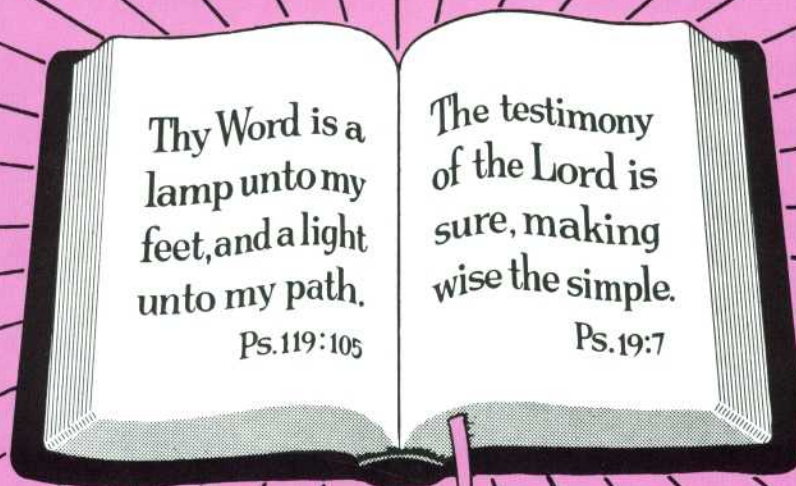


# Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST



**PARDON: Sought and Found**

The Carrot and the Stick  
In the Days of the Judges  
Concerning Elijah

## "I Will Repay, Says the Lord"

**A**MONG the earthly instincts naturally dominant in us is the impulse to revenge. Something in our too-human nature tells us to give as good as we get, and just as quickly as we can. Watch how easily the young child raises an arm or a fist to retaliate when another challenges him. Who taught him to do it? Who showed him how?

Retaliation need not be learned; it is born in us. It is the direct result of the thought patterns we naturally indulge in.

Outstanding in the life of our Lord is a quality exactly opposite of this. Of Him we read: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet. 2:23). This quality is *not* born in us, nor is it easily acquired. It must be cultivated diligently, carefully, prayerfully, day after day after day.

We would do well to remind ourselves often of the meekness and patience of Christ. What a contrast to our own weak-willed resistance to evil. How quickly when things do not go our way we feel frustrated or impatient or upset. Can we not admire the achievement of Christ? He endured far beyond what we are called upon to endure, yet uttered no word of impatience. He suffered at the hands of injustice, and was cruelly wronged; yet He had no acrimony to pour upon His injurers, not even a spirit of resentment, only a prayer for their forgiveness. Resentment and forgiveness cannot abide together. "Who when he was reviled, he reviled not again." Even in acute and severe sufferings, He gave way to no impulse of revenge. Although He could have threatened them, He did not. He was content to let the will of God be done.

And so to God He committed Himself, His cause, and the wrong, knowing that God would settle the matter.

Revenge upon those who wrong us has never been allowed to the people of God. The apostle Paul, himself a champion of virtue, gave this fatherly appeal: "My dear friends, do not seek revenge, but leave a place for divine retribution; for there is a text which reads, 'Justice is mine, says the Lord, I will repay'" (Rom.

12:19). The passage is especially meaningful as phrased in the Living Bible: "Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God, for he has said that he will repay those who deserve it."

Among the children of God, no vengeance or revenge is allowed, either toward friend or foe. The great conflict is never to be man against any other man but man against evil. It is this: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (v. 21). Here is the only conflict in which we may rightfully engage. As Christians we must be cultivating not the spirit of revenge but the Christlike spirit of love and goodwill, which will find its fullness in the eternal fellowship of the saints in the new world. We must be training *now* to live *then*.

Revenge need not be open and enacted to be wrong. It is possible to *take* revenge; it is also possible to *think* and *plan* revenge—and have no way to carry it out. It is also possible to harbor a *feeling* or a *desire* for revenge, either expressed or in secret. *All are wrong*. And whether the would-be object of our feelings of revenge is a friend or foe makes no difference. All revenge is forbidden to the Christian.

Who can say that they have never felt the desire to "get even"? Who can say that they have not wished some amount of ill upon their so-called "enemies," if no more than a dose of their own bitter medicine? But it is not Christlike, it is not Godlike, and every aspiring child of God will let go all desire for revenge.

What do you do, then, when you feel mistreated or distressed by the treatment you receive? Remember that this is the time to prove the reality of your faith. Ponder the example of Christ, and cultivate the spirit of Christ. Act as a friend, a slave, a subject of Christ. Like Him, revile not again but commit yourself to Him that judgeth righteously. Realize that you must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

Does this high standard seem beyond our reach? It has been done, and we also can do it. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Pet. 2:21). Jesus could say, "I have overcome the world," and so will we be able to say it, when we have followed Him faithfully to the end.

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## Megiddo means

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

### We believe

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

## Bible quotations

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

**NEB**—*New English Bible*

**NIV**—*New International Version*

**NAS**—*New American Standard*

**RSV**—*Revised Standard Version*

**TLB**—*The Living Bible*

**TEV**—*Today's English Version*

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

**Phillips**—*The New Testament in Modern English*

**Berkeley**—*The Modern Language New Testament*

**Weymouth**—*The New Testament in Modern Speech*

**Moffatt**—*The Bible, A New Translation*

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

**Rotherham**—*The Emphasized Old Testament*

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

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The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is a religious magazine devoted to the cause of Christ, and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. Official organ of the Megiddo Church. L. T. Nichols, *Founder*; Kenneth E. Flowerday, *President and Editor*.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** is available in microfilm from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106.

The **MEGIDDO MESSAGE** (USPS 338-120) is published monthly (except July) by the Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619. Second Class postage paid at Rochester, New York. SUBSCRIPTION RATE: One year, eleven issues, \$2.00. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Megiddo Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester, New York 14619-1697.

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# PARDON: Sought and Found

Scripture Lesson: Isa. 55:6-13

**I**N OUR last issue we discussed sin that is pardonable and sin that is unpardonable, and God's underlying principle in dispensing pardon. In this study we want to look further into the subject of pardon and see who obtains it, and why.

A favorite topic among popular evangelists has been the subject of *instant* pardon. No one likes to think of a long and difficult road to salvation. Any way is acceptable, so long as it is easy. As the widely-recognized Charles Spurgeon, taught:

*The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified God,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Redemption in full through the blood.*

Dwight L. Moody, among the greatest champions of the fabled "power of the blood," delighted in assuring people that instant pardon for sin was free for the asking. Almost everyone is familiar with the man who "Between the stirrup and the ground, . . . pardon sought and pardon found." Another teacher of darkness phrased it this way: "No soul can be forever lost, eternally bereft. He who falls from God's right hand is caught up in His left."

A pleasing doctrine indeed, if only it were true. How comfortable to believe that this is all we need to clear our record and usher us into paradise. There are ample side-benefits as well. Those who obtain this pardon can be bold and fearless in the day of Judgment. To illustrate, Evangelist Dwight L. Moody told the story of a man who was going to be tried for his life and if found guilty, there was no hope for him, unless the king would intercede. Before the trial date arrived, some friends of the man went to the king. After much deliberation, the king consented to give a pardon. "But," he said, "let it be kept a secret. If he is not condemned, do not say anything about it. Only if he is condemned may he use the pardon."

So the man went into court with the pardon in his pocket. No one could understand why he was quite so cheerful about his trial—especially when it went against him. And when the judge pronounced the final sentence upon him, he took pains to say that he and the whole court were shocked to think that a man could be on trial for his life and be so unconcerned.

When the judge got through, the man stepped forward, laid the king's pardon on the judge's desk, and walked out bold as a lion. And so, Moody concludes, "Do you see? You have a charge against me, but what do I care? God has justified me. He comes and says, 'Moody, you are a saved man, yes, saved by grace, saved for time and for eternity.'"

However appealing the idea of instant pardon, of complete exemption from the consequences of our sins simply by asking forgiveness at the last moment, it is all built on the shifting sand of human philosophy and reasoning and shall avail us nothing.

## What Says the Lord?

Is there any supposed Biblical evidence for the above? Why of course, the thief on the cross. Here was a convicted criminal, the worst of humanity, meeting death at the hands of the authorities. And Jesus, in the words of Mr. Moody, wanted to hurry home to get a mansion ready for him. The thought is comforting: If this *thief* were pardoned and saved, *who* needs to worry? And didn't Jesus assure him, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise"? And didn't the thief say, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom"?

Let us review a few details of the account as given in Luke 23. Did Jesus promise salvation to the thief and hurry home to get a place ready for him that day?

If we study the passage in relation to the rest of the Bible and plain Bible teaching, immediately we have several serious problems. First, if we believe that the thief was saved, we nullify the words of the apostle

Paul, that no thieves or revilers can enter the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-10). The man who asked Jesus to remember him was both a convicted thief and a reviler. Some religious teachers have attempted to say that the thief who was saved repented, but Matthew's gospel tells us that *both* thieves reviled Jesus while on the cross.

Second, the Bible offers no exceptions to its time-honored conditions for pardon: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh" (Prov. 28:13). When did the thief "for-sake" his sin?

Third, if the thief entered heaven that day, he went before he died, for in the evening of that day, the soldiers broke the legs of the thieves to be sure they did not get away during the night. It is said that crucified victims often lived several days before expiring. Jesus was miraculously delivered from prolonged suffering.

Fourth, if the thief entered heaven that day, he preceded Christ, for after His resurrection Jesus said, "I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). Not until forty days later was He taken up (Acts 1:3, 9-11).

Fifth, if Jesus promised heaven to the thief, then the thief was privileged above the disciples, to whom Jesus said clearly, "Whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 13:33).

So much has been assumed in connection with the thief that the Biblical account is worth re-reading. Notice that the thief said, "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." But notice also that Jesus did not say He *would* remember him. Furthermore, Jesus' words as recorded, "Today, shalt thou be with me in paradise," are wanting in many of the earliest manuscripts; and there seems to be ample evidence that they were not part of the original text. If the passage be genuine, however, it still does not promise salvation to the thief. Why take the passage as a statement and contradict plain Bible teaching when, as a negative question, it is in harmony? "What, you, a thief, with me in Paradise?" could as easily be the thought, suggesting an absolute No. To save the thief would have contradicted all of Jesus' former teaching. At the very most, the thief did no more than say, "Lord, Lord," and Jesus testified that He would reject all such (Matt. 7:21).

What about those who were sincerely serving God and sinned, either willfully, in ignorance, or carelessly?

Let us look closely at a few examples of these. It should give us hope that whatever our past life, whatever we may have done or whatever we may be doing it need not keep us from securing the prize—if only we repent and reform while we still have opportunity.

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## ***How was David "a man after his own heart"?***

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### **David's Example**

Of all the good that David did during his long and useful life, he is probably most remembered for his sins. How is it, then, that he, through all his ups and downs, could be called a "man after God's own heart"? Even more than pardon, this is a commendation. How can it possibly belong to David?

The statement is found first in I Samuel 13:13-14, where Samuel is announcing to the disobedient Saul that the Lord has rejected him from being king and has found another: "And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee." Someone was to be chosen to replace the disobedient Saul, one whom God had sought; and the quality God was seeking was "a man after his own heart." We know that Saul did not meet this qualification.

The apostle Paul, in Acts 13:22, made a similar statement concerning this same period of history. After God removed Saul from being king, "he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus."

This statement, that David was a "man after God's own heart," has raised questions through the centuries. While theologians have used it to illustrate God's supposed love for flagrant sinners, critics have derided the God who would be so morally weak and erring as to accept a man with David's character weaknesses as one "after (His) own heart." And many a sincere believer has wondered how David could merit so honorary a classification.

It has been pointed out, and rightly, that many times in Scripture the term "David" is used referring to David's greater son, Christ, the Messiah. The Hebrew Lexicon has as its first definition of the name David,

"Beloved," and gives Hosea 3:5 as an example of how it is used: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." The "David" in this passage could not possibly refer to the literal man David, who had already lived and died; future generations from the time of Hosea could not seek the literal "David" as "their king." The David, the beloved of the Lord, whom they should be seeking in the latter days is Christ, the coming King of all the earth.

The same use of the name David, denoting the Messiah the son of David, is found in Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24, and elsewhere. The Lexicon gives these texts to illustrate its use: "And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David. . . . And I the Lord will be their God, and my

servant David a prince among them. . . . And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them." This was all spoken several hundred years after the literal David died, yet the prophet was foretelling future events—sure evidence that he was referring to the righteous reign of a beloved David who should later rule in righteousness: Christ.

We know that Christ was truly a "man after God's own heart," humble, submissive, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). But this fact does not satisfy the question raised by the prophet Samuel's statement or by Paul's, that says explicitly, speaking for God, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man's seed hath God according to his

## *Let Us Pray . . .*

Our Gracious Father, the Source and Object of our praise, who encompasseth our days with blessings as the waters cover the sea; we thank Thee for life and all that it means to us, and for all the situations Thou dost provide to teach us what we need to learn.

Help us, our Father, to grow more and more concerned about our prospects of eternal salvation in Thy heavenly Kingdom upon earth. Help us to realize more deeply how wide the gulf separating our weaknesses and Thy strength; our failures and Thy perfection; our littleness and Thy exaltedness. Realizing the seriousness of sin, help us eagerly to suspicion not others but ourselves; and when we are found in the wrong, may we be eager to acknowledge it and go to work at once to make restitution, that we may someday stand blameless before Thee.

Save us from the peril of self-satisfaction, from a too-easy peace with our unregenerate selves. Warn us that any peace with evil is perilous; that now is the time to expose any evil in our hearts, before the Great Day when that which is undone must forever remain undone.

Lord, Thou hast set eternity in our hearts. We are not as those who have no shrine, no compelling interest. Deeply lodged in our mind is Thy holy image, demanding our devotion, compelling us to trust in

truth, wholesomeness, duty. Thou art our God, the Holy One, our Highest Love and Desire. It is for Thee to command, and for us to humbly listen. Thou art God; we are servants.

May this realization humble us, and may we henceforth seek diligently Thy pardon and grace, that we may be welcomed into Thine eternal favor and live where sorrows never come.

Be with Thy people everywhere, who are seeking Thee in sincerity and in truth. Be with those who have trials of old age, trials of middle life, or trials of youth. Be with Thy work in all its forms, and prosper it as Thou seest best. And we pray Thee to use all the situations of our lives to teach us holiness. May we let the examples left us in Thy Holy Word teach us how to displace envy and strife with mercy and goodwill; uncleanness and impurity with holiness and restraint; malice and vindictiveness with forgiveness and love; fluctuation and faithlessness with steadiness and trust. And may we ever be as ready to forgive one another as Thou, for Christ's sake, hast forgiven us.

Give us, O Lord, a steadfast heart, which no unworthy affection may drag downward. Give us an unconquerable heart, which no tribulation can invade. Give us an undivided heart, which no assault of evil can weaken. Give us an upright heart, which no unworthy purpose may tempt aside. Bestow upon us also, O Lord, the understanding to know Thee, the diligence to seek Thee, the wisdom to find Thee, and the faithfulness that will assure us that we may eventually look upon Thy face. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:22-23). Jesus was raised up, "according to the promise," "of this man's seed." If Jesus were in reality the man being referred to as "after God's own heart," He could not be raised up from his own seed.

If we can learn what God honors, requires, and approves in mankind and then look at David's character in relation to these, we may be able to see how the above statement can harmonize with Scripture.

We know that God demands absolute righteousness and absolute goodness, with no admixture of evil. But God knows also He cannot find that absolute quality of character ready-made. "He knoweth our frame," and our inclination to evil. He knows our weaknesses and the things that tempt us to sin. He knows also that we must grow into a holy character, and in His merciful kindness He allows us time to grow (Eph. 4:15; 2:21).

But God in His mercy does not require an entire life of perfect service without one slip. He is looking for the sincere and earnest effort coupled with a wholehearted determination to do right; and when we fail, a humble readiness to acknowledge our failure, ask forgiveness, and try again. This latter quality is one which David, despite his checkered career of transgressions, possessed in abundant measure. When he had sinned, he took the correction in the right spirit, humbly sought God's mercy, and changed his ways. And this is all God asks—even if our sins are "as scarlet." All we must do is "wash" and "be clean," "cease to do evil" and "learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16-20). However, this humble-spirited readiness to change is a high quality of character which very few through the ages have possessed. Could not the possession of this quality have made David a "man after God's own heart"?

### **Psalms of Contrition**

David's deep, heartfelt humility is expressed vividly in many of the Psalms. For example: "Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; . . . Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord . . . for thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great . . . forgive all my sins" (Ps. 25:6-7, 11, 18).

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. . . . For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: . . . I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Ps. 32:1-2, 4-5).

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***"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered".***

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"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. . . . Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. . . . The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:1-3, 7, 10, 17).

Could anyone ever speak more meaningfully? And if such thoughts issue from the inner sanctum of one truly humble and penitent, could not such a one rightly be called "a man after God's own heart"?

### **Truly Penitent**

It was not that David did not sin. David sinned, and grievously. And God did not overlook his sins or allow him to forget them. But David's attitude, upon recognizing his sin, was always penitence and a willingness to reform. Even when the reprover was an unscrupulous Joab and David was king of Israel, he took the correction in the same humble spirit, receiving it as a message from God. Might not this be the superior quality singling him out as "a man after God's own heart"?

After David had transgressed in numbering Israel, we read that "David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly" (II Sam. 24:10).

David was not a ready-made specimen of the character God loves. But who of us is? If He judged us by our natural condition, who would ever qualify? We have all sinned, and any sin is abominable to God. We may be inclined to feel ourselves much better than a man like David, who committed adultery and murder and then tried to cover it up. But any sin separates us from God as effectively as any other, until it is repented of and forsaken.

God did not love David for his sins—He strongly



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## ***Sin need not be an eternal barrier. We can overcome it.***

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condemned David, even punished him. But through it all David never lost his deep respect and reverence for God. And when he found himself in the wrong, he was man enough to take the rebuke or the punishment, learn his lesson, and go on. This is the quality God desires. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17).

This has been God's principle in dealing with mankind all through history. He judges not by what we are, but by what He knows we can become; not by the egregiousness of the sins we commit, but by our readiness to repent and turn. "He shall save the humble person" (Job 22:29). "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, . . . and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him" (Ezek. 18:21-22). Does not such a quality show the long-suffering and forbearance of God? Does it not give us hope?

### **The Example of Paul**

Another man who sinned greatly and was greatly pardoned is the apostle Paul. Known by his own testimony as "the chiefest of sinners," he spent his entire life after his conversion in a masterful effort, we might say, to compensate for the wrong he had done. How deeply he must have struggled with the thought of his former way of life, even though he knew it would not be held against him—"because," as he wrote, "I did it ignorantly."

Nevertheless, it was a memory hard to erase. More than once must he have been reminded of its grim reality. Picture him gathering with the brethren in Jerusalem, or Damascus, or Caesarea, and seeing among them a brother or sister whom he knew to be permanently crippled or suffering because of ill-treatment his own hands had inflicted. Think of the mental torture he suffered as he thought of homes where a staunch supporter of the faith, a loving, zealous, Christian disciple, was missing—because of his vengeance. Perhaps even more torturous was the thought of God-fearing brethren languishing in prison—whom he had captured, and for whom he was unable to get release. It was a reality hard to live with. How fiercely he must have fought to

control his instinctive feelings of remorse and regret. Meaningfully he wrote, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13-14). Small wonder that he suffered so gladly for the cause of Christ!

Though he knew that he had been forgiven and that God would not remember, and though he did not allow the memory to hinder his onward progress, yet he could not forget. Notice his frequent mention of it—in almost every Epistle. When relating those who had seen the resurrected Christ, he said, "And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." And, "By the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all" (I Cor. 15:8-10). And in his letter to the Galatians, he writes, "For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (Gal. 1:13-14). In his letter to the Ephesians, he wrote of himself as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8). To Timothy he wrote that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15).

The thought must have been a struggle for him as long as he lived. But we know also that he rose above it, that he triumphed, that he was forgiven and that God abundantly pardoned. And in the final day, God in His mercy will not even mention it. His will be a place of high honor in the New World, a "crown of life," and an eternal inheritance with all the saints of light.

What is the lesson for us? That sin need not be an eternal barrier. We can overcome it. We can live acceptably before God. We can do what God calls right. But we must actually make the change. God does not want us to do as a room decorator might, paper over the cracks and hope they will not show. We must remold, refashion, totally remake our rough-hewn dispositions, by doing what we naturally would not do, until doing right is a very part of us.

### **The Example of Peter**

Another man who sinned grievously was Peter. And his was not a sin in ignorance. Jesus warned Peter, and had Peter heeded the warning, he could have saved the grief and shame of his sin. But too confident was he of



his inner strength. Openly he vowed that he would never, never deny his Master. Yet he did it. Little did he know the weakness of his own heart.

It all happened so quickly. There was the Passover Supper with Jesus, followed by heart-to-heart exhortation they could scarcely comprehend. There was the sad hour in Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested and led away. Little did he or the other disciples realize the seriousness of it all. Jesus' captors, we read, brought Him to the "High Priest's house, and Peter followed at a distance." Then came Peter's trial. As they "lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard, and sat round it, and Peter sat among them. A serving-maid who saw him sitting in the firelight stared at him and said, 'This man was with him, too.' But he denied it: 'Woman,' he said, 'I do not know him.' A little later someone else noticed him and said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said to him, 'No, I am not.' About an hour passed and another spoke more strongly still: 'Of course this fellow was with him. He must have been; he is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are talking about.' At that moment, while he was still speaking, a cock crew" (Luke 22:54-61, NEB).

The cock crew, and can we imagine the thoughts that raced through Peter's mind at that moment, the sense of sin, the shame, the remorse, the overpowering surge of failure? And at that very moment, perhaps as Jesus was being led up a flight of steps to appear before the authorities, where He was to be tried and condemned to die, at that very moment "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61).

What a look that must have been, a look of rebuke, a look of keen disappointment, a look that pierced the very heart and conscience of that impulsive, determined disciple; a heart-rending, humiliating look that said "Peter, Peter. . . ." There was his Master, the one he loved most, facing the most difficult hours of His whole life; and Peter was too fearful even to own his identity as one of His.

One look, and the guilt, the remorse struck him as a thunderbolt. It was enough. Quickly he turned and went out, crying bitterly. He who had so boldly vowed that he would never, never deny his Lord—it was done. He had failed, and failed miserably. Yes, Jesus had known. He knew Peter, as Peter did not know himself. Jesus could look straight through him. It had all happened, just as Jesus had said. "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Peter went out. He went out into the darkness, but not as Judas. He went out, as has been beautifully said, "to meet the morning's dawn." For Peter was not defeated. Only a night and a day and another night of

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***Whatever our sins or failures,  
there is pardon, there is  
forgiveness if only we turn and  
forsake our sins.***

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sorrow, and he would know the triumphant joy of the resurrection, when a new Peter could face his Master with new humility, new vision, new understanding, new insight. For Peter it was not the end but the beginning, the dawn of hope, of new and fresh opportunities, of greater and richer experiences. A bitter lesson, but it was a lesson for eternity. Just forty days later, on the day of Pentecost, see him taking the floor and explaining to the wondering onlookers the meaning of the Holy Spirit, boldly defending to all the death and resurrection and destiny of his Master.

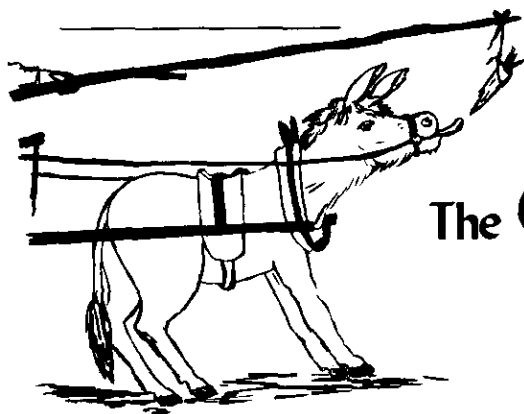
What is the lesson for us? Is not Peter's testing ours also? Let us put ourselves in Peter's place and see how we react when we are tempted by some word or some experience in our lives to deny our Lord and our high calling. Have we the poise, the grace, the humility, the resignation, the commitment to take the course we will never regret? Should we not pray in the words of the hymn, those words which so perfectly parallel Peter's experience and our own:

"In the hour of trial, Jesus plead for me;/ lest by base denial I depart from Thee./ When Thou seest me waver, With Thy look recall;/ Nor for fear or favor suffer me to fall.

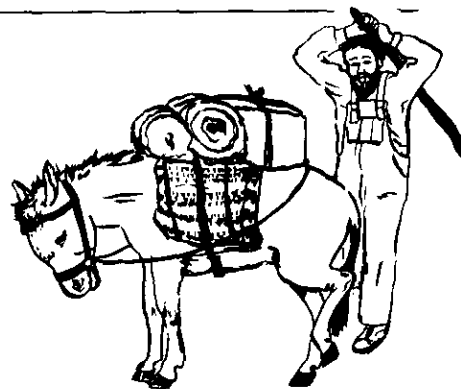
"With forbidden pleasure would this vain world charm;/ and its sordid treasure spread to work me harm./ Bring to my remembrance sad Gethsemane;/ or in darker semblance, rugged Calvary."

We can be sure that as long as he lived Peter never forgot the lesson of that night. Years later, as this mature apostle addressed his brethren as "Simon Peter, a servant and messenger of Jesus Christ," he exhorted them to add those same distinguishing qualities he had worked so diligently through the years to achieve in his own life. "You must do your utmost from your side," he wrote, "and see that your faith carries with it real goodness of life. Your goodness must be accompanied by knowledge, your knowledge by self-control, your self-control by the ability to endure. Your endurance too must always be accompanied by devo-

*(Continued on page 12)*



# The Carrot and the Stick



SOME time ago an editorial appeared in a London newspaper in which the writer discussed a philosophy he called "the carrot and the stick." Seeking to define the cause of the present unhealthy economic condition, he concluded that the human "donkey" requires either a carrot in front or a stick behind to goad him into action. The modern plan to relieve the individual of financial responsibility has removed both of these.

The following excerpts summarize his thought:

"The human donkey requires either a carrot in front or a stick behind to goad it into activity. It is fashionable at the moment to argue that the carrot is the more important of the two: 'incentive' is the watchword, and all classes of the community are busy arguing that if only they are given a little bit more in the way of incentive (at the expense of the rest of the community) they will respond with more activity . . . But it is probably more realistic . . . to hold that the stick is likely to be more effective than the carrot . . . However, it is not necessary for the present purpose to argue the respective potencies of the carrot and the stick; it is enough to agree that, if an active and progressive economy is to be founded on the frailties of human nature, both are needed."

The author concludes:

"The whole process of removing

both the carrot and the stick has culminated in the extraordinary circumstances of today. . . . Nobody gains anything from activity or suffers anything from inactivity. There is hardly a flavor of carrot or a shadow of the stick. And yet we wonder why the donkey does not break into a trot."

We, as Christians familiar with God's ways of dealing with the frailties of His human children, agree with the underlying principles of this editorial. Even a casual survey of the many Scriptures relating to the rewards for well-doing and the penalties for evil-doing convinces us that the Almighty employs both the carrot and the stick:

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil"; ". . . the Lord searcheth all hearts, . . . if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever"; "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword"; "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, . . . in-

ignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" (Deut. 30:15; I Chron. 28:9; Isa. 1:19-20; Rom. 2:5-9).

Perhaps no statement of Holy Writ strikes closer at the root of the matter than does that familiar text in Romans 11:22, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." We need to be mindful of both, God's goodness and His severity. We need also to remember the peace, joy, happiness and eternal reward awaiting all whose hearts are perfect toward Him, and on the other hand the shame, remorse, and everlasting destruction that shall be our portion if we fail to become pure in heart.

For hundreds of years man-made religion has been seeking to neutralize the carrot and the stick by teaching that good works are not necessary to salvation, that no one will gain by leading a pure and holy life, nor will any sustain serious loss by taking the path of least resistance and following the dictates of his own conscience. So long as just before we breathe our last we implore God for mercy and accept Christ as our personal Saviour, all will be well.

Modern religious thought takes still a different attitude, claiming that salvation is not the highest goal of religion, but that we should live

by the Golden Rule and through life strive to help and bless others from a purely humanitarian standpoint, with no thought of future rewards or punishment. Here again they discourage thrift and industry by ignoring the "carrot" or incentive of eternal salvation held out by the Almighty. The holy men and women of old all accepted and acted upon this lively hope. Jesus, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame. Paul, the foremost apostle, fought a good fight and finished his course with rejoicing in hope of the crown of life that was laid up for him. The apostle John entertained this same hope, "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (I John 2:25).

To the average person today, the matter of future rewards or punishments seems distant and uncertain, hence is no impelling force. However, all who have a knowledge of God's plan for this earth and its inhabitants know beyond the shadow of a doubt that the blessings can and will be theirs only if they are judged worthy. Otherwise, they shall be eternally excluded.

As, broadly speaking, the human "donkey" is inclined to be lazy and the spur of economic necessity is needed to keep him moving. The same is true in our effort toward perfection of character, for we, too, are disposed to inactivity. Quite naturally we should like to be free from the constant urge to do better and better. Without this incentive or reward as an impelling force for good, we would never reach our goal.

While it is the "goodness of God" that leads us to repentance, yet a knowledge of His jurisprudence cannot fail to help us take seriously our solemn covenant with Him. The stick has its legitimate place. It has been rightfully said that if the wages

for sin were paid at the close of each week, how powerful would be the impulse to avoid temptation and live right! It is so easy to forget, to lose the effect of an impression that at one time may have been strong enough to move us to action against all odds. The people who followed Moses through the Wilderness were much more obedient when they actually saw the judgments of God manifested than when everything seemed tranquil. But only a little while and they had forgotten again. The words of the Preacher, in Ecclesiastes 8:11, aptly describe the situation: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil."

What of us, we who are living right at the close of man's age of misrule and the culmination of all things foretold by the prophets and sages? Can it be said of us that in place of redeeming our time and spending every moment of it to put the finishing touches upon our characters we are surrendering to the lazy man's attitude of "time enough yet"? If we are, that Day will come upon us as a thief and we shall see our mistake when it is everlastingly too late.

To cherish no active discontent with our present condition is dangerous. It destroys the impulse to improve. But can we say we are satisfied with the present when we see the insincerity, the political corruption, the misappropriation of earth's resources, the sin and misery in our world today and we ourselves helpless to do anything about it? Do we not long to be freed from the aches and pains of this mortal existence and to be clothed upon with our house from heaven, that "mortality might be swallowed up of life"?

And surely we are not entirely satisfied with ourselves and the spir-

itual progress we have made! So long as one taint of sin remains we have not made the full surrender and there is still room for improvement. The words of the Psalmist reveal his deep understanding of the issues at stake (17:15), "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." His heart's longing was for the physical change, but he knew very well the moral change must come first. Righteousness, and righteousness alone, was the key that would usher him into the presence of God.

The unfaithful servants say in their hearts, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Their attitude is, God will not do good, neither will He do evil—there is nothing to be concerned about. He will not reward the righteous nor punish the workers of iniquity. To such, neither the flavor of the carrot nor the shadow of the stick remains. They are adrift like a ship without rudder or sail, with no sparkle or enthusiasm for anything but the passing interests of the moment, moments which they should be using in preparing for the Kingdom.

Let us watch that none of us allow our faith to sink to such a low ebb that the inestimable prize offered by the Eternal will lose its attraction for us! But may the hope of sharing those "pleasures for evermore" so energize and enthuse us that the "donkey" will break into a trot and never slacken his pace until he has reached the pinnacle of Perfection.

MM

***Each day is a challenge to the man with initiative. Each day is your only hope for remedying yesterday's mistakes.***

## Pardon: Sought and Found

(Continued from page 9)

tion to God; that in turn must have in it the quality of brotherliness, and your brotherliness must lead on to Christian love. . . . If you go along these lines there is no reason why you should stumble. Indeed, if you live this sort of life a rich welcome awaits you as you enter the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:1, 3-7, 11, Phillips).

### Qualities We Need

God's standard is high, supremely high. He cannot tolerate any sin. But at the same time, He recognizes our need to grow. "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones" (Isa. 57:15). Humility and contrition were qualities that all of God's holy men and women of old, in spite of their weaknesses, possessed in great measure. And the promise of God is to such: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isa. 66:2). Does not such a statement describe men like David, Paul and Peter? Does it describe US?

Oh, let us awaken to a deeper realization of our own need to grow, to improve, to acknowledge our sins—whatever their nature—and turn from them. God abhors sin, and He abhors those who sin, for sin and sinners truly cannot be separated. But He knows that in our natural state we will sin, and He has provided a

means whereby we can obtain His forgiveness and mercy; and it takes an honest, humble, God-fearing heart to find and make use of that means.

Perhaps we have not denied Christ openly and outwardly. We have not persecuted the saints or condemned them to death. No sins of flagrant adultery blot our record. Yet, who of us can say that we are all that we *could* be, or *should* be, with the opportunities that have been our portion? Who of us can say that we have done our best in every situation, that we have always kept the right attitude, that we have always spoken the right words, that we have always been as patient and forgiving and kind as we want others to be to us? Who has not felt the twinge of anger, or the shading of jealousy, or the keen edge of hurt feelings when our way was not accepted? Who of us has always entertained only the highest and best in our thoughts, has always worked to encourage others, and been strictly honest before God and before one another?

Whatever our sins or failures, let us take heart. There is mercy, there is pardon, there is forgiveness—if only we turn and forsake our sins. I would like to close with this exalting and reassuring description of divine mercy, relayed to us by the prophet Micah:

"Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

May God help us to that end.

MM

## No Time to Waste!

**W**E HAVEN'T a single second to waste! The harvest is indeed upon us and we should be about our Father's business as never before. It is so important for us to realize that when a moment is gone, it is gone forever. It can never be recalled.

Time is so precious, and it will be to our own sorrow if we waste it. So easily we get wrapped up in the things of this world and let them consume our time. We must stop and re-direct our steps. We have already lost too much precious time!

How swiftly time passes. Summer, then fall and winter and before we know it, another year has sped by. Judgment Day will soon be upon us. The greatest hope we have is that "we have what it takes." We have what it takes to make ourselves ready. We CAN—if we will!

Contributed.



## And Still She Speaks

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



When an evil thought comes, fill your mind with something else. The evil thought will come from some direction, but put it away and fill your mind with thoughts of this glorious Kingdom that is coming, the glory to be revealed.

The only place of safety, the only place on earth where we can be fully secure, is in the strong tower. Fly into that, into the truth of the living God, and believe. Take warning now and flee from this world and its ways. Then you can be saved.

Jealousy is a terrible weed, and it sometimes springs up very quickly. We may become jealous of someone just because they have a better looking car than we. Or they can do something we cannot do. But we must overcome that feeling. When another is able to have something, or to do something better than we, we must not allow jealousy to come in. We must reach that standard where we have no jealousy, no feeling of bitterness toward anyone in the world. We are here to be Christians, and every Christian must put away all jealousy.

Our hearts should be filled with thankfulness to God for opening up to us so grand and glorious a way.

We ought to long for the honor that comes from God; we ought to long for that exaltation and glory that He will bestow on the faithful.

We must dig up these roots of bitterness that rankle in the heart. Perhaps someone has done us an injury, or talked about us—dig up that root of bitterness. That is what we do in our gardens, when we want them to produce fruits. We take out the weeds.

I never tell you my words; I do not know enough of myself to tell you what is right. I turn to the pages of this wonderful Book and read what I tell you. Here are recorded the words of the Living God. Now if we want this reward of eternal life and glory, we must hurry or we shall find that the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.

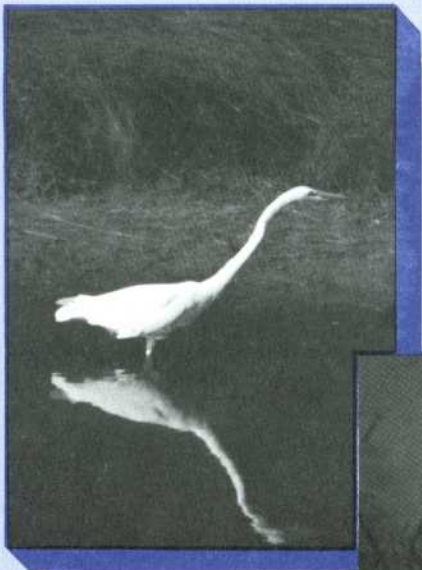
It would seem that every one would desire to walk in the way that leads to life. But instead of loving life, we see many demonstrating by their actions that they love death.

I long for something better than this life. Now we simply get our capabilities enlarged, our field of knowledge and experience widened and a better control of ourselves, when we must go to the tomb. Instead of getting ready to die, we want to get ready to live.

Are you—am I diligent every moment of my life? Are we watching our words, our thoughts, our feelings, our actions? Are we comparing our lives with the divine Record? Are we meditating upon this law, and coming out from a world of sin and evil? Are we putting away all anger and wrath, watching lest some jealous feeling come in and ruin our hope of eternal life?

Are we watching to see what we are talking about? We can all do this, and I think it would be impressed upon every heart so they would never forget the words of Peter, "seeing ye look for such things." Knowing that the day of the Lord is nigh at hand, we should "be diligent that [we] may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless."





## *Lines to Live By*

GOD of truth and power and grace,  
Drawn by Thee to seek Thy face,  
Lo! I in Thy courts appear,  
Humbly come to meet Thee here;

Trembling at Thine altar stand,  
Lift to heaven my heart and hand  
Of Thy promised strength secure,  
All my sins I now adjure.

All my promises renew,  
All my wickedness eschew,  
Chiefly that I called my own  
Now I hate, renounce, disown.

Never more will I commit,  
Follow, or be led by it;  
Only grant the grace I claim,  
Arm my soul in Jesus' name.

Sure I am it is Thy will  
I should never yield to ill,  
Never lose Thy gracious power,  
Never sin or grieve Thee more.

What doth then my hopes prevent?  
Lord, Thou stay'st for my consent;  
My consent through grace I give,  
Promise in Thy fear to live.

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|-----------|------------------------------|
| A .....   | Article                      |
| ED .....  | Editorial                    |
| F .....   | Filler                       |
| FB .....  | Finally, Brethren            |
| Ill ..... | Illustration                 |
| L .....   | Letter                       |
| MED ..... | Meditating on the Word       |
| PO .....  | Poem                         |
| Q .....   | Questions and Answers column |
| Q/A ..... | Question answered in article |
| S .....   | Sermon                       |
| SA .....  | Short Article                |

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Believe not those who say  
The upward path is smooth,  
Lest thou shouldst stumble in the way  
And faint before the truth.

It is the only road  
Unto the realms of joy;  
But he who seeks that blest abode  
Must all his powers employ.

Arm—arm thee for the fight!  
Cast useless loads away;  
Watch through the darkest hours of night;  
Toil through the hottest day.

To labour and to love,  
To pardon and endure,  
To lift thy heart to God above,  
And keep thy conscience pure,—

Be this thy constant aim,  
Thy hope, thy chief delight;  
What matter who should whisper blame  
Or who should scorn or slight,

If but thy God approve,  
And if, within thy breast,  
Thou feel the comfort of His love,  
The earnest of His rest?  
—Selected

*EVERY time we hold our tongues instead of returning the sharp retort, we are stockpiling goodwill for peace instead of making armaments for war.*

*"THE MAN who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the man doing it."* —Chinese Proverb

DAY by day the manna fell:  
Oh, to learn this lesson well:  
Still, by constant mercy fed,  
Give me, Lord, my daily bread.

Day by day, the promise reads—  
Daily strength for daily needs:  
Cast foreboding tears away;  
Take the manna of today.

Lord, my times are in Thy hand;  
All that my sanguine hopes have planned,  
To Thy wisdom I resign,  
And would make Thy purpose mine.

Thou my daily task shalt give;  
Day by day to Thee I live:  
So shall added years fulfil  
Not mine but my Father's will.

Fond ambition, whisper not;  
Happy is my humble lot.  
Anxious, busy cares, away!  
I'm provided for today.

Oh! to live exempt from care  
By the energy of prayer;  
Strong in faith, with mind subdued,  
Yet elate with gratitude.

*LORD, I my vows to Thee renew,  
Disperse my sins as morning dew,  
Guard my first springs of thought and will,  
And with Thyself my spirit fill.*

*Direct, control, suggest this day  
All I design to do or say;  
That all my powers, with all their might,  
In Thy sole glory may unite.*

## Points for the Month:

**Week 1:** Garments of righteousness never go out of style.

**Week 2:** It is not your position but your disposition that makes you what you are.

**Week 3:** You can't gain the Kingdom on what you are going to do.

**Week 4:** It is better to be more than we seem, than to seem to be more than we are.

**Week 5:** Only fruitbearing trees grow by the river of God.



# In the Days of the Judges

## The Last of the Judges

### Samson: for Weal or for Woe?

**A**FTER the death of Jephthah, Israel had three judges of whom we know little more than their names: Ibzan, Elon and Abdon. Of the three, we know only that Ibzan judged seven years. It must have been a relatively quiet time in Israel, since no mention is made of strife. But Canaanitish influence was strong, and a complacent Israel was easily led away from the true God.

From all indications, Israel's spirituality had not improved from the time of earlier judges, and after the death of these judges the old familiar cycle was repeated: "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years" (Judg. 13:1). They quickly reverted to what was right in their own eyes. The Bible does not say that at this time in their distress they called on the Lord to help them, but where else could they turn? Who but God could help?

As at other times, God raised up a deliverer. His name: Samson.

What can we learn from the career of such a man as Samson?

Although it is difficult for us to understand all he did, Samson served a purpose in the plan of God at this time. A man of physical strength, his morals were more representative of Sodom than of Israel. But it is an irrefutable principle with God that as a man sows, so shall he reap, and perhaps no individual in the Scriptures better illustrates this than Samson.

Samson was one of a privileged few in the Bible to have had his birth announced by an angel. As a judge, Samson was unique, having been chosen by God before his birth to deliver Israel from the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). His parents were greatly honored in entertaining an angel of God.



Called of God to be Israel's deliverer, Samson performed feats of strength unexplainable without the power of God. Though his career is beyond our understanding, he was the right man to do the job that God wanted done. Samson was simply an instrument in God's hand.

Before his birth, God decreed that Samson should be a Nazarite. By this designation, God's angel was saying that his whole life was to be dedicated to God. Samson did not keep this vow. The flaws in his character are glaring, and his passionate human nature led him more than once to transgress, and finally to end his life.

While the story of Samson occupies a comparatively large part of the Book of Judges, we actually know about only a small part of his life. According to a distin-

guished historian, the episodes recorded in the book of Judges took place in the first and last years of his twenty-year judgeship.

It is difficult for us living more than three millennia this side of these events to evaluate such a character as Samson. God must have had a special work for Samson, else his birth would not have been cause for an angelic visit. His principal task was to protect Israel from their perpetual enemy, the Philistines. This was the specific prophecy of the angel about his career, given before his birth: "he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines."

This is precisely what Samson did. Because he was judging at Hebron and keeping the Philistines occupied in the southern part of Israel, the prophet Samuel was free to initiate a spiritual revival in the northern part of the country, traveling his circuit from Shiloh to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh. Both men were needed in their widely differing capacities to accomplish the work God wanted done at that time.

Samson's special strength from God appears to have been limited to certain occasions. There is also evidence that Samson possessed great faith in God, and God rewarded him by answering his prayer and restoring his strength, allowing him to use his supernatural strength to destroy a great number of the Philistines in his last feat.

While we find Samson sadly lacking in morals, he saved Israel much grief at the hands of the Philistines. The good that he did would have more appeal for us had he controlled his sinful passions. The Bible, however, makes no attempt to hide his sin any more than it hides the sin of Saul, David or Solomon.

### The Last of the Judges:

#### Eli and Samuel

Bad times call for good men. Bad times even *make* good men, if the men are willing to be "made." This is what happened in the time of Samuel.

Times were bad in Israel; true religion had taken a back seat to Baal and Ashtaroath. The Philistines were not only oppressing Israel, they were winning. Yet there never was a dark night that was not followed by a sunrise, and so after the dark night under the rule of the renegade king Abimilech, the blatant idolatry of Micah and twenty years of oppression by the Philistines, there arose one of Israel's shining stars: Samuel.

The story now was no different than in the earlier days of the Judges. Because of their evil-doing, the Lord allowed other nations to oppress them. Israel's sin must have been great, because God allowed the Philistines to trouble them for a total of forty years (Judg. 13:1). This forty-year period did not end with one great deliverance as had some previous oppressions. The first twenty years culminated in their defeat at the battle of Aphek when Eli's two sons were slain, and the second twenty years ended with the battle of Mizpeh, when Israel routed the Philistines.

Of the life and works of Samuel's predecessor Eli we know but little. His work included service both as high priest and judge, he being the only judge to have filled both offices at the same time. According to the Scriptures, Eli judged Israel forty years, his term ending with his death at the Battle of Aphek. Because he was also the high priest, his office was at the Tabernacle in Shiloh, and it was here that the young Samuel was trained under his tutelage. At the same time, Samson judged in the south-

ern part of the country.

Eli's service as judge was not military as was that of many of the earlier judges; nor did his work bring him into contact with the Philistine raiders. For the most part, Israel at this time offered little resistance to Philistine domination, being content to mix with them, learn their ways and worship their gods. Eli's work as high priest was to keep alive the faith of the remnant who came to the services at the Tabernacle to worship the true God. His service would have been no different than that of other high priests who conducted the worship at the Tabernacle. Being both high priest and judge, he dealt with both religious and civil problems.

According to the divine principle, "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby" (Ezek. 33:18). Although a man may have lived an upright life for seventy or more years, if he forsakes the right way he will be remembered not for the good he did but for the wrong. And so it is with Eli; he is more remembered for his transgression in the wickedness of his sons than for his virtue in having been a "father" to Samuel.

Eli's role in the life of Samuel began even before Samuel was born. It was Eli who heard Hannah's prayer and blessed her as she left the temple. It was Eli who cared for and taught the child that Hannah brought him.

But what Eli did for his foster son Samuel he failed to do for his own sons, Hophni and Phinehas. For this problem with his sons Eli is best remembered, because he failed to deal with them to the satisfaction of the Almighty.

Eli was old, and his sons had assumed the duties of the priesthood in his place. But their conduct in the matter of the sacrifices was

not according to the law, and the people were indignant. The law specified exactly what portion of the meat was due the priest, but Eli's sons demanded more. Besides this, they had illicit relations with some of the women at the Tabernacle. Their contempt for the law (of which they were the supposed guardians) brought religion into disrepute and weakened the moral fiber of the nation, serving to drive the people from the worship of God to the pagan gods of the nations.

God sent a warning to Eli, first through a messenger and then through the young Samuel, about the misconduct of his sons. Twice God warned Eli, pointing out the seriousness of his sin in God's eyes. Eli must have made some attempt to correct his sons, but his mild remonstrances were ineffectual and the misconduct continued.

The Lord expected Eli, because of his high position, both as judge and high priest, to take vigorous action to stop the evil practices of his sons. Because he did not, God sent a prophet to announce that not only would both his sons die in one day, but his family would no longer continue in the priesthood (I Sam. 2:27-36). This happened, just as the Lord had said. MM

*Noise of hammers once I heard  
Many hammers, busy hammers,  
Beating, shaping, night and day,  
Shaping, beating dust and clay  
To a palace, saw it reared,  
Saw the hammers laid away.*

*And I listened, and I hear  
Hammers beating, night and day.  
In the palace newly reared  
Beating it to dust and clay.  
Other hammers, muffled hammers,  
Silent hammers of decay.*

—Selected

## The Judges: A Lesson for Us

THE PERIOD of the judges was the one time in the history of God's people when God gave opportunity for the best of all governments to operate, promising peace and blessing if only they would obey Him. Was God to blame that this best form of government did not work? No, the responsibility lay with the individuals. Israel forfeited this great opportunity by turning away from God. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The people sinned and turned to other gods, forgetting what God had promised them.

Why did God allow so much suffering to be imposed upon the people? Again, the responsibility lay with the people. Had they obeyed His command and driven out the inhabitants of the land, tearing down their altars as they had been commanded to do, much of the trouble could have been avoided. Intermarriage with the Canaanites (which God had strictly forbidden) no doubt led many away from God. Had the heathens not been living right among them, there would have been temptation enough to follow their wicked ways. But when the altars to idols and foreign gods were everywhere, how could they escape? Much of the unrest came about because of these foreigners living among them.

Why did God allow His people to suffer so long before He came to their rescue? Why did He allow them to be punished so many times? And on the other hand, why didn't He consider that the Israelites had forfeited their opportunity for theocratic blessings long before He did?

We can only guess. God allowed ample time and opportunity for this highest form of government to work. He graciously desired to give His people the privileges and blessings He had in store for them—if only they would submit to His discipline. God hoped to bring the people back to Him. Always He sent help when the people showed themselves worthy of it. Here was the

role of the judges—emergency people for emergency situations.

The apostle Paul called attention to the experiences of those who had gone before, warning those early Christians of the danger of defection from God. He wished to spare his people the hardships and sufferings endured by their forefathers. And this warning is as valid today as when spoken. Disobedience always brings grief and hardship. Indeed the book of Judges has living and pertinent meaning for us in our modern society. Human nature has not changed. Actually there was hardly an immorality or evil committed in the period of the judges that is not prevalent today. The disorders of our generation are such that the lessons from a similar period may give us the perspective we need to solve our problems today.

Israel's troubles sprang largely from one sin: disobedience. They had disobeyed God in not driving out the Canaanites as God had commanded. It was not that Israel lacked the power to drive them out altogether, for God had promised to help. Indeed, He *had* helped, as at Jericho. The real reason they did not drive them out was that they did not really *want* to drive them out. They were attracted by what they saw of the worldly ways of the heathens, by the ritual of their worship of heathen gods, and so they chose to allow these people to remain among them. As a result, Israel's standards were lowered, and the nation's faith weakened by the example and influence of the Canaanite population among them.

Living as we do in the midst of unbelievers, let us be warned of this danger.

The preservation of Israel's faith depended upon her apartness. To find the middle ground between mingling and conceding, coopera-

tion and surrendering was the ever-present task. Israel's woes always increased in proportion to the way in which she allowed the influence of her heathen neighbors to affect her.

We today face a similar problem, the problem of how much we should be a part of the world society of our day, to what degree we should be separate. The Christian life must find the middle ground between over-participation and withdrawal. While we share the life of our day, we must represent a life far superior to any other the world knows. To be in the world yet not of it is the perennial problem of our Christian lives. It is yet within our power to succeed where Israel failed.

In the days of the Judges God sent punishment upon the disobe-

dient, desiring to bring the people back to Him. It was a bitter process, a veritable ordeal by fire. Yet this very pressure had a twofold purpose. It came not only as a punishment upon the disobedient but as a test to prove the faithful. It was a strengthener to the strong, making their faith stand out in its true beauty and perfect purity.

Trials and temptations are always important for the maturing Christian; they can make or break. God forbid that we allow them to break us.

Living in a critical age, a sinful generation, we represent a life superior to any the world knows. May we not be one to weaken, compromise or surrender. Let our faith grow stronger and stronger, bringing to full maturity our life in God.MM

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## To Be Stirred Up

**WE** NEED to be all stirred up in our most holy faith. Is not the King soon to return to this earth, to give every man according as his works shall merit? He would have us welcome Him with hearts all aglow, properly clad in garments spotlessly clean and white.

By nature we are not what we ought to be, and as such we are not acceptable to God. Left to ourselves we would likely as not choose the wrong and in the end perish. But through a consistent study of His revealed Word we can evaluate the present pursuits of this short life as mere fleeting things leading away from God and away from eternal security.

The insignificant things of this life are very attractive to the natural man, and many will succumb to their alluring pull. In this busy, bustling world, all are astir with nervous tension, hot in pursuit of material wealth, riches, pleasure-seeking and honor of men. We, on the other hand, who are bound for the Kingdom must run the way of His commandments. Truth must possess every faculty of our being, the thoughts we think, the words we speak, the steps we take, the decisions we make and the deeds we perform. All the why's and what for's in our lives must tend toward that one harmonious obedient whole, that "God may be all in all." Our own self must not come into the picture.

We have every opportunity to make our calling and election sure. God is willing to save us if we are willing to be saved. These many years He has stretched out His hand toward us in loving invitation, "Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers," "separate yourselves," "be zealous" in performing all my commandments. "I will be your God, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

Let us make sure that we choose wisdom's path while the Lord is still calling. All will be lost by delay.

—Contributed



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# Concerning Elijah

**I**N THE discussion of any Bible subject it is so easy to start with an opinion and try to find evidence to support that opinion. A motto hanging on an office wall which I saw recently reads, "I can see both sides of a question, *my* side and the *wrong* side."

We realize that our belief in the return of the prophet Elijah before the second coming of Christ is the minority view. However, we urge you to read the evidence with an open mind, to determine exactly what the Bible says.—Editor.

What does the Bible say about Elijah's return? The last two verses of the Old Testament are these words by the prophet Malachi: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

## "I will send . . ."

Notice that Malachi does not quote the Lord as saying He will send some *man* or a *group of men* in the spirit of Elijah, or someone to do the *work* of Elijah, as many have claimed. He says definitely, "I will send you Elijah the Prophet."

Notice also that Malachi places this coming "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This great and dreadful day of the Lord did not take place at Christ's first coming. The whole 4th chapter of Malachi is placed in the context of the time when Christ returns to earth and calls on all nations to submit, when "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly" shall be destroyed. This has never happened in the history of the earth. There has never yet been a time which could be described in these words: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. . . . And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this" (Mal. 4:1, 3). The righteous do

not have the wicked "under the soles of their feet" today. In fact, the situation is quite the reverse.

And there was nothing about the first coming of Christ that could be called the "great and dreadful day of the Lord." Christ brought no judgments on the world at that time. We have no other alternative, then, but to conclude that the prophecy is at this time unfulfilled.

## "Floating Around"?

We recently received a letter from a friend who writes as follows:

*"I am writing to you in reference to your booklet, Elijah Then Christ. I found it very interesting, however, I feel you are in error on several points of doctrine. We both agree and know that John 3:13 affirms that Elijah was not in the heaven where God's throne exists. You place Elijah somewhere in outer space. You term it 'habitable islands.' Scientists and laymen alike know that physical man cannot survive beyond earth's atmosphere. Elijah was not transformed to spirit. In Hebrews 11:39 God inspired to be written that the prophets—including Elijah—received not the promise (not yet, but they shall at the resurrection)."*

We do indeed agree that Elijah was not taken to the heaven where God's throne exists. Only Jesus went there. But we do not conceive of Elijah floating around in outer space. With the universe containing billions of galaxies and each galaxy consisting of billions of stars and no one knows how many planets, is it not possible that Elijah could be on another planet?

Second Kings 2:11 reads, "Behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire . . . and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Among all the human race there have been only two exceptions to the rule that mortal men die. Enoch and Elijah are the two exceptions. Hebrews 11:5, in the *New English Bible*, reads, "By faith Enoch was carried away to another life without passing through death; he was not to be found,

because God had taken him." If Enoch was "carried away to another life," why not Elijah?

### God's Purpose

Our correspondent continues, *"The purpose of God in removing Elijah was to replace him with another man who could occupy Elijah's office in Israel for another generation. This work had to start under a new king, for Ahaziah of Israel had just died and Elijah was already aging. So as not to disqualify Elijah in the sight of the people, God took him away from the sons of the prophets and the people, allowing the mantle of Elijah to drop into the hands of Elisha. Thus God preserved the name and office of his prophet."*

An interesting speculation, perhaps, but the writer gives no Scriptural support for this position. And we know of none. Why would a new king necessarily require a new prophet? Several prophets of the Lord served under more than one king. Both Hosea and Amos served under several kings. This fact alone does not seem to us to be adequate proof that Elijah was not taken to heaven.

He continues: *"I believe that it is ridiculous to believe that Elijah stayed in the air for thousands of years."*

We agree, it is ridiculous, and to the best of our knowledge we never said that he did. The Bible states that he went up in a "chariot of fire," and the Psalmist tells us that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Ps. 68:17). Elijah was taken up by angels. Where he was taken we do not know. But we believe the record. He could be with Enoch, or the two could be on separate planets. There is surely no shortage of possible locations.

### What About the Letter from Elijah?

Our correspondent says further: *"From the wording of the letter in II Chron. 21:12-15 it is clear that Elijah wrote it after these events had occurred, for he spoke of them as past events and of the disease as future. Two years after the king (Jehoram) became diseased the king died. He reigned only eight short years (II Chron. 21:18-20). This proves that the letter was written about 10 years after Elijah had been taken to another location by the whirlwind. God used Elijah to convey the message because Elijah was the prophet of God in the days of the present King's father, Jehoshaphat, who was obedient."*

*"The letter he had delivered was recognized as his, proving he was known to be alive someplace."*

To use this writing from Elijah to prove that Elijah died seems unfair. Let us look closely at the facts.

First, Elijah was a prophet in Israel while Jehoram

was a king in Judah. The fact that the writing mentioned the wicked deeds of the kings of Israel and predicted the death of Jehoram of Israel is not positive proof that Elijah wrote it at a certain time. Further, we cannot be absolutely sure that these events occurred in the chronological order that is generally assumed.

Many people tend to think of the Bible as being written in a chronological order, but all parts are not chronological. In any event the Bible states that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." It does not say that he was taken to another location on this earth. That is only human interpretation and does not alter the facts. If we cannot trust God to give us the facts in this case, how do we know that *anything* in the Bible is true?

### Another Thought . . .

There is another thought we should consider.

This letter or writing has been used to prove that Elijah was on the earth at the time he sent the letter to the king Jehoram, which has been thought to be eight to ten years after he is said to have been taken to heaven.

While the exact timing of the reigns of the kings of both Israel and Judah is difficult to determine, also the time of Elijah's ascension and the writing of the letter, please note:

According to I Kings 22:51, "Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. According to *A Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah* by Edwin R. Thiele, Ahaziah reigned 853-852 B. C. At the same time or slightly before, during the later part of 854 B. C., Jehoram (son of Jehoshaphat) began to reign as co-regent with his father in Judah. He reigned for 5 years as co-regent and 8 years as sole ruler, or until 841 B. C.

Now we know from II Kings 1 that Elijah, after destroying the two captains and the one hundred soldiers that King Ahaziah of Israel sent to arrest him, eventually went to the king and told him that he would surely die. This, according to the above chronology, was in 852 B. C.

At this same time Jehoram was reigning as co-regent with his father, Jehoshaphat, in Judah. Five years later his father died and Jehoram assumed the throne on his own. His reign ended in 841 B. C.

From this chronology we learn that Elijah was on earth and active during the reign of Ahaziah in 852.

We have no way of knowing exactly when Jehoram of Judah received the writing from Elijah. We also have no exact date for the ascension of Elijah to heaven.

Albert Barnes in his notes on II Kings 2, has this to say, "The events of this chapter are related out of their chronological order. Elijah's translation did not take place till after the accession of Jehoram in Judah which was not till the fifth year of Jehoram of Israel. The writer of Kings having concluded his notices of the ministry of Elijah in chapter one and being about to pass in chapter three to the ministry of Elisha, thought it best to insert at this point the final scene of Elijah's life, though it did not occur till several years later."

If this is correct, it would seem that Elijah was on earth long enough to observe the wickedness of Jehoram of Judah *before* he was taken to heaven. And king Jehoram could have received the writing either before Elijah's ascension or after. (Remember that there was no air mail service in those days.)

In any event, it is a mistake to discredit the Biblical account when we are not told the exact dates of these occurrences. To say that Elijah was taken over the next mountain or deposited in some out-of-the-way place there to live out his remaining life and die is entirely man's conjecture. We prefer to believe the Biblical account, that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," a phenomenon witnessed by Elisha and 50 of the sons of the prophets.

One last thought: if Elijah had stayed on the earth and died as other men, what *need* for the spectacular intervention of the Lord to take him to another place on earth? Elijah was quite able to go to another place on his own power. Also, it was common knowledge among the sons of the prophets and Elisha that the Lord was going to take Elijah away. In fact, Elijah's ascension seems to have been more widely known and witnessed than that of Christ's.

### **Must ALL Men Die?**

Our friend writes further: "*The Bible says it is appointed unto men once to die. Elijah must have died sometime later (Heb. 9:27). First Corinthians 15:22 reads, 'In Adam all die.' Elijah was subject to human nature and death and is certainly one of the prophets who died in faith not having yet received the promise. To suppose God gave him the power of an endless life of thousands of years is to read into the Bible what is not there. That is immortality. That is not Biblical. He spent the remaining years of his life at some unidentified location on the earth, before he naturally died.*"

Let us examine these conclusions carefully before accepting them. First the statement, "It is appointed unto men once to die." Does this prove that all men must die a natural death?

The complete statement in Hebrews 9:27 reads, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Its meaning is clearer in the New English Bible: "... he (Christ) has appeared once and for all at the climax of history to abolish sin by the sacrifice of himself." What is the subject? "To abolish sin." How did Christ do this? By the "sacrifice of himself," just as every believer must do. It is this sacrificing of ourselves, this "death to sin," which is the lot of all men. And after this death must come judgment, to determine whether they have actually accomplished this self-sacrificing death. "As it is the lot of men to die once, and after death comes judgement." Judgment does not necessarily follow physical death. But judgment is necessary in the abolishing of sin to determine if the death to sin has been complete, to determine if we are acceptable to God. This is why all who agree to serve God will have to appear before Christ to be judged.

If we apply Hebrews 9:27 to natural death, we contradict Jesus' words to Martha, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" We also contradict the words recorded in Hebrews 11:5, "Enoch was translated that he should not see death." And Paul's words in I Corinthians 15:51, "We shall not *all* sleep, but we shall *all* be changed" are also meaningless. It is true that the great majority of mortals will die a natural death, but the Bible is plain that not everyone will. We must be careful not to create contradictions in our study of the Scriptures.

We cannot agree with our friend's conclusion that "Elijah is certainly one of the prophets who died in faith." Hebrews 11 does not mention Elijah. But there is no record of Elijah's death in the Bible. We read that Elijah was "taken up by a whirlwind into heaven."

Our correspondent is correct in saying that "Elijah was subject to human nature and death," "not having received the promises." We see no reason why God should be able to keep Methuselah alive for nearly a thousand years in the mortal state and not be able to keep Elijah and Enoch alive for two or three thousand years, also in the mortal state. We know that they have not yet been made immortal, because the apostle says clearly of Christ that He was the "firstfruits" unto immortality: "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (I Cor. 15:23). Also his statement in his Epistle to Timothy, that only Christ has immortality (I Tim. 6:16). To live for three thousand years is not an endless life.

*(Continued on page 24)*

## Conqueror or Conquered?

A TAMER of wild beasts in London had a boa constrictor, which he had cared for from the time it was little until it had grown to an enormous size.

At the close of one of his exhibitions, the serpent, at a word of command from the trainer, glided forward on the stage and encircled him, fold after fold, until at length the man was hidden from sight and the horrible head of the monster waved aloft in the air. The audience began to cheer wildly. Then, suddenly they were still with horror. A scream of agony had come from the center of that serpent mass. As all listened appalled, they heard the bones of the tamer crack, one after another: and all was still!

The serpent had become the master. He had been trusted once too often.

Yes, that tragedy *could* have been avoided.

But what of ourselves? All serpents, yes, the most deadly serpents, are not literal. And many times we, too, have set ourselves to be a tamer, rather than an exterminator of the deadly vipers of sin. But there is no taming of sin. God says, "He that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death."

Little sins, timid and pleading to live—how often have we failed to look upon them as the menace to ourselves and to humankind that they are! So we have tolerated them, spared them, even meditated

upon how they might serve our carnal purposes. A little pride, a little anger, a little self-indulgence, a little giddy and foolish pleasure—these are small boa constrictors that, unless stamped out, will one day be our death! Each day, each year that we spare them they grow more deadly. Once we could command, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" But a sin that has lingered and grown powerful no longer heeds our voice. It assumes the mastery; we become the helpless victim.

Sad the day when a serpent comes into our lives and we allow it to linger! An injustice, fancied or real, may have been done us. The serpent, bitterness, creeps in; we nurse it; we pet it; we hope to find in it a solace for our feelings. But it saps the joy from our life, and in the end crushes us to death. Never allow bitterness to linger!

Then there are those deadly serpents of jealousy and envy, little serpents that we may have adopted at a time when someone accomplished a task better than we, or when a comrade was preferred above us. These are serpents which will grow rapidly if not crushed at the onset. Oh, how soon they become our master!

Someone speaks highly of us. The serpent, pride, rears its ugly head, and we feed it; we nurture it. As a result, humility is forced from our lives. The serpent becomes the conqueror; we, the conquered.

An evil imagination is encouraged, an impure thought harbored, an unholy ambition given free rein, and a serpent enters our life. That is the moment when we ought to consider whether or not we wish to be a triumphant conqueror or be shamefully conquered.

How subtle is the serpent sin! We may think we can indulge our desires, covering our motives so well that those about us will never suspect what lies behind our well-guarded actions. But we are in the greatest danger when we hide away from the eyes of those about us the serpents that we are harboring. As that serpent winds itself about us, crushing out the breath of life, we will cry, "Would God that someone had persuaded me to stamp out this enemy long ago!"

In that auspicious Day of Christ's coming, all who have promised to serve God alone will be gathered before Him. Can words describe the joy of those who did not linger by the way to see how much pleasure they could extract from sin, those to whom every moment meant a fresh chance to crush the serpent? Oh, the ecstatic joy if on our ears fall the sweet words of the Master, "Well done; come and share my Kingdom with me"! What peace will flow through our being! What joy, because we have escaped the serpent, put it to death ere it became our conqueror!

### **AWAKE!** **For the Time Draweth Nigh**

Awake! O ye Christians.

Oh, ever be bright!

The return of our King

Will soon beam to light.

Oh, ever be watchful,

Be not down in the deep!

If our Master returns

Will He find you asleep?

## Concerning Elijah

(Continued from page 22)

### The Transfiguration

Our friend says further: *"The transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah was a vision, not a material reality."*

We agree one hundred percent. This vision is often cited as an actual event and is used to prove that Elijah was alive or that Moses and Elijah were in Heaven and appeared with Christ on the Mount. But this is not true, and we have never used this text in this way. Jesus said clearly that it was a "vision" not an actual occurrence (Matt. 17:9).

Our friend says also, *"Jesus said 'Elias is come already and they knew him not.' John the Baptist was the forerunner of the Elijah to come, prior to the 'Day of the Lord.' John was in the spirit and power of Elijah as you agree in your booklet."*

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Christ's first advent, but the prophets foretold two comings of Christ and two forerunners. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elias as the angel told his father, Zacharias.

In Matthew 3:3, the gospel writer cited Isaiah 40:3 as describing the work of John the Baptist. Isaiah 40:3 reads, *"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."*

Matthew 3:3 reads: *"For this is he [John] that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."*

John the Baptist was to be the forerunner of Christ's first coming, as Isaiah had predicted and as the record in the New Testament confirms. And following the same pattern, Elijah is to be the forerunner of Christ's second coming before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, as Malachi states and as Jesus confirmed when the disciples asked Him, *"Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things"* (Matt. 17:10-11). And Jesus said this *after* John had been beheaded, so He could not have been referring to John.

### In the "Spirit and Power"

Our friend says further, *"Someone will also come in the Spirit and power of Elijah before Christ returns. The prophet Elijah is dead awaiting his promise of the resurrection. John the Baptist was guided by the same spirit which had guided the same Elijah of old to point*

*Israel to the true God; and the next Elijah is to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ at His second coming. The day of the Lord will have the same spirit which empowered John the Baptist and will fulfill Mal. 4:5, 6."*

In the last 100 years there have been many false teachers purporting to be Elijah or fulfilling the prophecy of Malachi. Most have died and Christ has not come. Unfortunately these pseudo prophets keep coming and deceive the unwary. When a prophet comes in the spirit and power of Elijah, one who has power to go into a hospital and heal all the sick, one who has power to go into a cemetery and raise the dead, there will be no question that Elijah has come. Until then we will believe the Bible.

In conclusion, our friend comments: *"If you believe one forerunner, why can't you accept a second?"*

We cannot understand the thinking behind this question. For seventy years our church has been advertising the fact that Elijah will come as Christ's forerunner. We most certainly do accept a forerunner before Christ's second coming. But that forerunner must meet all the conditions specified in the Bible.

1. He must be *Elijah the prophet*, not some other man or group of men.
2. He must come *before the great and dreadful day of the Lord*.
3. He must turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.
4. And he must restore all things, as Jesus promised (Matt. 17:11).
5. He must have as much or more power than when he was on earth before. Only Elijah the Prophet can meet all of these conditions.

MM

### Needed: Self-Respect

He who wounds the self-respect of another thereby mars and scars his own self-respect.

Without self-respect there can be no genuine success. Success won at the cost of self-respect is not success—for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own self-respect?

Unless one builds on a foundation of self-respect, one's life structure, no matter how glittering and imposing on the outside, is corroded and honey-combed within, liable to collapse at any moment.



# Pillars

We often sing,

*"When nature sinks, and spirits droop,  
Thy promises divine  
Are pillars to support my hopes  
And elevate my mind."*

How often in this mortal vale "nature sinks." We are beset with physical infirmity, perhaps a weak heart, dimming eyesight, diseased lungs, or failing ears. When such afflictions descend upon us, nature surrenders to the inevitable. It sinks.

With the sinking of nature or the retarding of physical activity, "spirits droop." No reaction to physical affliction is more natural, or more spontaneous than the drooping of the spirits. However, for such reaction there is a remedy. The sinking of nature is inevitable, because we are mortal and subject to the ills of mortality. Furthermore, there are cases where medical aid is wholly inadequate to counteract this sinking. But for the drooping of the spirits, there is help, strong and substantial. It comes in the form of *pillars*, given of God, and mighty.

"When nature sinks, and spirits droop, . . . Thy promises divine . . . are pillars to support my hopes. . . ."

Pillars of promise! Promises of a future life which will know no sinking of nature, no physical infirmity, no weariness, no fatigue, no lapse of memory. Instead, life shall be robust, the constitution vigorous, our whole being energetic, vivacity and strength streaming from every pore of our being. Such is immortal life, promised and guaranteed in God's Word to all who diligently seek it.

Such a life in prospect forms pillars—girders of steel and bulwarks of granite—to support our hopes and sustain our spirits from deflection when nature sinks.

Nor is there any limit to the heights to which our spirits can rise when supported by divine promises. "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day," the mind lifted, elevated above the pain and discomfort and misery of the present.

O weary Christian, gather up God's precious promises and build thee stately pillars for thy soul's repose. Those promises are sure.

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## Do Not Forget

I have been thinking of Jesus' message: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). He wanted to impress on us the need to hold on to our faith and keep the commandments, lest we forget. Any moment "He" could be among us, and we could lose all we have been striving for because we did not watch.

We pray that will not happen to us.  
South Wales M. S.

## More than Intentions

Intentions are no good until they are acted upon. Jesus tells us in Rev. 22:12 that He is coming to give to every man according as his work shall be. I remember hearing someone say a long time ago that this means we will be rewarded for what we have *done*, and not for what we *intended to do*. Anyway, the point is that good intentions are not good works. This is a truth well worth remembering as we are all prone to procrastination.

We know the uncertainty of this mortal existence and long for a better life. We can follow the example of Jesus "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

We too can endure all things because we know that the trials and temptations of this life are only temporary and that an eternal future of unspeakable joy awaits us. If we cannot look past this life it means we have no faith in God.

We can be our own judge in this. If we are always thinking of temporal

things and spending very little time thinking and meditating on divine things, we are losing sight of the eternal reward. And when we forget what we are working for we soon stop working. We need to read, study, meditate and pray every day. We also need to constantly admonish and encourage one another to good works.

I remember Bro. Flowerday telling me the last time I was at Megiddo that as we get older we confront new problems as our health goes down. He cautioned me that we should ever be watchful because we never reach the point in this life that we can say we have no more problems or besetments to overcome. If we are not careful we can let a physical illness or any kind of temporal problem turn into a spiritual besetment. To conquer the old man is a never-ending struggle, but it is a struggle we can win if we keep fighting.

Tennessee S. K.

## Time to Grow—Catching Up

If our harvest of the fruits of the spirit doesn't mature, we are destined to "go broke." Without a good harvest, we won't have any hope for a rainy day.

We need to work harder for this prize of eternal life. If we have any weeds of malice and jealousy, we'd better take stock and see what we can do about it. If we work hard, with renewed determination we can do a lot in a short time. We can catch up and be ready for the harvest time when Christ comes to bring the reward.

At first we were a seed. In order to grow we had to have God's Word to keep us moist and growing. We had

to stand winds of adversity, drought, wet weather.

God sends the sunshine, the showers and blessings to all. God has done everything on His part. Now it's up to us to do on our part.

Iowa W. P.

## Obituaries

### Stephanie Radjick

On October 26, 1984, funeral services were conducted for Sister Stephanie Radjick of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Sister Radjick was in her 86th year, and had been an active member and supporter of the Megiddo Church for more than 60 years, subscribing to our magazine since 1922. Her frequent letters reflected her convictions, and she was a regular visitor of our Rochester congregation at our annual Abib and Memorial services as long as health and strength permitted.

Sister Radjick believed earnestly in the resurrection of the dead, and looked forward to the soon coming of Christ, when faith will be changed to sight. She is survived by sisters, nephews, and numerous friends and neighbors.

### Sam G. Mills

We also received word recently of the death of Sam G. Mills of Stewiacke, Nova Scotia, Canada. Brother Mills had been a lively correspondent and active reader of our literature for many years, subscribing to the *Message* since 1942. No details of his family are available.



## WORTHLESS? — JUNK IT!



**J**UNK something every day. Junk your worries, junk your fears, junk your anxieties, junk your little jealousies, envies and hatreds. Whatever interferes with your getting up and getting on in the world—JUNK IT! Every night before you go to sleep, put in the junk heap all your disappointments, all your grudges, your revengeful feelings, your malice—JUNK EVERYTHING that is hindering you from being a strong, fine character.”

The great trouble with most of us is that we don't consider this sort of thing as “junk.” “We pull all our mental enemies, all our handicaps, our discouragements, our losses, our misfortunes, our troubles, worries and trials, along with us. That eats up more than 50 per cent of our vitality and energy, so we have only the smaller amount left for worthwhile achievement.”

Isn't this good advice for Kingdom-seekers, to junk everything that is holding you back from attaining the goal you have set out for?

But let us consider that before we throw away anything, we must have something better to take its place. If we throw away anxiety, we might choose faith in its place. If we junk jealousy, envy and hatred, we could replace them with love and goodwill. There is no use brooding over disappointments. Rather, call them divine appointments, learn from them, and leave them behind. Grudges, revengeful feelings and malice should never be allowed to clutter our minds at all. But if they are there, why keep them? Why not junk them and put long-suffering and peace in their place?

There is a fruit of the Spirit to replace every fruit of the flesh, so we need have no yawning emptiness in our lives. If we are discouraged, we should add courage. If

we have had losses or misfortunes, we should remember Habakkuk 3:17-18, “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” and fill the space with rejoicing.

We need the experiences that come to us to develop and polish our character. If we patiently endure, they will become less severe and finally be forgotten in the joy of a perfect character.

Sometimes we have in our possession an article which we think we really ought to discard. But instead we lay it aside thinking it might come in handy sometime. So with perverse habits in our spiritual life; instead of discarding them right there we lay them away and when off our guard we get the worthless things out and indulge them again. This is not lawful. It is not sensible. It is not the way to reach our goal. If we would succeed, we must fight the old man until he lies dead at our feet. If we are constantly renewing the new nature, the old traits will not continue to overpower us.

Why hold on to what we don't want and wish we didn't have? The answer is simple: We wouldn't—if we didn't want to!

We must learn to see the junk for the worthless stuff that it is, then we will be glad to discard it, to throw away all that belongs to the “old man” of sin and keep only what belongs to the “new man,” the new nature that is “created in righteousness and true holiness.”

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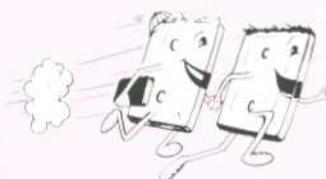
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