplined!

There was the answer—I was sure of it. After taking it all to the Lord in prayer, I began an all-out effort to change my attitude and manner, to be more patient, to do less scolding and more

needful, loving teaching. And after I knew she understood what she *should* do and what she should *not* do, then I could discipline her as seemed best.

It was about then I made myself face another fact—that many of Brenda's activities that irritated me were really not wrong. Wasn't I making important lessons less impressive by my continual haggling over such things?

One baking day was typical. Of course, Brenda wanted her own little ball of dough to punch and shape. With all her "help" we managed to finish the pie in just about twice as much time as it should have taken, and the floor had much more flour on it than the bread board. But which was more important—the extra time spent, and the flour on the floor, or the mother-daughter relationship I was building?

Well, I talked on and on with Gail that day. I told her I didn't have all the answers, and I didn't have this one perfected, I was sure; if I had a young child now I didn't know how well I would be able to do. But I assured her that disciplining yourself is the first step—at least that is what I tried, and am still trying. And I am convinced it works.

And if I may speculate, I think Gail is convinced, too. ●●

Let's Call It Paganism

(Continued from page 8)

among you, and shall make marriages with them and go in unto them, and they to you: know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:6-13).

What Israel Did

Well we know that Israel did not listen; Israel did not remember. Time and again they forsook the Lord to experiment with the ways of the paganism around them, and time and again they suffered. They fashioned their own images and then bowed to them and worshiped. The prophet Isaiah pointed this out dramatically:

"He heweth him down cedars: He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied; yea he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he

maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god" (Isa. 44:14-17).

This impresses us as paganism indeed; we marvel at such gross stupidity. How could any human creature, sustained by the breath of God, living by the mercy of God, be so foolish as to worship the work of his own hands! But—

More than one brilliant man—even in sacred history—has done it, and to his eternal ruin.

King Solomon did it. His close association with paganism was more than his faith could stand against. The Record reads: "King Solomon loved many strange women, . . . of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. . . . And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods" (I Kings 11:1-2, 8). Thus the worship of the true God—and all the salvation and blessing he might have had through it—was set aside.

King Asa did it. After 36 years on the throne, during which he served the Lord and prospered, he forsook the Lord to seek help from the King of Syria. The prophet of the Lord condemned him for this; yet he did it again. In his final sickness he sought not the Lord but "the physicians" (II Chron. 16). It was another fatal case of divided loyalties, and an otherwise brilliant career crashed in ruin.

The wicked King Ahaz did it. "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them," he said, "therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me." But there was no help to be had; "they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel" (II Chron. 28:23).

Paganism—Our Style

Now we do not hesitate to condemn these men. We quickly call it what it was: dabbling in paganism. They had seen what the God of heaven could do, and what the gods of the heathen could *not* do. How could they be so foolish? Surely they knew better.

But what of ourselves? Have we never sought help of any but the God of heaven—even when we knew better? Have we never fashioned a god of our own and sprinkled sweet incense before it? Have we never put any interest or affection ahead of the true and living God whom we have vowed to worship? Alas! We have. And shouldn't we call it what it is: paganism? *(Continued on page 20)*

Time and distance separate us from the idol-worshippers of old; but anything that challenges God's rightful first claim upon our affections or interests is just as idolatrous as were the images that were set up in ancient Israel. God's of human fashioning are legion, and include all sorts of objects of worship, from the tribal gods of the primitive peoples to the innumerable interests of the twentieth century. In the sight of God, they are all equal. They are all paganism.

What is our attitude toward them? We have no difficulty scorning the gods of the ancients, idols of wood or gold or stone; we have little difficulty disdaining the flagrant paganism of the December festival; but do we look with equal disgust upon our little ungodlinesses of thought, our secretly cherished imaginations and our selfish desires? Idolatry in God's sight is any undue devotion to unworthy objects. It is intense admiration, veneration or love for anyone or anything ahead of God. Pleasure seeking may be idolatry; a hobby, a profession, a business enterprise may monopolize too much of our attention and so dominate our lives. It may be our car, our house, our work, our money, our attainments, our mental or physical prowess, our social standing, our side interests, our self-importance. Strange gods are these, but gods none the less; and all are part of paganism. Many years ago the Lord described this type of idolatry to the prophet Ezekiel: "Son of man, these men have set up idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face" (Ezek. 14:3).

Our All to God

The God of heaven, Him to whom we have pledged our lives and all our trust and honor, must have our first and full allegiance. Are we willing? Are we willing to give up our little gods that give us pleasure now, all the little aggrandizements as we go along, all the petty honors of the present, to gain His eternal favor?

The apostle Paul warned about this same form of paganism. "The god of this world," he called it (II Cor. 4:4). "There be gods many, and lords many" (I Cor. 8:5). Oh, these little self-made gods! What need have we for care and watchfulness, what need to watch the stream of thoughts that flows through our mind. Evil imaginations, unlawful desires creep in so subtly and in such attractive disguises that almost before we know it we erect an idol in our heart—and worship it. Particularly watchful we should be when our mental powers are not involved with active duties, when our imagination is free to run—it so easily runs to mischief.

Some gods are easily destroyed; others we continue to love and cherish and give an occasional bow. We may not give them open obeisance, but in our secret chamber they are still exalted. How long? How long shall we be unmindful that God sees all, and knows all—and should be Lord of all? How long shall we do homage to that innermost secret longing of our own and set aside His command to worship Him and Him only?

Perhaps the god we are most prone to worship, the god which draws us most quickly into paganism, is self. Every way of our own seeming right to us, the temptation is great to burn just a little incense upon this altar of self and sniff its sweet fragrance. Oh, let us beware! We so easily go awhoring after other gods and forget the loyalty we have pledged to God. Loyalty means one has a definite destination, a fixed purpose in life, and a determined steadfastness in his pursuit. With loyalty to God comes power, poise, purpose, and a powerful strengthening of character.

We know the reward for wholehearted loyalty will be grand. Worshiping strange gods of our own making may be pleasing for a season, but only for a season. It will end in the bitterest of bitter disappointments. To God are known all of our ways, and He will recompense according to our works.

Oh, let us examine ourselves more closely in His presence. Where are our loyalties? What self-made gods do we still worship? What do we still love that we should abhor? What do we still cleave to that we should fling aside?

Let us pull out each idol, however small, from its hiding place, however deep, and call it what it is: paganism. Then let us grasp the hammer with both hands and smash it to shivers.

Someday we shall need the God of heaven on our side; we shall need Him desperately, as we have never needed Him before, when the pagan systems of men come crashing to the ground. And can we think He will come to our aid if we have had any images or interests ahead of Him?

Oh, why not eradicate from our hearts and lives anything that bears the slightest taint of paganism upon it, anything that could possibly incur His divine displeasure, even if it be our innermost cherished love. Then, when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming—because of some little idol in our heart. ••

The habits you acquire are either bobbers or sinkers on the sea of life. They either hold you up, or hold you down.

Fruitful

Branches

THE TEACHINGS of our Master were always simple, understandable. And nearly all were out of doors—by the sea, on the mountain, upon the road. They were of things familiar; He spoke of grain, sheep, a tree, a field, a vine, a fruitful branch.

We read in John 15:1-2, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Here it is the vine which our Lord selects to teach a lesson, to show the spiritual union which must exist between Himself and the members of His body, the Church.

It is easy to understand that a dead branch, or a branch severed from the vine, can never yield any fruit; so in the spiritual vineyard, the Christian branch cannot live apart from the sustaining teachings of Christ. His words, His life-giving words, must abide in every branch. Each must drink deep of the water of life in order to grow an abundance of precious fruit.

As living branches, we must keep our hearts open, a clear channel through which the life-giving water can flow in a never-ceasing stream. If obstructions of pride, envy, jealousy, selfishness, self-pity or any of the thirteen evils enumerated in Mark 7, clog the way, we will become an unfruitful branch bearing only withered leaves. The Master said that these would all be taken away at Judgment Day; such dead branches will be taken away and burned.

But every branch that shows signs of bearing fruit, He "purgeth it," prunes it, "that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).

This purging is a process which is contrary to the natural mind. It is a great work, and it cannot be accomplished by spasmodic effort. Only "by patient continuance in well doing" will the old growths of our own thoughts and desires, our old habits, one by one be purged away, that pure thoughts, lawful desires, and new habits may have room to grow. Only then will we become a more fruitful branch, bearing some thirty, some sixty and some a hundredfold.

Again we hear our Master drawing a lesson

from the vineyard: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." Our daily conduct is the fruit which will show if we are indeed letting His words sink deep into our hearts.

Our future life depends on being "like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit to maturity" (Ps. 1:3, paraphrased). All depends on our yielding fruit. This means we must conquer and rule our nature because our Master requires it. But what wonderful promises are held out to frail humanity for bringing one individual under control. There will be blessings of perfect health, riches, and honor beyond anything we have ever imagined, and an endless life in which to enjoy them.

It is for us to heed the counsel of James 5:7-8, "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

We have been granted a little time and opportunity to prepare for the coming harvest time, when the Husbandman will return to reap the fruit of the earth. How glad we will be then, if we have brought forth fruit unto everlasting life! ●●

God's Minorities

When Noah was building the ark, he was very much in the minority—

—but he won!

When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, he was a decided minority—

—but he won!

When Jesus Christ was crucified by the Roman soldiers, He was a conspicuous minority

—but He won!

When David, ridiculed by his brothers, went out to meet Goliath, in size he was in a decided minority—

—but he won!

When Gideon and his three hundred followers, with their pitchers and lamps put the Midianites to flight, they were an insignificant minority—

—but they won!

We Christians today are in the minority, but why fear? If God be for us, who can be against us?

—we shall win!

From
John the Elder



Sixth in a Series on the Epistle of First John

The Marks of the Christian Life

A Study of First John 3:10-24

ALL THROUGH his Epistle, the apostle John is very careful to distinguish between the believer and the non-believer, between "him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." In I John 3, he clearly admits no intermediate class; people are either children of God, or children of the "devil," subject to their evil passions and inclinations.

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (I John 3:10).

You can tell children of God by their conduct—they live by the divine precepts.

Then John emphasizes one living mark of distinction which is manifest by the children of God: righteousness. Especially is this shown in his love for his brother.

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (vs. 10-11).

The members of the Christian Churches knew this, but it was needful that they be reminded. Jesus and the apostles had all along urged Christians to love one another. Jesus had said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). It is said that the heathen world were amazed at the Christians, saying, "Behold, how the Christians love one another." There is no sin so destructive as the sin of hate, of malice, and bitterness.

To illustrate the tendency to evil, John reminds them of Cain.

"Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother, And wherefore slew he him? Be-

cause his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (v. 12).

Dark passions of hate boiled tumultuously in his breast; jealousy overcame him, until one day, aggravated by his brother's righteous deeds, he slew him.

One who hates another may not slay him, but he may try to undermine him, thwart his actions, combat his opinions, or berate his efforts. He may be cynical, contemptuous, indifferent. A less rigorous form of hate is dislike, which is often manifested by coolness; even this is far from God's standard of love.

In this day of religious freedom and indifference, there is frequently no strong opposition or hatred between the Church and the world. Believers may win the respect of those outside. Still the rule holds: Bad men do not like good men. The reason is that good men are a walking rebuke to the evil, even if they never speak a word to each other. Man is sure to bring more or less odium upon himself if he steadfastly adheres to living the Christ-life. Every true Christian has passed through periods when he was forced to find comfort in the words,

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you" (I John 3:13).

John the Elder now recalls a former time when he and his fellow Christians were in a state which he, figuratively speaking, calls "death." The life they now experience by practicing love one toward another is life indeed. John has simply changed his figure from "light" to "life," and from "darkness" to "death."

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (I John 3:14).

Love perfected brings eternal life. Hatred can end only in death, or destruction. Hence John is saying that they have passed from the state that brings eternal death to that state that brings eternal life.

We may be passing from one state to another, but as long as one single, unkind or unloving thought is harbored against a brother, our transition from one state to the other has not been completed.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (I John 3:15).

These words of John's may seem like a hard saying. That is how the Apostle of love expresses it, however, and it is for our admonition. Who can hear it?

It is a solemn indictment that the vice of hatred may find place among the "brethren." There may be Cains among church members. God judges the inner thoughts and feelings, the germ from which at anytime the deed may spring. It has been said, "Murder is only hatred in action; hatred is only murder in feeling." Morally, anyone who hates his brother is a murderer—in the sight of God. To seek one's own well-being at the cost of the well-being of another is the very essence of hate.

It is a mistake to confine the definition of hate to that violence of passion which may be aroused in men or women when anyone crosses their path. That man who calmly and without feeling sacrifices his brother to his own interest, is as full of hate as the man who loses control of his temper. If we let our brother sin without kindly telling him of his transgression, we are showing hatred toward him.

John views the life of the individual in the light of the end toward which he is traveling. He represents the one who harbors hate, malice, envy and revenge as having no title to eternal life.

"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I John 3:15).

In contrast to the evil example of Cain, John now holds up Christ as an example whereby we may know the virtue of love at its highest and best.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (I John 3:16).

The words "of God" are not in the original text. John is referring to Christ, who laid down His life as an example to us, that we should follow in His steps. One need not think that he has reference to Jesus' last single act of submission, the crucifixion. John is drawing attention to Jesus' whole

life. He laid down His own thoughts and ways. He did no sin, spoke no word of guile. When he was reviled, He reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not. He continually went about doing good. He taught the people how to sanctify themselves. His motto was not "Love thyself" but "Deny thyself." He denied Himself and became a perfect example for us. That is why John says we should do as Christ did: "he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." He laid down His life for us by example, and that is how we should lay down our lives for our brethren.

Now the Elder gives a practical illustration of expressing love one for another. If we see a brother in need and we open our hand to relieve him because God has put it in our power to do so, then we have indeed the love of God in us. But if we harden our heart against him and are unwilling to relieve him, it shows that the love of God which was in Jesus has no place in us.

"Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (I John 3:17).

"This world's good" may include material things, time, intellect or practical service. The word "bowels" which John uses is frequently used in the Scriptures as meaning "the seat of tenderness and affection." Love is the willingness to surrender that which is of value for our own life to enrich the life of another. Love is kind and considerate, eagerly helpful. Love is longsuffering, patient, forbearing, enduring; it does not retaliate against wrong, or return evil for evil. Love is appreciative of others, rejoicing in their advancement, their enrichment, their preference. Love is not suspicious, not envious. Love seeks good and rejoices in finding it. Indeed, the love of Christians one for another demonstrates more than anything else that we are Jesus' disciples.

John knows the tendency to admire great principles, and to neglect to carry them out. Thus he says,

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (v. 18).

John is not condemning the use of the tongue. It may be an instrument of great good. But fine words will never take the place of great deeds. Never can words take the place of kindly action when a man is in need. Let us not be content with even the strongest expressions of compassion and kindness to our fellow Christians, but let us demonstrate our love in proper acts of beneficence, even if the cost to us includes some self-denial.

Earlier in John's Epistle, he made it plain that our Christian walk is the test of faith. Our Christian walk will show whether we are of the light, or of darkness; whether we are of the truth, or error; whether we abide in Christ, or are of the world. Now he says that brotherly love shown by deeds of kindness is an evidence that God's saving truth is working in us. He says,

"And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him" (v. 19).

It is not the talking faith, but the working faith that assures our hearts now, as well as at His coming. It is by a working faith that the Christian encourages himself and gains confidence.

John pleads with Christians to labor wholeheartedly in the Lord that they may have sweet confidence before Him. "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." We might take John as saying that if our heart condemns us, then how much more will the all-knowing God condemn us. But John may also be speaking a word of encouragement here. The fact that "God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things" may also be a reason for pacifying the discouraged and troubled soul. If our heart or conscience condemns us, let us change our ways and go forward in our Christian walk. God knows all things, He knows our intents and motives. He is merciful and forgiving. This very knowledge of God gives us hope. There is no need of remaining in a rut of doubt and discouragement. Men can judge only by our actions, but God knows the longings and purposes of our heart. To the hypocrite who seeks only a cloak for his sins, the all-knowing God is a dread; but to the penitent soul, He is a comfort.

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God" (1 John 3:21).

John longs for Christians to walk so earnestly in the way of the Lord that they may enjoy sweet confidence in Him. Such confidence comes only when the heart feels no guilt of evil. The prophet Isaiah describes this confidence as the quiet assurance which comes to one as the result of righteousness: "The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17). While Isaiah was speaking of the glorious age to come, still there is "great peace" available now to those whose confidence is in God.

To have this confidence toward God indicates that our relationship with the Father will be intimate. Because of our sincerity and eagerness to do His will, we will go to Him often in prayer, assured that He will hear and answer us. Our prayers are answered because our will is in har-

mony with the Father's will. Always doing those things that are pleasing in His sight, we prove by our actions that His will is our will, and when we pray we ask that His will for us be done. Our deeds and our prayers are righteous. The prayers of him who delights in the Lord are nothing else than echoes of God's divine will. Therefore, because we ask that His will for us be fulfilled, we are confident that whatever comes to us is His sovereign will. Our prayers are answered. This will be true with us if our educated "heart condemn us not."

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (v. 22).

Then John sums up the commandments which the Christian must keep to merit fellowship with the Father and the Son.

"And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment" (v. 23).

The sum total of the Christian faith is "to believe in the name of Jesus Christ," and "to love one another." True religion combines faith and works. These two are inseparable. It is necessary to believe right doctrine, and then it is necessary to demonstrate it by a righteous life.

John is again aiming a warning against the popular theories of his day. Frequently, at a time of spiritual depression, there is a temptation to take hold of a new faith, hoping that it will be more powerful, or that it will offer an easier way of life. We are thankful for John's warnings that there is no easy way; his words are as timely now as they were then.

Much is contained in the words of John "believe on the name of Jesus Christ." Belief in Christ's name means of course to believe in Him, to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, that the gospel He preached was the only true gospel of salvation, that He in His life was an example of the pure and holy characteristics which we also must achieve in order to obtain eternal life, that He is now our Advocate with the Father, that He will come again and conquer all evil in the world. He will deliver us from mortality and invite us into His eternal Kingdom—if we truly believe.

John repeats that holy attribute which marks every true believer. Jesus Himself gave this command, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Christ was truly the embodiment of all holiness and good. And to believe in His name means to live as He lived, to be humble and obedient as He was.

"And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (v. 24).

Keeping His commandments is the key to abiding in Him.

Now John introduces the thought of the "Spirit." We may know that Christ abides in us by the presence of the spirit which He has given us. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). How is the spirit manifested in our lives? By the fruits of the Spirit. As a tree is known by its fruit, so then the Christian in whose heart Christ abides is recognizable by the fruit of the spirit he bears. This is John's practical test, whereby we may know that Christ—His principles, His teachings, His law—abides in us. "And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:22-24).

If we have the spirit of Christ abiding in us, we will be bearing its fruit. ●●

?uestions

"Why does the Bible say we are to pray to God in Christ's name, as in John 16:23?"

Jesus fills a very special and singular role in God's plan. His God-assigned name was to be "Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:23). He is also termed our "advocate with the Father" (I John 2:1), the one "mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

There are several occasions recorded in the Bible where a righteous person prayed to God in behalf of sinful people, and God heard and answered their prayer. Several times Moses prayed to God to spare the wayward Israelites and give them

another chance. After they were settled in Canaan, on one occasion they fell to worshipping Baalim and Ashtaroth. At that time the prophet Samuel convinced them to put away their pagan gods and serve the true God, and he prayed to God. The Lord answered his prayer (I Samuel 12).

The need for an intercessor in some instances arises from the fact that God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). If a person or a nation has rejected God and is living in open violation to His law, unless that person or nation repents and turns to the Lord, the Lord will not hear their prayer. This principle is stated by Isaiah: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. . . . When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:4, 15).

The prophet Isaiah then spells out the remedy: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (vs. 16-17). As soon as we show a desire to repent and change, God will hear and help. But until we reach that point, we must rely on someone who can intercede for us.

Paul's statement to Timothy (I Tim. 2:5) shows that there is "one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." It is a most merciful provision that while we are still in the sinful state we can have an intercessor or advocate in the person of Jesus Christ. That is why we can pray in His name.

There is another aspect to praying in Christ's name. If someone were doing something *in our name*, this would mean that he would be performing as we would be expected to, he would be expressing our aims, our standards, our ideals, and we would be viewed in the light of his performance. Just so, when we pray in Christ's name, we say we are approaching God just as Jesus would have. This means that the major characteristics of Jesus' life must characterize our lives. We must fill our lives with the things that filled His life—in short, we must be Christlike.

If we would pray truly in Christ's name, all our prayers and all our living must follow Christ. Praying in His name is not merely a phrase to repeat but a privilege and a responsibility to live the life distinguished by those things which made Christ the beloved of God. If we do this, we can be sure Christ will intercede for us and God will hear our petition and help us.

"I can't understand why a book like Songs of Solomon should even be in the Bible. What is the meaning of it? What do you get out of chapter 1, verses 5 and 6?"

Different Scriptural analysts have had differing ideas about the book. Some have thought it to be a collection of love and marriage lyrics existing at the time. Others have called it a love song by Solomon. But both of these would seem inadequate and inappropriate to a book of Scripture.

Perhaps the most widely accepted explanation is that the book has spiritual value as an example of the love of God for His people, His Church; and this explanation would seem far more logical and likely. A mere love song or a collection of existing love songs would never have been accepted into the canon of the Old Testament by God-fearing men, who were responsible for the choice of the books.

There is one Biblical statement that precludes the idea that the book could merely be informative from a natural or historical point of view, or a writing to entertain or enchant. That statement is found in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." "Things written aforetime," that is, the Scriptures, were written "for our learning" and to give us "hope." Where could the Christian secure any hope from reading a mere collection of love songs?

There is, however, a striking parallel between the secular love song and the Christian religion—Christianity is a religion of love. It has been said that Christianity is the most singing religion in the world. Some religions never break into song;

they have no language of love. The Christian faith is filled with it. The Bible, especially the New Testament, is a treasury of the highest type of love songs. It opens with Mary's exultant Magnificat. Then there is the angels' chorus, which the shepherds heard. Then Christ and His disciples are singing, even on the eve of His suffering. Paul and Silas knew how to sing even in prison, and Paul himself composes one of the most magnificent love songs, recorded in I Corinthians 13, which tells the fullest meaning of Christlike love. Paul admonished the early Christians to sing "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart" (Eph. 5:19, RSV; Col. 3:16). And the New Testament closes with the triumphant song that shall rise at the Marriage of the Lamb, when Christ and His faithful bride are joined:

*Alleluia: for the Lord God
omnipotent reigneth,
Let us be glad and rejoice,
and give honor to him:
for the marriage of the Lamb is come,
and his wife hath made herself
ready.
And to her was granted that she
should be arrayed in fine linen,
clean and white:
for the fine linen is the
righteousness of saints.*

As for Song of Solomon 1:5 and 6, these verses are no more than a part of the song. Taken literally, chapter 1 pictures a group of young women, the "daughters of Jerusalem" (v. 5), who sing a song of love. In verses 5 and 6, another singer introduces herself as "black, but comely." The newer versions employ the terms "dark of skin," or "swarthy." Some have conjectured that her statement: "they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept," indicates that she is not true to another lover to whom she is betrothed. The Moffatt Bible translates this last sentence, "I did not look after the vineyard of my charms."

In making a spiritual application, we might compare the lovers with Israel. God, as true Husband, demanded a wholehearted, undivided allegiance. But Israel wandered away. Their own vineyard they did not keep. These words also serve as a warning to the striving Christian. It is so easy to keep someone else's vineyard and neglect one's own. This was the danger Paul warned himself against: "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away" (I Cor. 9:27). ●●

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Our Readers Write...

Striving Upward

I am striving to live my best each and every day. There is nothing greater before me than to have a knowledge of the truth and to live to do the will of God. As we still have the privilege to live and work for our salvation, we must keep in touch with one another, lest we forget.

It takes a mighty struggle to rise above the downward pull of our carnal nature. Those who are only moderately struggling will never reach the levels of perfection. Working only halfheartedly, they soon drop down to a level of vague neutrality, neither positive nor negative. Their spirituality is lean, narrow and stunted. They may say they want perfection, but when their convictions are tested and conformities shaken, they are not ready for the test.

As a Christian we are on the battlefield day and night. Each trial is a chance to rise to greater heights in spirituality, for trials and temptations are absolutely necessary in the development of real life. Every day of a Christian's life is filled with momentary sifting, separating and perfecting. Our desires are determining factors. The force of our desires will lift us upward toward God or drag us downward to the level of the dust, chaff and refuse.

Only as we are honest in the sight of the Lord can we hope to be delivered from temptation.

Monrovia, Liberia

S. Z.

All In Comparison

Man today thinks he's very smart, but in comparison to God he is nothing but dust. Among the everyday run-of-the-mill folk like us there are those we think are very clever, and we do marvel at the achievements that have been made in these days of science. But our God took Elijah up in his chariot of fire in days when the fastest form of travel was horseback. Christ Jesus Himself was caught up by clouds of angels to His Father's side.

No, man hasn't even begun to learn. But one day, yes! one day those who merit eternal life will acquire a knowledge that even now in these wonderful days cannot even be imagined. And don't you think that God will give His best to those who love him? "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Worksop, England

H. L.

Honesty and Humility

There must be a good and honest heart, quite honest enough to acknowledge that we need to be taught of God: this is the first requirement to get close to God. Then we must acquire humility, for humility and honesty are both loved by God. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." God has plenty of time, but we have only one short fleeting lifetime in which to overcome all the sins which so easily beset us. But we know God's plan will not fail, and whatever He promises us, He is well able to perform. This is our joyful outlook.

Swansea, South Wales, England

G. S.

Noble Work

A noted author has made the statement that "Not a day passes over the earth but men and women of no note do great deeds, speak great words, and suffer noble sorrow. Of these obscure heroes, philosophers and martyrs, the greater part will be unknown till that hour, when many that are great shall be small and the small great."

These words can very well apply to the minority now who, almost unknown by the surrounding world, yet are very well known to God. Christians can be as "those people of no note" who do great deeds; they are the called-out few, who are daily putting self down and are glorifying God in their lives by their holy deeds. They are laying up His words in their hearts and are speaking forth the truth. Like Paul, they are willing to suffer the loss of all things of this world that they may win Christ. They are daily bearing about the dying of the Lord Jesus, dying to sin.

A noble work it is, to be sure; only eternity will reveal the relative merit of our labors. At this time of the consummation of man's unsavory rule, when the Lord is about to make His appearance, we must don all the courage we can and never look back but keep a steady, unbreakable forward march to accomplish our warfare with self.

In God's Book of Remembrance are written all our deeds. May we be genuine and never appear to be what we are not.

South Amboy, New Jersey

L. M. K.

A Great Family

It is certainly a great privilege to be a member of God's family in this world of evil and indifference. The bond of love and trust experienced between Christians is so wonderful, so much better than popularity with people of this world and being "everybody's friend." It would be nice to be well-liked by everyone; but if we are not, it will not bother us if we are all out to be a friend of God, with our minds fixed on things eternal.

Swansea, South Wales

R. B.

Deceased

I am sorry to inform you of the sudden passing of my brother Mark Adams, of Green Bay, Newfoundland, on September 30, 1978.

For many, many years, Mark was a subscriber to your magazine, and shared your views on many topics. I am sure he derived much satisfaction and inspiration from the literature.

Green Bay, Newfoundland, Canada Mrs. Annie Wheeler

Brother Adams has renewed his subscription to the Message regularly since 1936, not wanting to miss "a single issue." He will be missed.—EDITOR.

Obituary

Margaret B. Owens

On November 2, 1978, we met to pay our last respects to a friend and sister, Margaret B. Owens. Sister Owens first became interested in the doctrines of the Megiddo Church in 1922 when missionaries from the Church visited the Watkins Glen area via their boat. The family moved to Rochester in 1923, where she resided until her death.

Being a virtual invalid for the last eighteen years, Sister Owens' activities were limited; but she bore her affliction patiently and assisted with such small tasks as she was able to do.

She is survived by one sister, Mrs. Maude LaFeder, of Columbus, North Carolina, and two sons, Ellsworth and Ralph, both of Beaver Dam, New York. Interment was in Mount Hope Cemetery, where sleep others who await the great and final call of Resurrection Day.

I Am CARELESSNESS

I Am Your ENEMY.

I am more powerful than the combined armies of the world.

I have destroyed more than all the wars of all time.

I am more deadly than bullets or missiles, and I have wrecked more homes and jobs and happiness than the deadliest guns.

I spare no one. I find my victims among the rich and poor alike, among the young and old, the strong and weak, the high and the low.

I rise to such proportions that I cast my shadow over every field of human effort, professional as well as non-professional, from the humblest worker to the nuclear scientist.

I lurk in unseen places and do my best work silently.

I am the cause of thousands of deaths.

I am relentless.

I am everywhere—on the land, in the air, on the sea, in the home, on the job, on the streets and highways.

I breed sickness, degradation, and death. I make any bad situation worse.

Yet few people make a real effort to avoid me, or even take me seriously.

I crush, destroy, maim.

I give nothing; I take all.

I am *your* worst enemy.

I am CARELESSNESS.