

Megiddo Message

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise. The sky is filled with orange and yellow clouds, with the sun visible as a bright orb on the horizon. In the foreground, there is a dark silhouette of a willow tree on the right side, and a calm body of water reflecting the sky's colors.

Count that day lost
whose low descending sun
views from thy hand
no worthy action done.

What Do You Prefer?

*If you could do anything you wanted,
what would you choose? What would you prefer?*

A MAN once made this statement about what he preferred: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple."

Many options were available to this man, for he was no ordinary peasant bound by the humdrum of daily duties. He was a king, the greatest king Israel ever had, King David by name. All the wealth and activity of the nation lay at his disposal. Whatever he wanted, he could have had.

Yet, when he looked upon it all, what was his preference, his highest desire? There was no hesitation and no question; the choice was very clear for him: "one thing have I desired . . . that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life."

David was a busy man. No small job was that of running a nation. And with that job came some difficult decisions. He was busy in the mainstream of life, there was something to be done on every side; yet, in the midst of it all, his heart and soul were set on dwelling in God's house, being in the presence of God.

What an amazing example, to see a man so high in authority and power, longing to be in the place of solitude and quiet worship, alone with God! Despite his busy, productive life, David always had time for God.

Do we wonder at his great faith, his many victories with God on his side, his unshakable confidence that God was with him, his guide and protector? Do we wonder that even when he had sinned a great sin he could confess it, repent, and humbly seek God's forgiveness and restoration—and obtain it?

We have no doubt been thankful that our record does not read like that of David; but let us not be too hasty in our conclusions; for God judges a man not by his place *during* the running but at the *end*.

And David's end was nothing to be ashamed of.

Through it all is a glowing account of spiritual battle and victory; through it all shines a deep devotion to God, a steady faith in His providence, and a noble desire to company with his closest friend: the Most High.

When David had a choice, when he could do what he loved most, the "one thing" that he desired above all was to spend time with God.

Let us copy David's example and make our desire like his. Let us put God in the center of our lives, and realize our need to dwell "in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High." Then all our priorities will fall into place, our actions and thoughts will be ordered from above, and ours shall be the supreme delight David experienced: "to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple." MM

You may sing of the beauty of mountain and dale; . . . Of the silvery streamlets and flow'rs of the vale; . . . But the place most delightful this earth can afford . . . Is the place of devotion, the house of the Lord.

You may boast of the sweetness of day's early dawn, . . . Of the sky's soft'ning graces when day is just gone; . . . But there's no other season of time can compare . . . With the place of devotion, the season of pray'r.

You may value the friendship of youth and of age; . . . and select for your comrades the noble and sage; . . . But the friends who most cheer me on life's rugged road . . . Are the friends of my Master, the children of God.

You may talk of your prospects of fame or of wealth . . . And the hopes that oft flatter the fav'rites of health; . . . But the hope of bright glory, of heavenly bliss— . . . Take away ev'ry other and give me but this!

Ever hail! blessed temple, abode of my Lord, . . . I will turn to thee often, to hear from His Word; . . . I will walk to the altar with those that I love, . . . and delight in the prospects revealed from above.

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 precepts and principles given us in the Word 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*

Goodspeed—*The New Testament translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed*

Moffatt—*The Bible, A New Translation*

RV—*Revised Version*

About Our Cover

Our cover photo is of a sunset taken near Groveland, New York, by Mr. and Mrs. David Sutton.

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

“Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?”

Part II

Scripture Lesson: II Peter 3

THE STORY is told of the noted English agnostic Thomas Huxley who some years ago was in Dublin, Ireland for a series of speaking engagements. Early one morning he left his hotel in a hurry to catch a train, taking one of the city's famous horsedrawn taxis. Huxley thought that the doorman at the hotel had told the driver where to go, so he simply settled back in the cab and told the man at the reins to drive fast. The driver set off at a vigorous pace. In a few minutes Huxley realized that the cab was headed away from the station. “Don't you know where you're going?” he shouted to the driver. “No, your honor,” the driver answered, and then added with obvious satisfaction—“but I'm driving fast!”

This seems to describe the attitude of thousands today. There is much motion, much activity, much speed, much progress, but toward what goal? in what direction? Where is the port of arrival? Few, very few, seem to know either where they are or where they are headed. As expressed by Franklin Roosevelt in his first inaugural address, “We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way.”

Thank God, He has not left us to aimless traveling. He has given us a definite direction, a goal at the end of the way, rules by which we can travel, and signboards by which we can know that we are on the way. Among

the most prominent of these signboards is the prophecy of the Apostle Paul recorded in II Tim. 3:1-4. Let us look further at the signs he outlines for the end of the age. The next word in his long list is:

INCONTINENT. The Greek word is *akrates* (ak-rat'-ace) and means without self-control, intemperate, powerless. The incontinent include those who do not restrain their passions or appetites. We see examples of this in alcoholics, compulsive gamblers, immoral men and women, and impulsive killers.

Rampant drug abuse is another example of the incontinent. The illegal drug business last year (1985) was conservatively estimated to amount to more than \$110 billion. Add to this the cost of drug abuse in the U.S.—more than \$60 billion annually including the expense of hospitalization, property damage and time lost from work that results from a misuse of drugs. An even greater cost accrues in the personal and family destruction caused, and so much to the youth of our nation. It has been said that marijuana is currently the second largest crop, dollar wise, in the U.S. The dollar value of narcotics seized at the borders of the U.S. in 1983 was over \$28 million. According to statements of U.S. officials, this is only a fraction of the narcotics smuggled into this country. “The odds are in the favor of the pushers,” says one Coast Guard official. Is it not a vivid fulfillment of prophecy?

And incontinence breeds fierceness.

FIERCE. *Anemeros* (an-ay'-mer-os) means brutal, cruel, inhuman. We are living in a time which can aptly be termed “midnight madness.” Recall the inci-

Note: *Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming? Part II* is available as a complete church service on cassette. Price: \$3.00

dent at a soccer game in Italy. A fight broke out in the bleachers and as a result, a mob of people on a dividing wall caused it to collapse. Scores of people were actually jumping, stumbling, running and walking over the injured and dying without any regard for human life! Afterward the game went on as scheduled. It is hard to imagine the callousness of many people today.

Never before in all history has there been so much worldwide terrorism. Car bombings, hijackings, and the planting of explosive devices in public places are constant news items. Officials wonder what to do, as they watch the problem grow worse. Terrorist activity is sweeping like wild fire across the world. Crazy men, on suicide missions, have killed hundreds as the problem worsens. It is reported that Iran is currently "training" terrorists. One cannot but wonder, what next?

DESPISERS OF THOSE THAT ARE GOOD. This phrase is captured in one Greek word, *aphilagathos* (af-il-ag'-ath-os). It means hostile to virtue. An aversion to goodness has permeated much of the youth of our land, as any student will testify who has tried to maintain a high moral code. The despisers of goodness not only practice evil but applaud others who do the same. The very notion that some acts are immoral is rejected.

These last three subjects—incontinent, fierce, and despisers of those that are good—are interrelated in nature. The lack of self-control breeds fierceness and hostility toward goodness, and such people are "despisers of those that are good."

TRAITORS. The Greek word is *prodotes* (prod-ot'-ace) which means betrayers. It includes the disloyal, the untrustworthy, the treacherous, those who pursue their own interests at the expense of others. It includes those whose word is no longer binding. It describes producers of tobacco and alcohol, who advertise poison as though it were harmless pleasure, and put their own monetary interests ahead of the health of the nation.

"Traitors" also describes those who design contracts to include misleading information, "loopholes." It includes those who are disloyal to their family, company or nation.

HEADY. *Prophetes* (prop-et-ace') is the Greek word which means rash, reckless, precipitate, compulsive, uncontrolled.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of this uncontrolled compulsiveness today is seen in the billions of dollars which Americans spend every year on illegal bets and gambling. Las Vegas, the most widely known gambling attraction in America, is preparing for highly increased activity and Atlantic City, the East Coast competitor of Las Vegas, is multiplying its casinos to

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meet the demand. Gambling is a nationally mushrooming business.

Nor is gambling limited to the casinos. Even some of our state governments are involved in gambling, having found it a highly popular source of revenue. As recently as January, 1986, the New York State Lottery reported selling lottery tickets on the final day before the drawing at an unprecedented rate. People hoping to guess the perfect combination of numbers and win the 28-million dollar "jackpot" were buying lottery tickets at the rate of more than 19,000 a minute—so fast that no one could even know who the winner was until the computers, working night and day, had had an extra day to catch up with the processing.

This "heady" trait of being uncontrolled, rash, reckless, and compulsive is seen also in the high school girls who become teenage mothers. So widespread has the problem become that some schools have found it necessary to provide nurseries to care for the children so that the mothers can continue their education!

HIGHMINDED. *Tupholoo* (toof-o'-lo) is the Greek word which means blind with pride or conceit, beclouded or besotted. This implicates people who have become drunk on self-pride—it is seen in politics, in social circles, among religious dignitaries, among the educated. It is especially conspicuous in those who regard themselves as innately superior to others—some parents even teach their children that they are naturally superior and should dominate others.

LOVERS OF PLEASURES MORE THAN LOVERS OF GOD. No one living today can deny this. The masses flooding the theaters, dance clubs, gambling halls, the spectator sports, the social entertainments all attest to the fact that the thirst for pleasure dominates.

The phrase "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" is the generally accepted translation of the original text. However, Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon seems to add another aspect to the meaning. The word "pleasure" in the Greek is derived from two other Greek words: "pseudes" (psyoo-dace'), which means

untrue, erroneous, deceitful, wicked, false, liar; and "adelphos" (ad-el-fos), which means brother; hence, a deceitful, wicked or false brother. It might be applied to ministers who are admittedly unbelievers. Or it might apply to so-called Christians whose integrity in business matters is impossible to distinguish from that of non-Christians. The phrase "false brother" indites those who claim to represent Christianity but who by their conduct deny it.

A direct result of the modern pleasure-seeking and self-seeking so prevalent today, when men are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," is the widespread moral degeneration that is undermining our nation and its most sacred traditions; the philosophy that "if it feels good, it is good"—a philosophy that can justify almost any action or conduct.

With the alarming increase of crime; the sensational treatment of violence and sexuality in literature; the total disregard of social restraints and moral values; the lurid presentations on stage, screen and television; the greed and cynicism of government, labor and business; the continuance of racial injustices; the accelerating divorce rate; the rapid disintegration of the family; the harsh, pagan disregard for the sacredness of human life—can we wonder that the great Apostle called these "perilous times," when men would be "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God"?

Some countries are trying a unique solution to the multiple problems of morality and social behavior. To relieve the burden on law enforcement agencies—and "reduce crime"—they are rewriting their laws. If a certain misdemeanor isn't in the laws, it isn't a misdemeanor! If the trend continues we can imagine a generation that will have no moral law to break.

Then follows the final word in Paul's prophecy: **HAVING A FORM OF GODLINESS BUT DENYING THE POWER THEREOF.** Here is perhaps the most astonishing of all the facts in this Divine prophecy. Who, but by divine vision, could have foreseen a situation so contradictory as an age of unprecedented violence, crime and immorality—and also maintaining a "form of godliness"! Yet this is precisely what we see today. Current polls tell us that 94% of the general public believe in God, 90% believe in life after death; 8 out of 10 say the Ten Commandments are binding. While many denominational churches are shrinking, pentecostals, conservatives, and independent groups are growing rapidly.

Many churches today are little different from the paganistic churches of yesteryear who thought to woo pagans into the fold by adopting their paganistic customs and calling them "Christian." It is not the Word of God that attracts large numbers into the church congregations today but rather social activities—bingo,

Let Us Pray . . .

O Lord our rock and our fortress, and our refuge in the day of affliction; our strength in weakness, and our stay in trouble: we come before Thee this morning with minds eager for fresh impressions from Thy Word. In the midst of a world of midnight darkness, Thou hast given us light.

We thank Thee for all Thy abundant goodness to us, for life itself, for strength of body and mind, for the warmth of friendship and the encouragement of true brotherly affection. We thank Thee for Thy Word, and the brilliant hope it sets before us. Help us to use all these gifts in ways that honor Thee.

Father, we pray Thee to open our ears to the words which Thou dost desire to have us hear. Give us the patience and grace to accept life and what life brings us,

confident that Thou art working all things together for our eternal good. Stir up our courage to change the things that must be changed, and give us the fortitude to hold fast the things which Thou hast given us, to go on believing even where we cannot see, knowing that Thou wilt never forsake those who are true to Thee.

We pray for a new sensitivity to sin in our own hearts and lives, and to realize that it must be eradicated before we can be accepted by Thee. Thou wilt have only the best; if we fail to qualify, Thou canst find others who will.

Lord, we pray not for lighter burdens but for greater strength; not for easier disciplines, but for more power to endure. Be with Thy people everywhere as they are with Thee; guide and direct them through all their comings and goings, that they may be stronger in hope, brilliant lights in a world of sin and darkness.

And wilt Thou hasten the day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of Thy Son forever more and peace and good will shall extend from sea to sea. In His worthy Name we pray. Amen.

baseball, outings for the children—not to mention the dynamic personality of the preacher.

Surely Paul's forecast for the last days is a striking sign of Christ's coming, and the end of the age.

Only Christ Will Stop the Avalanche

The downtrend might be suitably compared to an avalanche. Once the avalanche starts down the mountain-side and picks up speed, no power known to man can stop it. It is said that an avalanche in the Alps, once it starts to move, builds up rapidly. Masses of snow and ice, earth, rocks, trees, houses, and even whole villages, slide down the mountainside together. It is impossible to stop one part of the avalanche without stopping all of it.

So in the world today, morals, submission to law, the sanctity of the marriage contract, the sacredness of the home circle, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, modesty of dress and deportment, reverence for the Bible and the God who authorizes it—all is going down together. No man is able to arrest the downtrend or stop the avalanche. Only the coming of Jesus will accomplish this. In the words of the inspired Prophet, "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." No *man* can stop the avalanche, but God can. Let us read further: "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see": but they shall be made to see, "for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world *shall* learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:10-11, 9). He *will* stop the avalanche.

The simile of the "book sealed with seven seals," recorded in Revelation 5 and 6, bears a striking resemblance to the thought of Christ stopping the avalanche. The Revelator wept much because "no man was found worthy to open and to read the book," or to open the seals thereof—that is, to accomplish the great things the seals represent. "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (v. 5). The world is to grow worse and worse until Christ arrives. Only He can stop the avalanche.

It is said that in the Alps they have what is known as the avalanche blast, which is a wind storm caused by the mass moving rapidly down the mountain slope. Today that wind is blowing, and it will continue to blow stronger and stronger until at Christ's coming it will be countered by the "whirlwind of the Lord" which will go "forth in fury," falling "grievously upon the head of the wicked" (Jer. 23:19). Then and not

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until then will the downtrend of the avalanche be reversed.

Our Reaction

We are seeing the fulfillment of the things written aforetime, and what should be our reaction? Should we be worried, fearful, heartsick, restless, discontented? No, Jesus would have us observe, and be comforted by the signs of His coming. These are His Words: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). Not rejoice because we observe that sin and evil is on the increase, but rejoice to know that this is the darkness before the dawn, the prelude to something infinitely better, that the Kingdom of God is near at hand. Though the darkness is still all around us, we can see ahead the glow of the approaching Day.

From the Prophet Peter

The Apostle Peter near the close of his Second Epistle also includes some prophecy especially for our time. "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Pet. 3:3-4). This forecast is being fulfilled in two ways. Scoffers have arisen saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" They have been saying it over the years, and they are still saying it.

But Peter's meaning goes even further. There "shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." Men and women who know the demands of the gospel, but do not care to apply them to their daily living, are among the scoffers. In Matthew 24 Jesus spoke of this class of individuals, listing them as "evil servants." "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint

Only Christ can stop the avalanche.

him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vs. 48-51). The evil servants would be saying in their hearts, "My lord delayeth his coming." We may say it in our hearts without speaking it audibly. But some have even spoken their doubts in plain words. This, too, is a sign that we are near the time of the Lord's coming.

From Prophets Daniel and Joel

Daniel also foretold something that would take place at the time of the end: "And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 11:35). The Moffatt Bible gives a different rendering to this text, as though viewing the situation from the opposite angle: "Some of the pious, however, shall remain pious, and so be refined, purified, and made white, till the crisis at the close (for the appointed hour is still to come)." It is undeniable that some of understanding have fallen away, but it is strengthening to be assured that some of the pious will remain pious, even through the crisis at the time of the end. Let us here resolve that we will be among those who remain pious.

One sign of Christ's coming has a dual, somewhat contradictory aspect: the prophets of God foretell an unprecedented preparation for war, and a simultaneous probing for peace. The nations' frenzied armament race, when plowshares are beaten into swords and pruning-hooks into spears—to be suddenly interrupted by Divine intervention—was foreseen by Joel. We read: "Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong." At such a time as this, the Eternal will take a hand. "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord . . . The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake" (Joel 3:9-11, 16).

Consider the vast amounts of money being spent for war—the United States alone is currently spending \$237.5 billion; up from a yearly rate of 40 billion dol-

lars only 25 years ago, and leading powers the world over are making a similar effort. How remarkable that the Lord should have been able to inspire His spokesmen to forecast these facts so accurately over twenty-five hundred years in advance. What a vivid sign of Christ's coming is their fulfillment before our very eyes!

And the parallel search for peace is a striking fulfillment of Paul's prophecy. Paul intended that his prediction should be a source of strength and encouragement to the man or woman who is expecting the Lord from heaven and yearns to be ready for acceptance. His words were addressed to the Church at Thessalonica: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, . . . and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness" (I Thess. 5:1-5).

In II Peter 3 the Apostle is telling of the great time of trouble that must accompany the establishment of God's new and better order upon earth. Verse 10 reads: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Then Peter sounds a solemn word of warning in the following verse: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." Seeing that the present heavens and earth shall pass away—all the pomp and pride of man, man's incompetent system of misrule, shall pass away forever—what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." Looking for the coming day, and not only looking for it, but hasting to be ready for it; working for it, preparing for it, surrendering all for it, that we may be worthy of living in it when it comes.

Then the Apostle sounds the glad note of comfort: "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, Look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." We are looking for a new heavens and earth, a new arrangement of things on the earth; sin and evil will not always be rampant as it is today. That is why we do not fear. We are looking for a new ruler, a right-

(Continued on page 10)

Every Day, Every Day

Long-suffering Is as Long as Hope Is High

“REMEMBERING without ceasing your . . . patience (long-suffering) of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (I Thess. 1:3).

Paul might have been called the author of hope. Hope is the keystone in the archway of Christian beliefs. Take away this support, and we are of all men most miserable.

The measure of our hope directly influences the way we interpret our experiences. When our hearts beat high with hope, the artillery of life may release heavy barrages in our direction, but we will face these attacks with patience unflinching.

When our hope is limited we quickly give in to discouragement. This leads to a shortage of long-suffering, and brings on a series of spiritual problems: (1) We become cold—the fires of hope cool down until we are left with a meaningless routine. (2) We become critical—everything strikes us the wrong way; we quickly and impulsively register a protest of our dislikes. (3) We find others of our kind, and bring out the worst in each other. Overwhelmed by this avalanche of defeats, long-suffering dies.

The most tragic commentary on the plight of modern life is the sense of hopelessness. Frustration, futility, and fatalism drive people to excessive indulgences, blighting addictions, and crippling perversions. These abnormal practices leave their victims restless, rebellious, and rancid.

A line in a familiar hymn says: “My strength renew; my hopes restore.” When our hope in Christ is restored, He will give us an adequate supply of long-suffering and a bright outlook for the future.

Help us to keep our hopes undimmed, undiminished, and undiluted, so we can have a poise, balance, and equilibrium in every life situation.

“Everyday with Paul,” by Mendell Taylor. Copyright 1978 by Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City; used by permission.

"Lord, What Shall Be the Sign of Thy Coming?"

(Continued from page 8)

eous King, and for a righteous people to be taken out, over whom the King of righteousness can rule. God has given us the promise, and we have the best of reasons to believe it.

Then in verse 14 Peter admonishes us again to be faithful that the promises may become a reality to us: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Without spot and blameless—what a standard to reach, but what an incentive to reach it. Oh, what need to "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Blameless, clean through and through. That is perfection of character.

Then once again before closing his Epistle, Peter, realizing how easy it is to be led away with the error of the wicked, repeats the warning to his brethren in the faith—and to us,—to be faithful, lest relaxing our ardor we fail of the prize of immortal life: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

Peter's warning is very similar to the warning given by Jesus at the end of His temple sermon recorded in Luke 21. I would like to cite it from the New English Bible: "Keep a watch on yourselves; do not let your minds be dulled by dissipation and drunkenness and worldly cares so that the great Day closes upon you suddenly like a trap; for that day will come on all men, wherever they are, the whole world over. Be on the alert, praying at all times for strength to pass safely through all these imminent troubles and to stand in the presence of the Son of Man" (vs. 34-36).

The warning is to us who see the signs of His coming so clearly fulfilled before our eyes. It is meant to alarm us, to alert us, to warn us to *see* what is clearly before our eyes. What do we see? We see history moving forward not toward an end that is way out there someplace. We see, more vividly than any who have gone before us, that we are a people at the brink. Instead of moving along a single line to some far-off final point, we are moving rapidly toward the end of time. At any moment, things may change.

Six thousand years of man's rule is almost at an end. It is time for each of us to enter upon a private campaign to save ourselves. Hence Jesus' warning, "Watch . . . be on the alert, . . . pray." It is absolutely impossi-

ble to do too much; it is *very* possible to do too little. And when the great Day comes, who of us will not wish we had done more!

**O brother, be faithful! eternity's years
Shall tell for thy faithfulness now,
When bright smiles of gladness shall scatter thy tears,
A coronet gleam on thy brow.**

**O brother, be faithful! the promise is sure;
That waits for the faithful and tried;
To reign with the ransomed, immortal and pure,
And ever with Jesus abide.**

Righteous Father, just and true in all Thy ways, we thank Thee for the message of this hour. We thank Thee for alerting us to the signs of the times in which we are living. We do not grope in darkness, unless it be by our own choosing; we do not live in wonderment, unless we close our eyes to the mountains of evidence surrounding us.

Wilt Thou stir up our courage to change the things in our lives that need changing now, while time is still extended to us, that we may finish the task we have begun and be accepted for a place in Thine everlasting Kingdom, world without end. Amen. MM

TODAY

TODAY is here. I will begin it with a smile and resolve that I will be pleasant. At the beginning of this day I am equal with all others; I have the same amount of time in seconds, minutes and hours. I resolve that I will not waste the valuable time God has entrusted to me because the minutes I wasted yesterday are lost as a vanished thought.

TODAY I refuse to spend time worrying about what might happen tomorrow. I will spend my time making things happen today. I will begin by doing that which I know should be done. I will not imagine what I would do if things were different. Things are not different; I will work with the material at hand. I resolve to never again say, "If I find time," or "if I had time," for I never will "find time" for anything—if I *want* time, I must make it. I will not wait for tomorrow, for we are warned to "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Act on Your Dreams

DREAMING is both vital and dangerous. It is vital when it motivates any major accomplishment. It is dangerous when it allows us to be content with a mere fantasy world instead of a tangible result.

There is nothing wrong with dreaming and planning so long as it doesn't stop there. There is nothing wrong with "building castles in the air" first—if this is the preliminary to putting legs to the dream and actually going to work and building the castle!

We are not in the business of building castles, but we are each one of us in the business of building a life. And the life which we are building consists not in dreams alone but in daily tangible acts and actions which touch the lives of others.

Now, in a broad sense, it might be easy to confuse "dreaming" with the meditative, reflective, thought-filled devotional life which is so vital to Christian growth. It is here that our minds and our emotions are stimulated to see beyond what we are to what we can become. We are elevated in our thinking to think the thoughts of God. Our spiritual sensitivity is raised to a high pitch. A vast expanse of lands to conquer lies

ahead of us. At the same time we are able to view the grand tomorrow God has promised.

But of what real value is our dream if we do not make the move from the meditative to the actual action and fulfillment?

We must always maintain the balance between the reflective and the productive. The inventor must dream—it is true. But there comes a time when his dreams must be transmitted into a real, tangible object if anyone is to receive tangible benefit from his ideas.

A dream must never be an end in itself, an escape from the world of reality. It must serve as a means to greater realities. We are not interested in a life of spiritual fantasies. Rather, we are vitally interested in working out in real life, in real Christian actions, the things of which we have dreamed.

It is a fine point of Christian balance, finding the sensible "middle of the road." Let us take adequate time to think, plan, meditate and pray. And after our eyes have seen the heavenly possibilities, let us enter the real world with a determination to make that dream a reality.

The real test of our meditations and our dreams is the effect that they produce in the hours that follow, as our lives touch others.

James said it this way: "Don't only hear the message, but put it into practice; otherwise you are merely deluding yourselves" (Jas. 1:22, Phillips Translation). MM

**Now,
in the stillness of my heart
and the clear light
of Thy eternity:
I would ponder
the pattern my life is weaving.**

*When we face an ethical, spiritual or moral choice,
sometimes we have to say . . .*

"I Will Not"

IN OUR modern world we frequently find ourselves in situations where we must make a choice, either ethical, spiritual or moral. Often these choices involve something of our present culture that conflicts with the Divine order. But this is no more than can be expected, when the apostle Paul wrote of the last days that men would be arrogant, godless, self-willed, proud, selfish, unloving, brutal, holding a form of godliness but denying its power.

The deteriorating condition of the world in our day is a matter of divine prophecy, and there is little we can do to change the situation. Far more profitable is it to concentrate on living right ourselves. We cannot change the world; we cannot stop the deteriorating world system, but we can in our own lives become what God wants us to be. Our situation is very much like that of a rocky harbor at night. One cannot remove the rocks in the harbor; one cannot even know where all of them lie; but one *can* establish a lighthouse. This is our assignment here, to be lights shining in a dark place.

A short account in the book of Daniel illustrates this point. Daniel was a man of strong internal fortitude in a very bad time. When the book opens Daniel is already far removed from his home environment. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had decided to take certain of the more capable Jewish young men, bring them to his court,

reeducate them, and refine them to fill leadership positions in his kingdom. One of the men he decided to train in this way was Daniel.

If Daniel had not been serving the true God, we would never even know of Nebuchadnezzar's project—it mattered only because it involved someone (Daniel) who mattered to God.

The king's first intent was to Babylonize these young Israelites so that they would forget their past and adopt the new culture. As Nebuchadnezzar planned it, they were to become genuine Babylonians reflecting a Babylonian world view, with Babylonish education and gainful employment at the Babylonian executive level.

Nebuchadnezzar offered Daniel the world above all his peers. Daniel was to have the best. He was to live in the king's house, become the king's right-hand administrator, eat the king's food, and possess the king's knowledge—things he never could have expected as a slave.

From the standpoint of this world's fortunes, the offer was tremendous; breathtaking. But almost immediately we hear a counter from Daniel. We read: "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank" (Dan. 1:8). In other words, "I will not. . ."

Why such a decision? Daniel saw a conflict with the law which as a young Israelite he had learned to

respect. The Israelites could not eat meat offered to idols (Ex. 34:15) and they could not eat certain kinds of meat at all. Daniel, therefore, had a Divine perspective. He knew the law of God, and obedience to it came first. And if Nebuchadnezzar should be offended and cancel his training and send him out to the fields to labor, so be it. God came first.

God expects His people who live in a secular world not to be conformed to it. He wants those who "will not eat the king's meat" or "drink the king's wine," who will not make choice of any convention that violates His higher law.

We should notice, however, that Daniel did not turn down everything the king offered him. He separated between what was a principle of the law of God and what was not. He may not have liked the name the king chose for him, but he accepted it—what difference did it make if the king did call him Belteshazzar! A name was only an outward thing.

Then, too, Daniel did not refuse the king's training. He may not have liked it, or the job the king assigned him, but he took it, and performed it admirably so far as we know. He kept it as long as the kingdom lasted, "even unto the first year of king Cyrus" (Daniel 1:21)—which would not have happened, had the king been unhappy with his work.

Yes, Daniel could have said, I will not eat your meat; I will not

accept your name; I will not do your job, or accept your salary. But such a stance would have brought no glory to God or honor to Daniel.

The difference lay in what was a command or a principle of God, and what was not. Where God had made a specific command, Daniel obeyed. But where there was no law violated, Daniel did his best to cooperate. There was no virtue in simply being contrary.

We must never use our obligation to God as an excuse for contrariness, or laziness, or idleness. Daniel did what he could. He did not want to bring discredit to the God of his fatherland, either by obstinacy or idleness.

Christianity is a religion to be lived in the marketplace. Christians are to be *in* the world but not *of* it. The true believer goes against the grain of what is acceptable to society, and he does so without apology. "I will not. . . ."

We all know how the story ended with Daniel. Melzar, who was responsible for the young Jewish men, went along with Daniel's request, and at the end of the ten days Daniel and his companions "looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food" (Dan. 1:15). In other words, the way of obedience made God's people look good, made Melzar look good and—most important—it was right.

Like Daniel, we too must be ready to say, "I will not," when we are tempted to compromise or conform, because God means what He says; because right is right, and wrong is never right. MM

THE MEN who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to do nothing and succeed.

The Wisdom of God

Proverbs 3:13-17

The Wisdom of God is more precious than gold.
The truths that the pages of Scripture unfold
Are valued above heaps of silver, piled high,
Or diamonds, though in wild profusion they lie.
Of rubies, or emeralds, though the supply
Be ever so ample, their sum cannot vie
In providing the values we find in the Word—
They cannot compare with a "Thus saith the Lord."

The Wisdom of God that divulges the plan
For this little ball and the creature called "man,"
In doing the same sheds a wonderful light
That brightens the corners and scatters the night.
The paths that were hidden His Wisdom makes plain,
And through it our losses are turned into gain,
As we catch a view of the heavenly plan
And find that God's thoughts are above those of man.

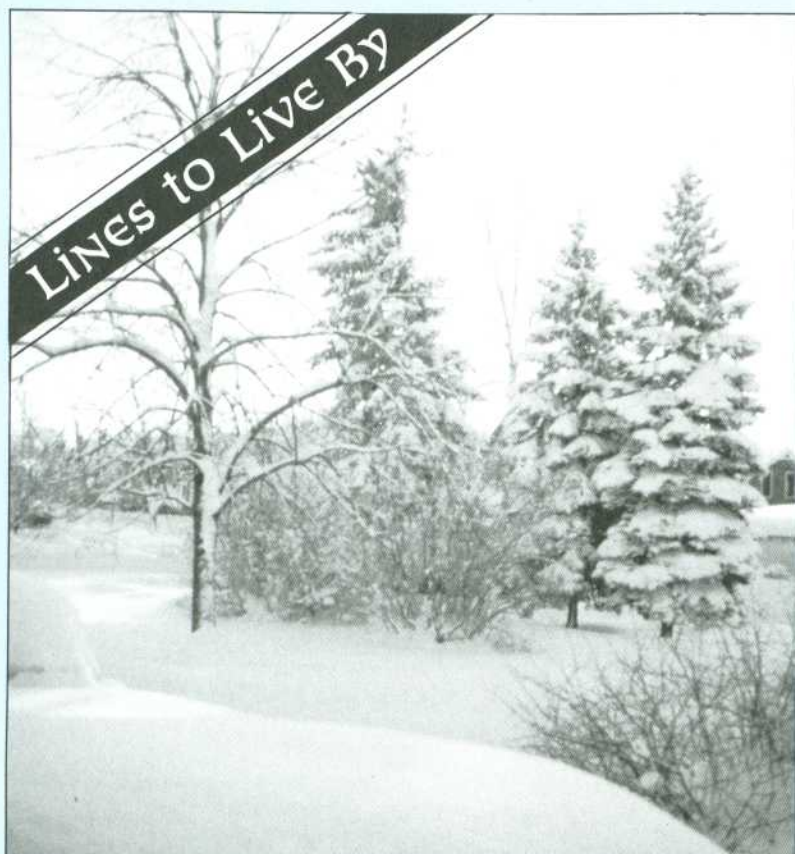
The Wisdom of God is a furnisher sure,
A guide for the Christian who hopes to endure;
A compass and chart to the tempest-tossed soul
Who resigns every way to the Captain's control.
It gives every rule that's essential to life;
It gives lasting joy, and delivers from strife.
It furnishes comfort in seasons of grief,
And for pressing cares gives a balm of relief.

For those who are lost in the woods of despair,
The Wisdom of God even seeks for them there,
And flashes a beacon, a bright, shining light
That, if they but heed it, will lead them aright.
And those who are sick to the soles of their feet,
Left wounded and bruised by the "friends" that they meet,
Will find there a healing that's rapid and sure,
A guaranteed medicine, healthful, and pure.

God's Wisdom still offers the choicest of meat
For those who are hungry, with nothing to eat
But husks that the world in delusion will choose.
Such *fodder* the wise quickly learn to refuse.
The Wisdom of God is food fit for a king;
Its praises His children will constantly sing.
In fact, all who eat and digest it will be
Kings and Priests with our Lord, when His glory they see.

O wonderful Wisdom, the Wisdom divine!
As high as the stars that eternally shine,
Giving riches and honor, and life without end
To each one who will to its precepts attend.
What comfort goes with the assurance, "God saith"!
A bulwark in life, and a solace in death.
A shield and a helmet; a staff, and a rod,
Are found in this Wisdom, the WISDOM of GOD.

—Liot L. Snyder



THOSE who live on the mountain tops have a longer day than those who live in the valley. Sometimes all we need to do to brighten our day is to rise a little higher.

We shall steer safely through every storm as long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, our courage steadfast, and our trust fixed on God.

A Spiritual "Daily Dozen"

INHALE	Breathe in the beauty of God's creation.
EXHALE	Expel all critical and negative thoughts.
THINK	Meditate on good, constructive thoughts.
LISTEN	Hear the voice of God through His Word.
STRETCH	Mentally reach for the highest good.
RELAX	Rest your mind from the cares of the day.
WALK	Be sure your steps follow His leading.
TALK	Speak kindly to whomever you meet.
LOOK	Search out every opportunity to improve yourself.
SMILE	It costs nothing but pays big dividends.
LOVE	Keep your obligation to God uppermost in your mind.
PRAY	without ceasing; live near to God.

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ED	Editorial
F	Filler
FB	Finally, Brethren
MED	Meditating on the Word
PO	Poem
Q	Questions and Answers column
S	Sermon
SA	Short Article
ST	Story
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God Never Forsakes

Leave God to order all thy ways,
And hope in Him, whate'er betide,
Thou'lt find in Him, in evil days,
Thy all-sufficient strength and guide.
Who trusts in God's unchanging love
Builds on the rock that naught can move.

What can these anxious cares avail,
The never-ceasing moans and sighs?
What can it help us to bewail
Each painful moment as it flies?
Our cross and trials do but press
The heavier for our bitterness.

Only thy restless heart keep still
And wait in cheerful hope, content
To take whate'er His gracious will,
His all-discerning love, hath sent.
Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To Him who chose us for His own.

He knows when joyful hours are best;
He sends them as He sees it meet;
When thou hast borne the fiery test,
And now art freed from all deceit,
He comes to thee all unaware
And makes thee own His loving care.

Nor in the heat of pain and strife
Think God hast cast thee off unheard,
Nor that the one whose prosp'rous life
Man envieth is of Him preferred.
Time passes, and much change doth bring
And sets a bound to everything.

All are alike before His face;
'Tis easy to our God most high
To make the wicked poor and base,
To give the righteous wealth and joy;
True wonders still by Him are wrought
Who setteth up and brings to naught.

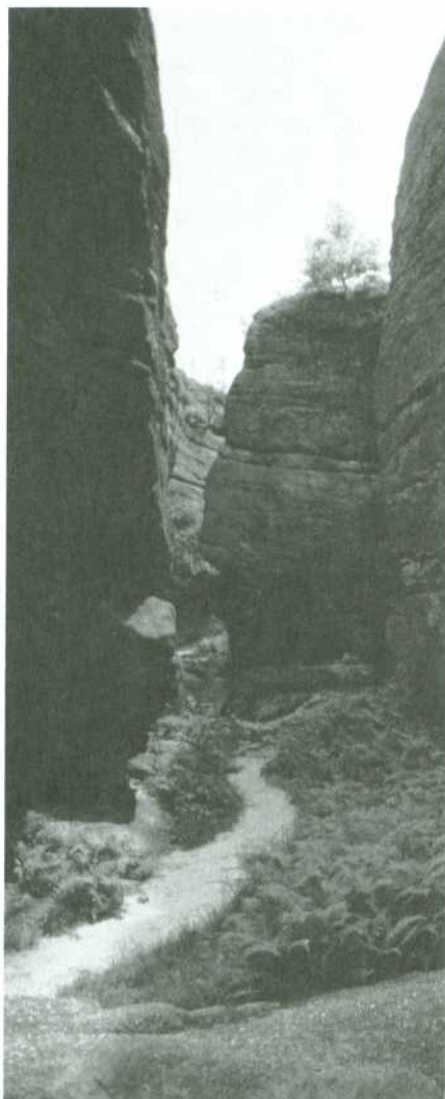
Sing, pray, and swerve not from His ways,
But do thine own part faithfully;
Trust His rich promises of grace,
So shall they be fulfilled in thee.
God never yet forsook the need
Of one who trusted Him indeed.

—Selected

Nothing is opened more often by mistake than the human mouth.

POINTS for the MONTH

- Week 1:** We should allow nothing in Christ's absence that we would not allow if He were here among us.
Week 2: My temper shall be so tempered that it will produce no tempests.
Week 3: We grow in grace as we grow in gratitude.
Week 4: The course of least resistance makes both rivers and men crooked.



The call from Christ to follow Him is not a request, but a command. From the beginning of the Christian walk of faith, Jesus must be Lord.

"Come . . . Follow Me"

The Meaning of Discipleship

by James Montgomery Boice

THERE is a fatal defect in the church of the 20th century; a lack of true discipleship. Discipleship means forsaking everything to follow Christ. But for many of today's supposed Christians—perhaps the majority—while there is much talk about Christ and even much furious activity supposedly done in His name, there is actually very little following of Christ Himself. And that means, in some circles at least, there is very little genuine Christianity. Many who fervently call Him "Lord, Lord" are not Christians (Matt. 7:21).

In His great sermon on the Mount of Olives, uttered shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus compared professing (but unconverted) Christians to women waiting for a bridegroom to appear for a wedding banquet. They were unprepared for his coming and were therefore shut out of the wedding. They were not saved.

Jesus compared those who merely profess faith to a man who was given a talent to invest, but failed to use it and was condemned by his master on the day of reckoning. Jesus said he was thrown "into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 25:30).

In a third comparison He described these people as failing to feed the hungry, give drinks to the thirsty, receive strangers, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit those in prison. These people called Jesus "Lord." They considered themselves to be genuinely converted. But they were not, and so they perished utterly.

We need to see where this is true for us. We need to ask what it means to be a Christian and whether these shortcomings describe us.

Costly Grace

There are several reasons this lack of discipleship is common in today's church. The first is a defective theology that has crept over us like a deadening fog. This theology separates faith from discipleship and grace from obedience. It teaches that Jesus can be received as one's Savior without being received as one's Lord.

This is a common defect in times of prosperity. In days of hardship, particularly persecution, those who are in the process of becoming Christians count the cost of discipleship carefully before taking up the cross of the Nazarene. Preachers do not beguile them with false promises of an easy life or indulgence of sins.

But in good times, prosperous times, the cost does not seem so high, and people take the name of Christ without undergoing the radical

transformation of life that a true conversion implies. In these times, preachers often delude them with an easy faith—Christianity without the cross—in order, dare we say it, to increase the numbers on their church rolls, whether or not the people added are degenerate.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German churchman of the Nazi era who eventually suffered martyrdom for his opposition to Hitler's policies, called this erroneous theology "cheap grace." He said, "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance. . . ."

The contrast is "costly" grace. "Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows Him. Costly grace is the gospel which must be *sought* again and again, the gift which must be *asked* for, the door at which a man must *knock*. Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*.

But it is not just a false theology that has encouraged this fatal lack of discipleship. The error is also due to the absence of what the older devotional writers called a self-examined life.

Most Westerners live in a tragically mindless environment. Life is too fast and our contact with other people too impersonal for any real thought or reflection. Even in the church we are far more often encouraged to join a committee, back

a project, or serve on a board than we are counseled to examine our relationship to God and His Son Jesus Christ. So long as we are performing for the church, few question whether our profession is genuine or spurious. But sermons and teachers should stress that a personal, self-denying, costly, and persistent following of Christ is necessary if a person is to be acknowledged by Jesus at the final day.

In the absence of this teaching millions drift on, assuming that because they made verbal acknowledgment of Christ 10, 20, or even 30 years ago and have done nothing terribly bad since, they are Christians, when actually they may be far from Christ, devoid of grace and in danger of perishing forever.

"Follow Me"

Discipleship is not a second step in Christianity, as if one first becomes a believer in Jesus and then (if he chooses) a disciple, but from the beginning, discipleship is involved in what it means to be a Christian.

To begin at square one, we look at Christ's command, "Follow Me." There are many texts in which Jesus explains in greater detail what it means to be His disciple, but the command to follow Him is the first and most basic explanation.

We find it in a number of stories, chiefly in the callings of the first disciples. In Matthew 4:18-22 (parallels in Mark 1:14-20 and Luke 5:1-11) we are told that Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee when He saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew. Jesus said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed Him. He went a bit farther and saw two more brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee. He called them in a similar manner, and they too left their boat and followed Him.

Several chapters later, in Matthew 9:9-13 (parallels in Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 5:27-32), there is an account of the call of Matthew, also named Levi. Matthew was a tax collector. He was despised by the people for his collaboration with the Roman authorities. But he obeyed Christ and followed Him. When the people protested Jesus' association with this "sinner," Jesus replied, "It is not those who are

Anyone who is following Jesus must turn his back upon sin and set his face toward righteousness.

healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." This explanation shows that the command to follow Jesus was not understood by Him to be only a mere physical following or even, as it were, an invitation to learn more about Him and then see if one wanted to be a permanent disciple or not. Jesus understood it as turning from the way of sin to the way of salvation. It was a call to healing by God.

In all, "follow Me" occurs 13 times in the Gospels. But in addition there are scores of references in which one person or another is said to have followed Christ. Clearly it is a very basic concept.

Elements of Discipleship

What is involved in following Christ?

1. *Obedience.* Obedience is an unpopular concept today. We betray

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disdain for it by our frequent use of a phrase like "blind obedience," meaning mindless adherence to authority. So when we come to a phrase like "follow Me" we naturally think of it as an invitation and conform our evangelism to that pattern. We "invite" people to follow Jesus, promising that He will receive them and make them happy if they do.

Well, there may be an element of invitation in Christ's call to sinners. But it can hardly escape any thoughtful student that "follow Me" is a command, which is why those commanded to follow Jesus immediately left their nets, boats, counting tables, or whatever else was occupying them and followed Him.

This is another way of saying that without obedience there is no real Christianity. It is not that people cannot "follow" Jesus in some lesser sense and then fall away when the demands of genuine discipleship become clear. Many people in the Gospels seem to have done this. The rich young ruler is an example. But that is not the same thing as a sheep of Christ's flock hearing His call and responding to His voice as he recognizes Jesus as his Lord and Master. Those who are genuinely Christ's sheep obey His call from the beginning and thus enter a life in which obedience is a chief characteristic.

2. Repentance. When Jesus called Matthew, He called one who was a recognized sinner. So He emphasized repentance. But the need for repentance is no less evident in the calls of the other disciples. For example, in both Matthew and Mark the account of the calling of the first disciples is immediately preceded by a record of Christ's first preaching, focusing on the proclamation "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15). It is impossible to follow

Christ without repentance.

How could it be otherwise? Jesus is the holy, sinless Son of God. He never leads one step in any sinful direction. He has never led the way into a single sinful thought. So anyone who is following Him (and not merely an imaginary Jesus) must by definition have turned his back upon sin and set his face toward righteousness. Christians do sin. When they do they must confess it and turn from it, being restored to fellowship again. But any-

The Elements in Discipleship:

- Obedience
- Repentance
- Submission
- Commitment
- Perseverance

one who thinks he can follow Christ without renouncing sin is at best dreadfully confused. And anyone who claims to be following Christ while actually continuing in unrighteousness is deluded. Such a one is no Christian.

3. Submission. In one of Jesus' most important sayings about discipleship, the Lord pictures discipleship as putting on a yoke. This suggests submission to Christ for work assigned. It is the picture of an animal yoked to others as well as to a farm implement for labor.

A yoke is also the connection between submission and subjection. *Submit* comes from the two Latin words *sub* (meaning "under") and *mitto* or *mittere* (meaning "to put" or "place"). So submission means putting oneself under the authority of another. *Subject* also comes from two Latin words, *sub* and *iacto* or *iactare* (meaning "cast" or "throw").

It means being put under the authority of another. In other words, the first word has an active sense (I put myself under another's authority) and the second word has a passive sense (I am placed under that authority). The idea, however, is essentially the same.

In ancient times it was customary for a ruler, when he had conquered a new people or territory, to place a staff across two upright poles, perhaps four feet off the ground, and require the captured people to pass under it. By this act they passed under his yoke or submitted to his authority. When Jesus used this image He was saying that to follow Him was to submit to Him. It was to receive Him as Lord of one's life.

4. Commitment. The fourth element in following Christ is commitment, for the simple reason that it is impossible to follow Christ without being committed to Him. A lack of commitment means deviating from His path or falling away from Him. On the other hand, it is impossible to be committed to Christ without following Him, for a failure to follow really means being committed to some other thing or person.

Here is the meaning of faith itself. Is faith minus commitment a true biblical faith? We remember that James goes so far as to insist, in a passage some have erroneously thought contradicts Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, that a faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 26). It is useless (vv. 16, 20). It is only a claim to faith (v. 14), not a genuine faith that comes from God and expresses itself in works that please Him. If faith without works is dead, how much truer it is that faith without commitment is also dead.

True faith involves these elements: *knowledge, heart response, and com-*

mitment. No one is saved by a dead faith. But a living faith is faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, for the Lord is the Savior and the Savior is the Lord.

5. *Perseverance*. The final important element in following Christ is perseverance. This is because following is not an isolated act, done once and never to be repeated. It is a lifetime commitment that is not fulfilled here until the final barrier is crossed and the crown received.

Is salvation something that took place in the past, something that is taking place now, or something that will take place at the Lord's return? All three are salvation; isolating any one is an error fatal to the preservation of the gospel.

Peter spoke of growth in godliness and concluded, "Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you" (II Peter 1:10, 11).

Paul admonished believers to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13).

All this is to say that discipleship is not simply a door to be entered, but a path to be followed, and that the disciple proves the validity of his discipleship by following that path to the very end. The psalmist wrote about it in Psalm 119. The section begins "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (v. 105) ends with "I have inclined my heart to perform Thy statutes forever, *even to the end*" (v. 112).

To be a Christian is no light thing. It is a call to a transformed life and to perseverance through

whatever troubles may arise. It is the hardest thing anyone can do. Yet anyone can do it, Christ supplying the necessary strength, and in the end it is the only thing that really matters.

Will you take that path?

The Master is going before you. He is looking back at you with a most compelling gaze. He is saying, "Come!" He is commanding, "follow Me!"

MM

LETTERS

Hearing

I was wishing to hear someone's voice from your church, and to my surprise I received the cassettes. It made me so happy that I wept for joy. I shall return these cassettes shortly. I want a friend to hear them first. They make me feel closer to you. I feel like I am right there with you.

North Carolina

A. L.

Too Busy

I am deeply indebted to those of you who are still fighting for the cause of Christ and to those who have gone on before and who tried so hard to spread the Truth that others might see the light.

I have tried for fifty years to shed a little light for others but they are too busy caring for temporal things.

Please renew my subscription to the *Message*.

South Carolina

J. C.

Appreciative

I would like to receive your magazine *Megiddo Message*. I will use this *Message* as a resource for our weekly studies.

New York

S. H., Chaplain

Please renew my subscription to the *Megiddo Message*. Thank you for this wonderful service!

Connecticut

V. M.

Looking Ahead

I look forward to every issue. The September issue is best ever. Please renew my subscription.

Tennessee

Mrs. O. W.

Keep on the Right Road

We should be very careful not to walk as other Gentiles walk. It is so easy to get off on the wrong road at times. We need to be very thoughtful. If we are sincere, we will be thinking and looking to see where we are going and what we are doing. We will be putting off the old nature and always striving to put on the new.

May we always speak the truth, study to show we are sincere, and learn the good way.

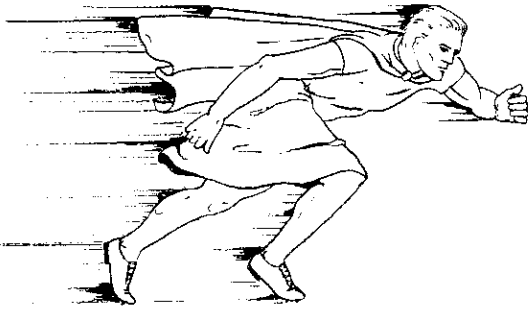
South Carolina

H. C.

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Run to Win!

by Percy J. Thatcher

Pastor of the Megiddo Church, 1945-1958

*The prize has been exhibited,
the course prepared,
the rules laid down—
all that remains for us to do
is follow the rules
and—RUN to WIN!*

FRRIENDS, let me speak to you freely concerning the race for life eternal, the great marathon of the ages in which you have been invited to participate. The prize has been exhibited, the course has been prepared, the rules laid down, the Judge chosen, and some of the greatest runners the world has ever known are ready to help you prepare for the test. Remember, the prize will never be given to those who are sitting down in stillness, idle, waiting and wishing for it. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize?" Oh, my friends, "so run that ye may obtain." Be sure you not only run, but run to win! This great race under the same conditions will never be run again. No second chance here. "Now is the accepted time." Now is your opportunity.

You will read over carefully the Book of rules which governs all who participate in the great contest. Note first that you must strive lawfully. "If a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully." Remember, it will not be an easy race, and there is absolutely no hope of winning unless you are in running trim and fit for the struggle.

You must train carefully, using the proper food: the milk of the Word first (I Pet. 2:1-2), followed by the strong meat which will strengthen your senses to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:14). Drink freely of the water of life; do not defile your body with the dainties of Egypt, and you will soon be ready and "rejoice as a strong man to run" the race.

Have you run before? No one will question you, for your former running was to evil; and you have severed yourself completely from your former life. Your feet must now be trained to run the way of His commandments.

And watch those garments. Should you attempt to enter the race clothed in any garment purchased from the merchants of Babylon, you will be a sure loser.

Wisdom shall stand at the entrance of the race course to offer you freely the proper clothing for the struggle. Oh, make it your choice! It is of silk and purple. Put it on, for it is for "strength and honor" (Prov. 31:24-25). In preparation, take from off your feet the heavy-heeled shoes made by men and put on the "sandals of the gospel of

peace." They have been tested by such great runners as Paul, Peter, John, Daniel and Joseph.

Seeing you are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," do lay aside "every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset," and "run with patience the race that is set before" you (Heb. 12:1-2). Yes, my friends, remember to run with patience. Without it the race will be lost. Fix your eye upon the prize, then press, crowd and thrust yourself through all that may stand between you and the finish-line. And through it all, remember patience. Never run uncertainly, by fits and starts, or half-way effort, but really run! Run for your very life! Through all difficulties, keep running until you reach the end!

Remember the race is a long one. Many have entered who run in vain. How carefully Paul guarded against this. Demas, Solomon, Judas, and Saul have already entered; they looked good at the start, but they failed miserably. And friends, these examples are given to us lest we run in vain. Thousands have given up part way down the course, thinking the way too long, the hills too steep; and when they saw the wilderness ahead, they turned back. But at all costs avoid their mistake.

It is easy to make a sudden little spurt. Multitudes that came up out of Egypt by the hand of Moses to enter this race did this. They made many small spurts, but they fell short because they lacked perseverance. When they started out, they were willing to work. But they were quickly out of breath and turned back.

Beside the race course will be found men who will approach you with deceitful nostrums, soothing oils which have no healing qualities, and easy-way linaments. Among them will be some swift runners—but let me warn you, their feet run

to mischief instead of to victory. Yes, "their feet are swift to shed blood. . . . There is no fear of God before their eyes. . . . They have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam . . . who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

In all your training, choose a good pacemaker. I can recommend Christ very highly. He has run the whole course and finished with joy. Paul, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and

another take your crown. Many a runner has stumbled and fallen, losing all because he was watching someone else in the race more than himself, looking backward and not forward.

Your opportunity to run and win has never been greater. The sun gone down, the cool of the day will give you every advantage. If you cannot run now and keep up with men on foot, how can you ever expect to contend with horses? And

Your opportunity to run—and win—has never been greater.

other great runners, will be on hand to give you instruction, together with certain great runners who have gained a reputation in the closing hours of the race. I beseech you, follow their instruction to the end, for they watch for your souls to see that you finish the course "with joy and not with grief." Perhaps you will feel big enough to run without help. Remember, "it is not in man that *walketh* to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23), how much less in him that *runneth*! When you get under way, never draw back. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Heb. 10:38), says the King who has made possible this race and offered the great prize to every conqueror.

Some will make a sad mistake, thinking they can give others a long start and then easily overtake them. Oh, my friends, be careful lest

if in this time of peace and plenty you are fearful of becoming faint and weary, how will you ever stand the test at the swelling of Jordan? (Jer. 12:5)

Multitudes have slipped away from the great contest secretly; many openly saying that the way is too hard, the race too long, the rules too restricting. Others, great examples of perseverance and endurance, have pushed on over the line to a glorious finish, never doubting, never tiring, never fainting, believing to see at the end the goodness and salvation of God in the land of the living. Through the eternal ages will echo a song of cheer and praise by an innumerable host in honor of their victory. Yes, angels shall fall down to acknowledge their glory. As they receive the prize, they will hear from the lips of an impartial Judge the sweetest words ever uttered: "Well done."

MM

It is when things go hardest, when life becomes most trying, that there is greatest need to have a fixed goal, one that circumstances cannot wreck.

Free to Serve

“Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant” (I Corinthians 7:21-22).

THE word “servant” as used in this connection carries a much different meaning than we attach to it today. In our nation today, there is nothing derogatory about service. One may serve his country, or his fellowmen, in a variety of honorable ways. Employees may be said to serve, and the fair employer compensates their service in wages. One may offer a skill as a service to others, to meet the need another cannot supply.

In ancient times, the term servant meant something very different. The servant was one who was bound. Nothing about him, not even his life, was his own; all was the property of his master. The servant was usually bound for life. And it was with this fact in mind that the Apostle gave the advice found in our text: “Art thou called being a servant? care not for it”—or, as translated in the Jerusalem Bible, “do not let that bother you.”

What lesson can we take from this text, in this day when labor has attained a position of dignity?

The command to be not bothered or troubled about one’s position in life is still timely. There are still people, plenty of them, who must work in ignoble positions, and for employers who are unappreciative and overbearing. And there is still the need for every Christian to learn to look not at one’s station in life but rather at his character. God is looking for heart qualities, not worldly attainments. It makes no difference to Him whether one is master or slave, employer or employed. The one whom He approves must have the ability to take the responsibilities of either position with equal grace; to do either task as “to the Lord”; to take second place and work in it as wholeheartedly as he would if holding top position. It was in this capacity

that Joshua served Moses; Elisha served Elijah; and Timothy served Paul.

Jesus stressed the need for this type of humility when He said: “But whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all” (Mark 10:43-44).

In our text the Apostle is forcing home the lesson that to live the Christian life one’s situation does not have to be made to order. Whatever our circumstances, whether to our liking or not, as Christians we should value them because this is our opportunity—and our only opportunity—to prepare for eternal life. Whether we are rich or poor, day laborer or professional, unknown or recognized by the whole community—these things make no difference whatever, if only we belong to Christ and are living the higher life.

*We may live in a tent or a cottage,
And die in seclusion unknown;
But the Father who seeth in secret,
Remembers each one of His own.*

If Christ’s servants, our whole concentration will center around living the type of life that pleases Him. Our whole interest will be on obtaining that “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” and whatever our status happens to be during our short day of probation, we will not be either puffed up or cast down.

If offered employment at one thousand dollars a day, we should not be apt to delay our acceptance of the offer until we could learn whether the position were in an executive or subordinate capacity; if the task were within our possibilities, we would take it and like it; the offer would simply be *too good to turn down*.

Likewise with the offer of immortal life, freed from all the aches, ills, and disappointments of mortality: whatever the price in humility and self-sacrifice, the offer is simply *too good to pass by*. For such an inestimable reward we can take—and like—anything that comes to us during our short day of probation.

“For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord’s freeman.” The teaching of Christ turned helpless, dejected men into bold and courageous defenders of the faith. The prospect of living beyond their present hopeless situation buoyed them up and gave them a new outlook on life. The realization that some day they could live in God’s Kingdom upon earth, freed not only from temporal servitude but also from death and corruption and the limitations of mortality, made them even then *free* men and *free* women.

And now for the other side of the picture: “He that is called, being free, is Christ’s servant.” Whatever our status, we must realize that Christ’s service places a yoke upon us. It restricts our freedom of action so we cannot live as we would have lived before accepting these restrictions. Freedom as defined here in America includes freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of action, and the freedom to pursue happiness. So accustomed are we to the right to run our own business, to act, speak and think as we please, that we do not care to take orders from either God or man. But this sort of freedom is definitely denied to Christ’s servant: “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). “*Ye cannot do the things that ye would.*”

We are not free to use our talents as we naturally would, or our time, our money, our mind, or our emotions. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31). The following is a specific command on the use of our time: “Be strictly careful then about the life you lead; act like sensible men, not like thoughtless; make the very most of your time, for these are evil days” (Eph. 5:15-16, Moffatt).

Christ’s servant must even be careful how he uses his ears. The command is: “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge” (Prov. 14:7). Neither can he use his eyes to look at whatever he pleases: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof” (I John 2:16-17).

We even are told the things we can and cannot think

about: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (Phil. 4:8; II Cor. 10:5).

Control is one of the most potent words in the Christian’s life, and no member of our body is harder to control than our tongue. Yet our words must be controlled: “For God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.” “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (Eccl. 5:2; I Pet. 4:11).

Faithful service to God will never go unrewarded. As the conscientious employer looks well to the needs of his worthy employee, so the Lord Jesus will share the Master’s wealth and blessings with every good and faithful servant. This is His promise: “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be.” “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (John 12:26; Rev. 3:21).

Do we look down on servitude? Let us rather count it an honor to be in God’s exalted service, and whatever our present station, fill it to the very best of our ability, that He may be pleased to share with us His measureless wealth in the world to come.

TIME is the one thing that can never be retrieved. One may lose and regain a friend; one may lose and regain money; opportunity once spurned may come again; but the hours that are lost in idleness can never be brought back to be used in gainful pursuits.

An aged clockmaker placed a label on the inside of the door of each clock he made containing these words:

*Lo, here I stand by thee upright
To give thee warning day and night,
For every tick that I do give
Cuts short the time thou hast to live.
Therefore a warning take from me
To serve thy God as I serve thee.*

● A Futile Rebellion

"Please explain this verse, 'Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way.' What does it mean?"

The second Psalm is a prophetic picture of the time after Christ has returned and has established His righteous reign. He is crowned King, but the nations do not immediately accept and acknowledge His authority. Instead, they rebel.

Psalm 2 describes that rebellion. They "take counsel together" and "set themselves against" the new Ruler and His associates, those who have been made kings and priests. We read: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" (v. 1). The "heathen," those who are "strangers to the true religion," and their vain imagining is the idea that they can successfully resist the new authority that has arrived. All such resistance is futile and predetermined to fail; by resisting they will harm only themselves.

But they do not realize this, and so "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." They set themselves against the new Ruler and His associates, those who have been made kings and priests.

Their resistance is a fulfillment of Jesus' own prophecy in the parable of the Laborers, who say, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

What is the Lord's reaction to their resistance? "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh" (v. 4). Or as phrased in the newer versions, He "scoffs at them," or "laughs them to scorn" (v. 4, NAS, NEB).

Then he openly "rebukes them in anger, he threatens them in his wrath" (v. 5, NEB). He pronounces judgment upon the wicked.

Divine authority will be vested in His Son. Speaking prophetically of Christ, He says, "I have enthroned my king on Zion my holy mountain. . . . 'You are my son,' he said; 'this day I become your father. Ask of me what you will: I will give you nations as your inheritance, the

ends of the earth as your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like a clay pot'" (vs. 6-9, NEB).

In the face of such irresistible destruction, the next passage is a solemn warning to the nations. "Be wise, now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little."

This passage is clearer as translated in some of the newer versions. The New American Standard Bible reads: "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; take warning, O judges of the earth. Worship the Lord with reverence, and rejoice with trembling. Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled." No other options will be open. It will be literally "obey and live" or "disobey and die." All will be compelled to "do homage," to recognize earth's rightful king. All will be compelled to "Give unto him the glory due his name." Those who refuse to obey will literally "perish in the way." They will be cut off from among the living. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish" (Isa. 60:12).

But they need not perish, if they only heed the warning; if they only submit instead of resist; if they "do homage" to the new King instead of fighting against Him.

What about God's anger? God does not become "angry" as we think of anger; He is not moved by any human passion. The term refers only to the vengeance of His law; He "executes upon them the judgments written" (Ps. 149:5-9). There is no judgment without warning; nothing by surprise; nothing unfair.

Always there is a blessing available for the humble, the penitent, the obedient: "How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!" (v. 12, JB).

● On Suffering Reproach

"What does Rom. 15:2-3 mean, 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me'?"

The verse in question is quoted from Psalm 69:9, where David was pleading the cause of those (himself included) who suffer reproach (insult, disgrace, censure, discredit) at the hands of unbelievers.

Because of his deep love for God, David felt personally the reproach that unbelievers were bringing against God. He felt every word uttered against God as keenly as though it had been directed against him personally. And, conversely, when men reproached David, he felt as though they were really reproaching God, for their resentment was against the favor God had showed to him. The sin of his enemies against him was, as far as he was concerned, sin against God, and *he* suffered the reproach.

Paul used the text in a similar context. In the first verse of Romans 15 he points up the Christian's duty to his younger, or weaker, brother in the faith: "Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to his edification" (Rom. 15:1-2, NAS). Then follows the Apostle's reasoning: Why should we take upon ourselves this obligation? Why can't we just mind our own business, so to speak, and let the next person do the same?

Because being concerned for one another is part of our Christian duty. Looking out for one another's good and upbuilding is part of our obedience. We cannot live simply for ourselves. We must each one "please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. For even Christ did not please himself." Christ was concerned about His brethren; He was also concerned about the honor of His Father. His concern for their attitude toward Him was only because of what it said about their relationship to His Father: "He that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." This was the attitude He maintained. If God was assailed, Christ felt the blow; so closely in line was He with God that "as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me."

His noble Apostle experienced this also. When anything was brought against Christ, he, too, felt the incisive edge. If the word of Christ was assailed, if Christ "suffered reproach," so did Paul—and came immediately to the defense.

Paul also experienced this same sensitive caring, this same holy concern, with his brethren. When they suffered, so did he; he knew what it was to share their sorrows, their joys; their triumphs and their sufferings.

And he recommended this same attitude to his brethren. So responsive to each other's needs, so sensitive and so strong should be their brotherly concern that they would be actually like the different members

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of one physical body (I Corinthians 12). All should interact together as one body, under one head, though still individual members. One central nerve should join all. When one suffers, all suffer; when one rejoices, all rejoice.

In the body of Christ, or in the true church, there is no place for selfishness or envy, pride or party spirit. All consecrated, loyal and earnest members are "one body in Christ," all sharing the same binding interests and the same vital concerns. In this way, each true member can say with Paul and with Christ, "the reproaches of them that reproach thee fall on me."

• Concerning I John 3:2

What is the meaning of I John 3:2, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"?

The verse in question reads, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

In the third chapter of First John, the Apostle is pointing out the privileged status of sincere believers. God in His love has delivered them from this world—to such an extent, says John, that they have something very special in common with Christ: "The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." What a high compliment!

These sons of God by adoption enjoy a very special situation, being called, even in this mortal state, "sons of God." They are not, in the fullest meaning of the term, "sons," because they have not yet been changed in nature; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 15:50); yet they have it by promise as long as they continue in a life of obedience.

None are naturally sons of God, but the Scriptures make clear what is required to be counted as one of His children. First, we must be enlightened, must be taught the knowledge of God—"all thy children shall be taught of the Lord" (Isa. 54:13). Then we must conduct ourselves as members of His family, must "put on the character of the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 13:14, Moffatt), must exchange our ways for His and our thoughts for His (Isa. 55:8-9), must accept His discipline (Heb. 12:5-6), and adopt the character likeness of His children. If we are sincerely doing this, even though we have not yet experienced the physical change, we may be counted as God's sons.

Then the Apostle goes on to tell what this will even-

tually mean—its significance is beyond our power to fathom, because it "doth not yet appear what we shall be." The word translated "appear" means "to render apparent, appear, manifestly declare, manifest forth." At the present time it has not been manifest to us what the immortal state is like. We have never so much as *seen* an immortal being. The immortal state being totally beyond our experience, it is totally beyond our comprehension, even beyond our imagination. In the words of the apostle Paul, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9). It is beyond anything that has yet entered into the heart of man to imagine! Paul said it again in his letter to the Ephesians, that what God is able to do for us is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20-21). When we have asked everything we can ask, and thought of everything we can imagine, it is still "exceeding abundantly above" all this! Indeed, in the words of John, it "doth not yet appear"—it is not yet made known—"what we shall be."

But we shall not be left to wonder forever. It *shall* be made known, says John; it *shall be manifest*. And when that day arrives, when what we shall be is made known, or manifest, what glory to each of God's sons! This meaning is obscured by the King James translation but is apparent in the original, and has been noted by some of the modern translators. For the words "When he shall appear" the New International Version gives the alternate translation, "when it is made known." The same Greek word is repeated that was used to express the negative. What is not known now *shall be made known*, or manifest. And when it is, then we shall learn what immortality is like, we will see firsthand—if we are truly sons of God we shall experience it ourselves—we shall be "like him," made immortal like Him. This is the same promise Paul gave in Phil. 3:20-21, that Christ shall "change our vile body" and fashion it "like unto his glorious body."

Do we wonder at the Apostle's concluding thought in this passage: "And every man that hath this hope in him," this hope of being made immortal like Christ, this hope of being changed into His likeness and becoming an eternal son of God, "purifieth himself, even as he [Christ] is pure."

A free translation of the passage might read like this: at the present time, in our mortal state, we cannot know what it will be like, to be a fully glorified son of God. But when it is made known, we will be made like him—and this will be when we "see him as he is"—immortal.

MM

How Is the Weather?

IF someone should ask you, "How is the weather today?" you would undoubtedly look at the sky and answer, "Cloudy," "fair," "bright," or "rainy."

But, let me ask you, How is your weather—or your neighbor's weather—today? I mean the neighbor with whom you work, perhaps, side by side. What kind of weather did you leave about you when you left his presence? In this instance we call it *weather*, but it also goes under the name of *influence* or *example*.

In other words, did you leave a sunny atmosphere, full of hope, of joy, of optimism, of helpfulness and kindness? Are you the sun in your happy home, or are you the cloud that causes "rain" to flow down the cheeks of your loved ones?

Does your barometer show signs of "falling," predicting a storm when things do not go your way? Or is your weather mild—calm and considerate?

Is your weather changeable?

Within twenty-four hours are you at one time warm, friendly, patient, . . . and then—icy, distant, cold and unyielding? Is it necessary for your friends to protect themselves with an abundance of warm goodwill in order to keep comfortable in your frigid atmosphere? Do your sharp, blustery retorts make them shiver?

If you should work in an office, is the weather always "fair"? Or is the atmosphere you diffuse heavy with fault-finding, bigotry, egotism, distrust?

Fair indeed is the influence we exert by pleasant, thoughtful associations with those around us. Remember, people are human—with tender feelings and sensitive dispositions; they react to the weather we create.

How is *your* weather today?

MM

Willing To Work. And Wait.

THE reward God offers should be so attractive to any reasoning man or woman that the requirements would seem little indeed. What aging person does not long to renew his youth? Who does not want happiness, health, wealth, and the thousand benefits that God offers? Who would not like to be able to have power over such a simple thing as the weather? Someone has said that "Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it." The reason is obvious. However, Jesus was able to *do* something about the storm on the sea of Galilee. He spoke to the wind and it ceased.

People who have been struck by tornadoes, floods and drought, would surely like to have this power but are they willing to change their ways and do only what is pleasing to God, so that one day they can have such power?

But a day is coming when those who have obeyed God's Word will have such power. What a thought! How invigorated we should be by the prospect of such awesome power that we would throw away our crutches of self-pity and jump for joy in doing the will of God!

But our human nature is not so inclined. To obtain that reward requires patience: we must be willing to work. And wait. This is not natural. If we are like most people, we want what we want right when it occurs to us to want it. I see this all the time in my business. Someone thinks about installing air conditioning. Then one hot summer day, the decision is made, and it has to be installed *right away*—today, if not sooner—even though they may have debated the issue for months, or even years.

It is not human nature to wait with patience. It is not human nature to give up the things of here and now for far better and eternal, future rewards.

But God is looking for farsighted people. He wants those who are willing to work and wait for what He has promised. He wants those who will work and wait for years, even many years, and not grow tired. He wants those who will keep working until they have entirely rid themselves of their old natures and become perfect in the eyes of God, with full confidence that what He has promised He will fulfill.

He wants those who are willing to work. And wait.

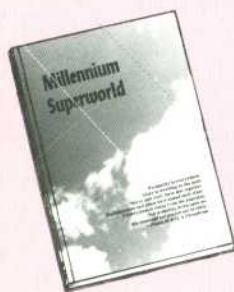
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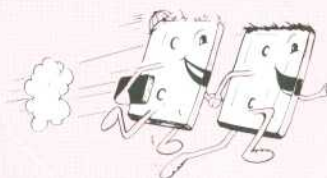
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