

Megiddo Message



Do your diligence to


Come Before Winter

— II TIMOTHY 4:21




A Musician's Prayer

To the Great Director who plays all the chords of life, who arranges the tone poems of the rainbow and whose notes are the stars and clouds, autumn leaves and sunbeams, snowflakes and flowers, this is my prayer:



That I may set up my life to the measure of Christ, allowing no variations of my own design; that I may always have the courage to follow Your rules;




That I may direct my life toward the things that count;

That I may keep tacet all idle tales, gossip, and words that hurt;





That I may be ready for any opportunities that come my way;



That by working daily I may turn out worthy arrangements of my life that increase my joy and honor You;


That the impressions I make on the white pages of manuscript may encourage, inspire and turn the thoughts of those who hear my song to You;

That I may write into my own life all those major chords that harmonize with the vast melodies of Your plan;



That I may keep fresh in my mind the things that remind me of You, the surety of Your promises and the steady beating of Your directing Hand;

And finally, O Master of musicians, help me avoid the disgrace of a discordant life and guide me safely through the score of time.



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 life, all men, and all things.

We believe

—in the Bible as our only source of knowledge about God and His purposes and plans for the salvation of humankind.

We believe

—in Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Perfect Example, who was born of a Virgin, ministered among men, was crucified, resurrected, taken to heaven, and seated at the right hand of the Father, crowned with immortal glory, and who shall shortly return to be king of the whole earth.

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 humankind 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 applying the precepts and principles of the Word of God in our own lives, in this way 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*

NASB—*New American Standard Bible*

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*

AAT—*The Bible: An American Translation*

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

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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.



Come Before Winter

Scripture: II Timothy 4

There comes a time in every life when the icy weather of winter—whether it be the winter of advancing years, the winter of changing attitudes, or the winter of unbreakable habit—freezes shut the golden doors of opportunity. By the time the springtime comes again, it is too late.

THERE is sadness and poignancy in these words. Through the little window of this sentence from Paul's last letter to Timothy we can see a truth vividly portrayed. It is a warning against procrastination, that deadly enemy of all accomplishment. It is a warning that time is not an endlessly gushing torrent of energy. Time is limited. Circumstances change constantly. Opportunities may come only once, and they must be grasped promptly, or slip into the irretrievable past.

Paul is writing this letter from his prison cell in Rome. The letter is filled with expressions of personal regard and affection for Timothy. Listen to its opening words: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve ... with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy."

Tenderness and affection then changes to a kindly reminding of the obligation of duty. "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.... Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." Timothy must hold firmly "that good thing which was committed unto [him]" whatever hindrance he might encounter. "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Paul implores him to face the stern conflicts manfully. The letter is one of counsel and encouragement until—

Suddenly it changes. An autumn

tang sweeps through the remaining passages. In the midst of his writing, news comes which quenches the Apostle's last lingering hope of release. His condemnation is certain and his doom inevitable. He can never return to Ephesus. So he charges Timothy to leave Ephesus and come to Rome. "Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me" (II Tim. 4:9).

He continues to write bravely: "The last drops of my own sacrifice are falling; my time to go has come. I have fought in the good fight; I have run my course; I have kept the faith" (II Tim. 4:6-7, Moffatt).

"I was ever a fighter, Timothy dear lad, so one fight more—the last and the best." As Paul approaches what he knows will be the end, his feeling is not fear and frustration but the joy of triumph. A fight well fought, a race course finished, a battle won—he has only a few more moments of consciousness before the next thing he will know—the day of coronation! "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (v. 8).

But a certain disquietude intrudes. He desires Timothy's company all the more because he has been deserted by his friends (of all who set out with him from Asia, only Luke remains). The sense of his impending death brings him not fear but a feeling of business incomplete. He must leave his work in worthy hands.

Paul instructs Timothy to bring with him his belongings: his mantle, of which he was feeling a need as the days grew shorter and chillier; and his manuscripts, and—"especially the parchments," the Old Testament Scriptures.

When should Timothy come? It was already autumn, and two or three weeks would elapse before his summons reached Ephesus and

Timothy. Since navigation was dangerous after the autumn solstice, and was entirely suspended after the first week in November, there was no time to lose. So Paul amends his injunction: "Do your best to join me soon." He says now, "Do your best to come before winter." It is an autumn warning. "Timothy, you must come very soon—before winter—or it may be too late."

Because Timothy responded and started for Rome immediately, he was able to share in Paul's last hours. But suppose he had waited? What if he had missed that last boat to Rome and had arrived the following spring, after Paul had been executed? Would he ever have been able to forgive himself for disregarding Paul's urgent plea to "do thy diligence to come before winter"?

Putting Off

There comes a time in every life when the icy weather of winter—whether it be the winter of passing years, the winter of changing attitudes, or the winter of unbreakable habit—freezes shut the golden doors of opportunity. By the time the springtime comes again, it is too late.

**The strongest
chain in the world
is weakened by a
single broken link.
That broken link
is the habit of
putting off
what we should
do today.**

Are you letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy or encouragement which you mean to give him—someday? If you could only know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that "the time is short"!

There may be little out-and-out refusal among us, but there is much temptation to procrastination. In every circle where we move and live, putting-it-off is the popular method of avoidance. In the words of the grade-school poem is a lesson for all of us:

*My friend, have you heard of the land of Yawn
On the banks of the river Slow,
Where blooms the Wait-a-while flower fair,
And the Sometime-or-other scents the air,
And the Soft-go-easy's grow?*

*It lies in the Valley of Wait-a-while,
In the land of Let-er-slide.
The Tired-feeling is native there,
It's the home of the listless I-don't-care,
Where the Put-it-offs abide.*

In the practical details of everyday living, the "Put-it-offs" abide. We do not decide *not* to write a letter to a friend. We simply postpone answering it. We take it up, dally with it, lay it down, but never seem to get around to finishing it. We never decide *not* to make a friendly visit we know we should make, we just don't find the convenient moment.

And even in weightier matters of Christian duty and discipline, we pursue our habit of putting-it-off. We never decide not to confine our reading to that which is constructive, edifying and purposeful. We just relax a moment, pick up the nearest magazine or newspaper and read whatever catches our eye. "Only a few moments," we tell ourselves. But

moments grow into minutes, and the habit unchecked wastes many precious hours. "Sometime," we say, "we will do better." But when?

We never decide not to give serious attention to the training of our children. We refer it to a nebulous tomorrow. But is it such a trivial thing? With each passing day they are growing older—and are they learning the things we want them to know? By observing our lives are they learning respect for their elders and reverence for God? Are they learning those virtues and cultivating those habits that will make them law-abiding citizens and loving children of God? Someday, we say, we will teach them—when they get a little older. But then—it may be too late.

We never decide not to spend our time to the best advantage. We comfort ourselves by saying, "Someday I am going to do better." But *when*? If Timothy could not see the seriousness of Paul's situation, he would be tortured throughout his life with the thought that he had failed his beloved chief.

The strongest chain in the world is weakened by a single broken link. That broken link is the habit of putting off what we should do today.

We look forward—to the time when we can own our own home, or be free from the responsibilities of our children; or retire in a small country or city dwelling where we can have everything just the way we have always wanted it. But what are

we doing with *the present*? All of us need something to live by in this perplexing, inescapable *present*. "Do your best to come before winter." Of course you intend to come, but come before the ice and snow make it difficult, dangerous, impossible.

Work—Before Winter

Do your best to come before winter, and strengthen noble friendships. I intend doing that one of these days, but other concerns make it expedient to wait. However, friendship not strengthened *now* will not be any richer when winter comes.

Someone is more talented than you. He has so many more advantages, and seems not to recognize or appreciate your meager—but wholehearted—effort. You feel forgotten, neglected—and jealous. Do your best to come before winter, and conquer that jealousy.

You gave a suggestion, and no one accepted it. You felt your judgment as good as anyone else's? Do your diligence, and avert that feeling of hurt—winter is coming.

You made a mistake. And you knew it. It was simply an error in human judgment—no wrong there. But when questioned about it, you tried to justify yourself; you were unwilling to acknowledge that you had made a mistake. Be watchful and alert—winter is coming, and before honor is humility.

Then someone else made a mistake. An outright careless mistake. You were ruffled and impatient—

couldn't they have watched what they were doing? Do your best and conquer that emotion of impatience—before winter comes.

You gave your best effort to a piece of work. A masterpiece, it seemed to you, and someone criticized it. You were reluctant to acknowledge that someone else might have done the job much better than you did it. Your pride was hurt—beware, for winter is coming, and pride will give you no warmth.

You went out of your way to do someone a favor, and it was not appreciated. Did you feel injured? Do your best to come before winter with forgiveness to that person who has wronged you. Be reconciled with those you have wronged. Forgive *and forget* the wrong. I *intend* to, you say, but I am not quite prepared yet to walk that road of humiliation and embarrassment. Some day? but it will not be easier to enter into that liberating experience when winter descends.

Do your best to come before winter and follow Christ. Live at His height; look out upon life with His outlook, and into it with His insight. It will not be easier later.

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short" (I Cor. 7:29). While we hesitate, while we wait, our day of probation is slipping by. We should feel the urgency of this moment. Our time is short.

Are you letting miserable misunderstandings run on from year to year, meaning to clear them up some day? Are you keeping wretched quarrels alive because you cannot quite make up your mind that now is the day to sacrifice your pride and kill them? Are you letting your friend's heart ache for a word of appreciation or sympathy or encouragement which you mean to give him—someday? If you could only know and see and feel, all of a sudden, that "the time is short," how it

Let Us Pray

LOVING Father, we come to Thee with words of praise on our lips. We thank Thee for Thy gifts, one and all; they are as varied as our needs, and as unfailling as the seasons.

Our minds crave light and knowledge, and Thy Word has kindled a light within us. Through law and sacrifice and prophecy Thou hast sought to keep alive within the minds of men the knowledge of Thyself. And in the fullness of time Thou didst send Thy Son, that through Him Thou mightest show us a pattern of the perfect life and reveal more fully the quality of the perfection Thou dost demand of us.

Bathe us in Thy re-creating light, that we may cast off all meanness, all despair, all sin and shame, becoming new creatures in thought, and word and deed. Grant us brave hearts and true. Inspire us with firmness to carry out every holy purpose. Forbid that we should waste the time that is left in vain regrets for the past, or vague dreams of the future, but may we be up and doing, making every move count in our journey toward the Kingdom.

Remind us of the importance of time. Lifetime is working time, and if we pine away in our transgressions, making little or no effort to eradicate them, a moment shall arrive when our sins shall have become so fixed that we cannot overcome them, and they will bear us down to eternal oblivion.

May we become accustomed to doing good until constant self-criticism and the fear of doing wrong shall have become second nature, and the fear of doing wrong developed to a point where we will not once be caught off our guard.

Be with Thy work in all its forms. Be with those everywhere who are longing and preparing for the better Day that is coming. May Thine angel encamp about them and us as Thou hast promised, and may all things work together for our good, for the purification of our lives. And may Thy Kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

would break the spell! How you would go instantly and *do* the thing that you might never have another chance to do.

Time Is Limited

The thought of "come before winter" reminds us starkly that *time is limited*. The Christian's term of opportunity is not an endless succession of days.

There is an element of mystery about time, and the more we think about it, the more mysterious it appears to be. Time has an elusive quality. How easily it slips away from us, and we hardly notice it is gone. With each tick of the clock another second passes into eternity.

The action is irreversible; that moment past is *gone forever*; it can never be recalled. Seconds pass into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into days, days into months, and years, and lifetimes.

But with each of us, time has a personal touch. Time is eternal, but time in relation to our lives is limited. We have only so much of it. Summer is speeding away; winter *is* coming.

Aware of this fact in the life of every God-fearing man and woman, the prophet Jeremiah wrote the stern words of warning recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the book bearing his name. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your

God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

Why is the warning so urgent? Because darkness is coming; dark mountains of tribulation and death are ahead; your feet will stumble, and you will seek in vain for the light of life by which you may continue to walk. If you would seek the Lord, you must kill your pride and seek Him now, *now, before* your feet stumble on the dark mountains.

The form of winter may vary in each of our lives. The fall of darkness suggests the termination of opportunity, the end of the day of life, the closing hours of one's probation time. It may be the end of natural life—and we should remember that none of us are exempt from the possibility of disease or accident. God's only promise is to guarantee sufficient time and opportunity to the man who is making the very most of what he has.

Then, too, the end of our day of probation may come with the arrival of the prophet Elijah, if we have had sufficient time to complete our work. But here again is the justice of God: He does not ask what we cannot give, but we are accountable for all that we have. Hence, the urgency of the prophet Jeremiah's words: "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he

turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness."

Remember Lot's Wife

Jesus was saying "come before winter" when He spoke the shortest but most pointed sermon ever uttered: "Remember Lot's wife." Two angels had come to Lot and his family to deliver them from the doomed city. The hour of escape arrived, but Lot's wife was not prepared to accept it. For the Sodomites the end was at hand. To Lot, his wife and two daughters, the angels offered deliverance. They all left the city together, but so attached was Lot's wife in affection that she could not keep her face steadfastly set toward the hill country. Even with the angel of God holding her hand, she looked back, and lost her life. For her there was no second chance, no time to reconsider and turn, no extended opportunity. The end came. And so will it come to every covenant-maker who refuses to heed the angel's message: "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee." Destruction is behind; darkness is behind; soon opportunity will also be behind—life is *ahead*. Escape for thy life!

No Winter Ahead?

How contrasting to the urgency of Jesus' words is the attitude of much of the religious world, that "while the lamp holds out to burn the vilest sinner may return." Such teaching stifles initiative and weakens morality. It implies a never-ending summer of opportunity without bounds or

obligation. "Do thy diligence to come before winter" is meaningless if God is willing to accept us in any way, any time. We quote the following from a lecture delivered by the once popular evangelist Dwight L. Moody:

"What a terrible hour I thought it would be, when my sins from childhood, every secret thought, every evil desire, everything done in the dark, shall be brought to the light, and spread before an assembled universe! Thank God, these thoughts are gone. The gospel tells me my sins are all put away in Christ. Out of love to me he has taken all my sins and cast them behind his back. That is a safe place for them. God never turns back; he always marches on...."

"You may pile up your sins till they rise like a dark mountain, and then multiply them by ten thousand for those you cannot think of; and after you have tried to enumerate all the sins you have ever committed, ...you are invited to make an exchange; to get rid of all your sins, to take Christ and his righteousness in the place of them....The blood covers them...."

"Men make out pardons for good character or good behavior. But God makes out pardons for men who have not got any character, who have been very, very bad. He offers a pardon to every sinner on earth if he will take it. I do not care who he is or what he is like. He may be the greatest libertine that ever walked the streets, or the greatest blackguard who ever lived, or the greatest drunkard, or thief, or vagabond...."

Every word of Sacred Writ places a time limit on probation. Opportunity was not, is not and never will be unlimited. It is possible to delay too long.

How would this ring in Paul's ears, that pressing Apostle who was running with all his might and main to *win*? Does it spark with the urgency of Paul's message: "Do your diligence to come before winter"? It does NOT. Such is NOT the teaching of the God of heaven. Every word of Sacred Writ places a time limit on probation. Opportunity was not, is not and never will be unlimited and unconditioned. It *is* possible to *delay* too long; it *is* possible to wait until it is *too late*; it *is* possible to miss the crown of life through negligence and continual postponement.

This was Ezekiel's message when he wrote of the urgent need to repent: "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezek. 18:30-32). Turn—and do it NOW! Come—*come before winter!*

Our Winter

The wheels of time are moving us on relentlessly. How many days before winter?—we know not. We have no assurance that our allotted time shall be sixty, seventy, seventy-five, or eighty years—or even forty. Great strides in the medical profession during recent years have lengthened the life span, but they have not removed the certainty of ultimate death. Death still stalks the land, and it is just as real at seventy-five years as it was at fifty-five. Also, there are more causes for accidental death now than in former years. As the tempo of life

and the speed of transportation have been increased, the hazards of existence have increased. And besides, living as we are so near the close of the day of salvation, our working time may be terminated at any moment by the appearing of the great Judge.

How needful that we keep in mind the warning words of the great Apostle: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15-16). How urgent that we *heed* them, for—winter *is* coming!

Seize the Day

"*Carpe diem*," cried the old Latins. "Seize the day." For our proposition is just this: neutrality is impossible. Neutrality is a figment of the imagination on any basic issue of life. Right is right, and wrong is never right. And if you hesitate to take positive action in behalf of the right, winter will come and all your regrets and protests will be unavailing. Life's processes do not call a halt because we have not made up our minds. To put off decisions is to make, actually, an ir retrievable decision.

Our foremost concern is the forming of a righteous, holy character, a life that God will perpetuate through winter and spring and on into eternity. But such a life is not the result of idleness or delayed action. To make flowers grow (not weeds) you must have *action*. Likewise, you cannot become a Christian in your sleep.

If we think that deferring the action necessary to make ourselves over into a new creature will make the process less painful and less demanding, we will be disappointed; there is no easy way.

"Do your best to come before winter." For the conclusion of the matter is here: it *is* possible to be too late. A tree in April which insisted that it would not put out leaves until

If you hesitate to take positive action in behalf of the right, winter will come and all your regrets and protests will be unavailing.

May, and then June, and thus on and on postponing it, would find October quite too late. This runs all through life. Doors *do* shut. Winter *does* follow autumn. Habit accentuates this fact.

If you should think it possible to remain neutral and open-minded on this subject, you are deceiving only yourself. While you rest in neutral, you are coasting downhill. Your life is passing through its springtime; summer, autumn, and winter will come, slowly or suddenly, but inevitably. And when winter comes, with what will you warm your hands? How great will be the store of good deeds you have laid up in heaven?

If you have any gracious words to utter, say them *now*. If you have any wounds to heal, any wrongs to right, any injuries to forgive, attend to them *now*. If you have children to raise in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, be at it *now!*

If you have any desire for the riches of eternity, answer positively now. Start *now* to mold your life according to the Pattern God has provided until your every motive and imagination is fitted into His sublime purpose. *Act now.*

As for me, "Now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Cor. 6:2).

So "do your best to come *before winter*."

You *will*—won't you?

MM

Do You WANT To Change?

WHAT is the answer? Yes...no...maybe?

More than likely the answer is conditional for just about everyone: a definite "maybe." It all depends on what is to be changed. If no object of change is stated, the answer falls back upon the subject—which is where it belongs; because if anyone is going to change he must first decide that he really *wants* to change.

Why? because all change begins on the inside.

As we begin each new day, it might be well for each of us to ask ourselves in all seriousness, "*What* do I want to change about me? What can I change today?"

The self-satisfied will see nothing about themselves that they really want to change. But before you settle for this, think it through to its logical conclusion: Do I really want to go on being *just the way I am*? How would I feel if everyone else were *just like I am*? This question, honestly answered, may be the beginning of the first change: a change of mind.

If, however, we want to be different, if we want to change for the better, to grow Christ-ward and God-ward, let's look at some of the ways we can bring about that change in ourselves.

We should begin by taking inventory of our lives and comparing them point by point with the standard of the Word of God. This is the direct command of the Psalmist: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Ps. 119:9). Here is our point of beginning, by "taking heed" to our way, considering our way and comparing it with the standard: "according to thy word."

A multitude of books are circulating today on time management, how to get the most out of time. Many of these programs begin with a suggestion like the following: "Chart your day—analyze it in terms of the things you do, and the time they take."

In the same way we should look over our lives and list the things that take up our time, energy, and interest, with a special focus on the goals we have set for ourselves. Anyone in business knows the value of this proce-

dure. How can you tell where you are going unless you know where you have come from?

Then once you have listed your activities and your goals, you can begin to set your direction by marking the areas that need change and going after them one by one. This is the method often used in industry to identify areas of slippage, areas of waste, areas of potential disaster; simply by taking a good, honest look at the situation and deciding what corrective course of action is needed.

So let us begin by taking a personal inventory of our lives and then comparing it with our master guideline, the Bible; by "taking heed thereto according to thy word." The criterion is not, "How do I feel about this?" nor "What does someone else think about this?" nor even "What does it look like to others?" but rather, "What does the Bible say about it, what does God think about my life?"

An honest appraisal of ourselves in the light of the Word of God may be a shocking experience—it will show us how much we need to change.

We may be surprised when we discover what underlies our own nature. The apostle Paul was not very complimentary when he described it in these words to the Ephesian Brethren, "Throw off your old evil nature, rotten through and through, full of lust and sham" (Eph. 4:22). Truly an open and honest appraisal; but dare we imagine ourselves any better by nature?

There are many ways to get personal lessons from the Bible. How can we get the most? Not by reading verse after verse, chapter after chapter, with a goal to read the Bible through. We grow as we read with an open mind, with a mind to be convicted of wrong and a determination to change. We grow when we read, meditate, and compare our lives with what we read; when we ponder the real meaning of what we read. Someone has suggested the following plan:

Read a passage each day, and select one verse upon which you are going to meditate. Write this verse on a card that is small enough to carry with you. Then, during

the course of the day, read the verse aloud to yourself, think about it, and after a short time you will find that you have written it in your mind.

At this point we are in the best position to relate it to our life.

The second vital point in applying the Word of God to our lives is to recognize God's guidance, God's leading, and to obey His directives. There is a sense in which we can make no progress in our spiritual lives until we have willingly committed ourselves to Him.

After World War II was officially ended, it was discovered that in some areas back in the mountains there were small pockets of resistance—people who either did not know that the war was over, or who were unwilling to surrender. In much the same way, we find pockets of resistance in our own hearts. Even after we think we have conquered ourselves, we discover with dismay that there are still areas of our lives not yet given up to God. Before we can be truly a “new” creation in Christ, we must find these areas and turn them over to God. This is perhaps the hardest part of our assignment, to yield our stubborn human nature, but it must be done; these are the areas which we *must change*.

The next area that we must decide to change is our attitude toward tomorrow. Most of us are natural worriers. We are willing to carry on with confidence today, but we cannot stop thinking or wondering about what tomorrow may bring to us. This is an area of our lives where we have direct commands. We are neither to boast about what we plan to do tomorrow, nor to concern ourselves with its problems. Wrote the Wise Man, “Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1). And our Lord admonished His disciples, “Take...no thought [no *anxious* thought, no *worried* thought] for the morrow.” As the passage is phrased in the Living Bible, “Don’t be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time” (Matt. 6:34).


Humanly, we dare not presume upon our tomorrows. Life is uncertain, and we all know it. But God sees the future as well as the past and present, and if we have committed our lives to His care and His guidance, shouldn't we be able to trust Him and obey?

Our confidence then, is in Him, the One who said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). We must trust His Word, trust His faithfulness, trust His planning.

Our task now is to see the areas in our lives that need changing, *and change them*. This accomplished, we have done all that human hands can do, and when the time is right, God will do the rest. If we have done our part

faithfully, He will fulfill His promise and “change our vile [mortal] body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21).

That great physical change will make all our present changing abundantly worthwhile. MM



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The Devil In Action

The devil is real—as real as men and women who follow their natural desires to do evil; as real as selfishness, hate, jealousy and pride.

IS there really a devil?

Either the answer is Yes, the Devil does all the bad things and makes bad people bad; or No, there is no Devil.

If you grew up in a fundamentalist home where the devil was as real as your father, you may just assume the devil is real. True, you never saw him, yet you are sure he exists. But when asked “How do you know?” you may feel “hard put” to answer clearly.

Is there really a devil? What does the Bible say? It tells us Yes, there is a devil, but contrary to popular belief, he is not a Satanic force roaming the earth with power to make us do bad things we do not want to do or which is against our wills to do. He is not a created spirit of evil stronger than God. Rather, the devil may be me; the devil may be you. The devil is anyone who yields to his or her desire to do evil. Jesus said to the apostle Peter when Peter opposed the will of God, “Get thee behind me, Satan” (Matt. 16:23). And speaking to the Twelve He said of Judas, “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” (John 6:70).

He did not say, One of you is *possessed of* the devil, but “one of you is a devil.” Judas was called a devil because of the wicked deed Jesus knew Judas would commit.

The devil exists as surely as hate and jealousy and fear and resentment and selfishness exist in the human heart. And he will exist as long as men follow their natural desire to do evil.

The person who decides to look after his own interests without regard to how his decision may affect another; the person who thinks of himself first and only—that individual is a devil.

Not until God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven will the devil cease to exist.

What about all the very bad things going on in the world today? What about crime of every name and nature? To credit it all to a literal devil is a very simple explanation, and a comfortable one. We like to shift responsibility to someone else. It is convenient to have someone to blame for our shortcomings, some evil force outside ourselves.

But no such escape is possible. We

ourselves must take the blame for every bad and damaging choice we make. When we do wrong, we ourselves are devils.

Jesus hit the target squarely when He said, “There is nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean’” (Mark 7:18, 20-23, NIV). Evil begins with the evil thought in the mind, and no one puts thoughts into our mind except ourselves. No one has more control over our minds than we ourselves. Center your mind on good thoughts and you will keep out “the devil.”

What a terrible injustice, not befitting the character of an All-wise God, to give us the freedom to choose our own course of action, then create an evil force too powerful for us to resist.

No, God never did anything of the kind. God never created a devil with power equal to Himself.

The devil is any person who, being tempted, gives way to that temptation, whether it be to lie, to deceive, to commit adultery or any other evil. When we give in to temptation, we ourselves are to blame, and not any evil power that put the idea into our minds. We opened the door and allowed it to enter, and we must take responsibility for it. There is no escaping that responsibility. And whenever it happens, the devil is there in operation.

Then again, the devil is in action when someone speaks unkindly or treats another cruelly. In our day verbal abuse has become common; both men and women take the name of God in vain. We hear of husbands who abuse their wives, either physically or verbally; and parents who abuse their children. When any person is unkind or cruel to another human being, there the devil is alive and well.

The contrast between contemporary philosophy and the Christian faith cannot be drawn too sharply. The mood of our time says "Find yourself." Self is the center of man's

own little universe. But Jesus taught the opposite when He said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it" (Mark 8:35, NIV). And again, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (v. 34). "Lose yourself" to the world, "lose yourself" in service to Christ, and you will find yourself in His future Kingdom. The person who clings to himself, who puts himself first, is clinging to the devil.

There is a passage in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Judges which describes one of the darkest and most chaotic periods in the history of the Jewish people. At this time there were many devils in the land. The verse reads: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." In other words, Everybody did whatever he felt like doing. It was "Do-your-own-thing" time in Israel. And is it not "Do-your-own-thing" time in the world today? Many are those today who recom-

mend doing whatever seems right in one's own eyes. As the history of our time is written in the future, it may be that the saddest line will be a line from one of today's popular songs which says, "I did it my way." That is the devil in action.

The age old discussion of the problem of evil will never be answered until we realize that evil is not a thing of itself, and certainly not a person or an evil god, but a very part of ourselves, our own lower nature. It is the misuse of our God-given freedom to choose our own actions, right or wrong. The problem of evil will only increase until we realize this.

The problem of evil will be met only to the degree that we follow the advice of the ancient prophet Isaiah and "Cease to do evil" and "Learn to do well."

Evil—and the devil—will disappear as soon as we stop giving in to our own evil lusts and longings, as soon as we exchange our ways for God's, as soon as we learn to love what God loves and hate everything He hates. MM

*The Bible constantly reminds us
that what is inside counts.*

*In this obstacle course called Life, what happens TO us
can make mighty demands upon our faith;
but in the final analysis, it is only what happens IN us
that determines whether we win or fail.*

The Curtain

IT is about time for the curtain to rise on the most dramatic events known to the world. Christ will come, and all the great things God has promised will begin to happen. He *will* come—the Day is near.

Just how much longer the present trend of world affairs can continue, only God knows. He has not seen fit to reveal the extent of His patience and long-suffering toward His human family. But there *is* a breaking point. There will come a time when violence has prevailed long enough. The great voice shall peal out from heaven upon this age of man's proud rule and say "It is done" (Rev. 16:17). Then the curtain that hides from our view the momentous scenes just ahead *will lift!*

God was long-suffering with rebellious mankind in Noah's day. But there came a day when the clouds poured out their waters and the springs of the earth broke loose, and the long-predicted deluge arrived. Any means of escape were sealed away from those who had refused to listen.

In these closing days of man's rule, the world is in a whirl. The pendulum keeps marking time; the calendar keeps turning pages; the years keep rushing by. With each advance in time, the culmination God has planned draws nearer. World events today are only setting the stage for the climactic scene.

We live in a progressive world. Progress, that is, in automation, science, technology, medicine, industry—practically everything that pertains to the present system. But it is also a time of unprecedented fear and tension. What of the future?

The curtain raiser is waiting. The great Director of events is ready to give the signal for the greatest of all displays. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord" (Zeph. 1:14).

In many parts of the world, it is a time of material prosperity. Capital investment is at an all-time high. But "neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath" (Zeph. 1:18).

In other parts of the world, it is a time of extreme suffering, poverty and deprivation. One unstable government displaces another, and the helpless victims despair in hopelessness.

Nations of the world seem unable to stir up enough strife to satisfy them. Turmoil, restlessness and uncertainty are everywhere. While diplomats talk peace, rebels and terrorists plan insurrection. Peace seems to be pending, but fear of the nuclear giants lurks constantly in the shadows. Current events point surely to a termination of the human picture.

To view the past progress of the human race produces a feeling of awe and amazement. Viewing the world situation as it is today makes one tremble.

Even more fearsome are the results of the amoral life-style which our govern-

Will Rise...

ment and educational system are producing. Who can question the fulfillment of the divine prophecy: "In the last days perilous times shall come" (II Tim. 3:1) when we see in our own America:

- 10% of the population addicted to drugs (in 1986, 150 tons of cocaine, 12 tons of heroine, and more than 30,000 tons of marijuana entered the U.S.)
- 16 million alcoholics, with 205,000 alcohol-related deaths each year
- 1½ million deaths each year directly or indirectly from venereal disease
- 30 million cases of incurable genital herpes
- 3 million new cases of gonorrhea each year
- 3 million AIDS victims
- 50,000 teen suicides each year, with more than 400,000 attempted
- 250,000 new child abuse victims each year
- 11 million compulsive gamblers
- 300,000 deaths each year caused by use of tobacco

Who can deny that our civilization needs HELP! It is enough to make even the most optimistic tremble with fear. Tensions are mounting. We can only say, "Lord, how long?"

The present picture is no cause for fear. It is only a confirmation of the word of the Lord, telling us in unmistakable terms that it is about time for the curtain to rise on the most spectacular scenes ever witnessed by the world. *Jesus is coming!*

That great event promises to bring the greatest destruction and the greatest glory the world has ever seen: the greatest destruction, because it will bring the end of all who oppose God and His authority; the greatest glory, because Jesus is coming with crowns of immortality for all the righteous, for all who have proved their faithfulness to Him by worthy lives thereby meriting His eternal blessing. And that blessing will not be for themselves alone. It will overflow to all the inhabitants of the world as they, with Christ, become the initiators of the new program, the founders of the new government, the teachers and guardians of the multitudes who will enjoy the measureless opportunities, the boundless happiness and the sure prosperity of the glorious Millennial Age.

The present is dark, but the future—beyond the curtain—is incomparably bright. For the closing of the annals of this world means the opening to all the great things God has promised. The Millennium is almost here!

Now is the time to be diligent, watchful, careful, prayerful, remembering the solemn words of Jesus: "Lest coming suddenly, I find you sleeping" (Mark 13: 36-37).

Let every believer be alerted now...before God lifts the curtain.

MM

Opportunities Unlimited

The Glory of God's Second Chance

Part 4: *The Story of Simon Peter*

*From unpromising and even hopeless beginnings, men have risen and may yet rise to the heights of character and achievement, by the power of faith and the help of the Eternal.
"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof" (Eccl. 7:8).*

Scene 1: *The Big Fisherman*

Introduction

Perhaps no life recorded in Holy Writ contains more contrasts than that of Simon Peter. Here is a man we can all understand and love and forgive, because he is so like ourselves. He was a strange bundle of contradictions: earthly, boastful, impetuous, talkative, cowardly, violent—yet the other side of the coin was pure gold.

One might wonder why Jesus should choose for His disciple such a mixture of good and evil. It was because He could look past the evil and see the good—the warmhearted loyalty, the fervid zeal, the leadership, the makings of a rock-hard courage, which should mark this rough-hewn character, once he was truly converted. At the climax of it all He could see one of earth's truly great men.

Outspoken, impetuous, vigorous, we feel we know Peter because we know what he thought. He said it out loud. Thought and desire meant action to him, and sometimes trouble. Energy and determination are good in a good cause; how much better when used in the best cause of all, the building of a character worthy of being perpetuated through eternity.

This lesson came hard for Peter, and it is not any easier today.

We first see him at his lowly trade, Simon Bar-Jona, as yet not even Petros, a "stone."

Characters:

Peter Apostle-To-Be
Andrew Brother of Peter

Setting:

A marine backdrop, with a beach. Simon Peter, bare-headed and roughly dressed, sits on a log, mending a net.

Peter: [impatiently] Now where's that brother of mine! I'd like to know. [Works for a moment, then comments roughly.] Never around when there's work to do.... Him and his prophets!

[After a moment Andrew enters]

Peter: Well, Andrew, it's about time! What's the idea of running away and leaving me all the work to do? If that's the kind of partner you are, I might as well be your hired help—although I'd never bring myself to work for *you*. If it was the first time, I wouldn't say anything, but it isn't amusing any more. Is that your idea of—

Andrew: [gently] Now, brother, be calm. [sits down and picks up net]

Peter: Be calm? Don't you know we've got to fish tonight? Don't you know we got *nothing* last night? Or maybe you don't care whether we eat or not.

Andrew: [soothingly] We'll fish tonight. We'll have this mending done before supper time. You know I washed the nets before I went away, so you didn't have that to do. Didn't I, now?

Peter: Look at that hole! I don't know what things are coming to—this lake's getting so full of snags a man can't earn a living any more.

Andrew: Simon, that particular snag has been there for years, and you know it. You remember I warned you we were getting close, but you wouldn't listen.

Peter: Don't remember any such thing. And look at *that* one! *That's* where all the fish went. Might as well fish with a barrel hoop, or your bare hands. It doesn't bother *you* any, you and your big ideas about the next world.

Andrew: Now, brother, you know I'm just as sorry as you are. It's *my* living no less than yours! But why lose your temper over it? It's just fishermen's luck—bad last night, maybe good tonight.

Peter: Well, if you'd stay home once in a while instead of gadding all over the country after that John the Baptist, we might get something done.

Andrew: I go to hear John *days*. I'm always here when it's time to fish.

Peter: Yes, you're here, and half dead for sleep. I tell you, Andrew—

Andrew: Simon, there is something more important than these daily tasks. Think of life's spiritual values—the condition of your soul.

Peter: [scoffing] Spiritual values! Will spiritual values fill your stomach or put clothes on your back? Will spiritual values mend these nets, or buy a new boat when the old one is worn out, or send your children to school? What has this Prophet got that will make *me* a better *fisherman*?

Andrew: What this Prophet has will certainly make you a better *man*.

Peter: How do I know that?

Andrew: Come and see.

Peter: Why should I? I'm as good a Jew as you are! ...But seriously, I'm afraid you'll get in trouble if you keep this up.

Andrew: What do you mean?

Peter: The government doesn't like these agitators, and you

could get put out of the synagogue if you keep that kind of company around.

Andrew: If I do, I'll have plenty of company. You should see the crowds—

Peter: Yes, I know. That's what makes it dangerous. Annas hasn't approved him, and Annas is the law in this country.

Andrew: [scornfully] Annas! Huh!

Peter: All right, maybe you think you're bigger than he is. Let me tell you, he could make it pretty miserable for us both. You'd better learn which side your bread's buttered on! I'd be *afraid* to talk like that about the *high priest*—I really *would*!

Narrator:

The longest lesson on character building in the Book is the one on self-control. It needs to be, because self-control is so hard to learn. Peter learned it the hardest way, taking every knock and failure as it came, but never quitting.

Although Simon Peter had risen, by sheer force of character and ability, to the inner circle of intimacy with the Master, he still had to learn his lessons the hard way, even as you and I. His loud boast, "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death," was sincere enough, for sincerity was one of his chief virtues. But testing proved that his courage was not equal to his sincerity and when tested, it quickly dissolved. In only a matter of hours, he was profanely shouting, "I tell you, I know not the Man!"

Yet from this humiliating failure, Peter rose to fight the harder. The experience taught him to distrust his own strength and to seek God for the courage which he lacked by nature.

Let no one till his death

Be called unhappy. Measure not the work

Until the day's out and the labor done.

To their everlasting credit, it is not recorded that the Ten ever reminded him of his failure. Such was not the spirit of the Christ they had followed. Peter had been punished enough by his own conscience. To have been hard and unforgiving, to have refused a helping hand in this crisis, would have been a darker sin than Peter's denial.

Sins of the spirit can be more obnoxious than sins of the flesh, which are too often committed under swift and strong temptation.

No man ever needed more desperately a second chance, and no man ever more richly used it. From Pentecost onward, it was Peter's voice which led in denouncing the sin of the mob which had crucified his Lord, and in preaching the gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins.

The Eternal loved Peter and used him when he became worthy of trust and use. His healing of the lame man in the temple holds out to us one of the finest promises in the Bible, that of trust and usefulness when we have humbled ourselves, learned of God, and built a character worthy of trust.

Scene 2: *Changed*

Setting:

The Beautiful Gate of the Temple. A back curtain and 2 white columns. Peter and John and the Lame Man (now healed) are on the stage. Peter is preaching to an off-stage crowd.

Characters:

Peter The Apostle
John Another Apostle
Lame Man Man who was healed
Two Priests

Peter: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you see and know; and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came afterwards, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the

prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness."

[Enter two Priests]

Priest No. 1: See here, Galilean, what's going on here? What right have you to speak to the people?

Peter: The same right you have, sir! By God's command this temple is a house of prayer for all people. Search the Scriptures—you will find it written in the book of Isaiah.

Lame Man: [pushing forward] Look at me, if you want to know what these men can do. You know me. One minute ago I took the first step I ever took in my life. *I'm healed!*

Priest No. 2: By what authority, or by what power, or what name, have you done this?

Peter: Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a cripple, by what means this man has been healed, be it known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you *well*. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Priest No. 1: [after conferring] This must go no further, Galileans. You are not qualified to preach, and that which you preach is heresy and blasphemy. In the name of the Jewish nation, we command you that you speak no more of these things, or teach in the name of this Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified by Pilate as a deceiver and a blasphemer.

John: And whom God raised from the dead, as you all know!

Priest: No. 2: If you do not obey, you will be severely punished.

Peter: [boldly] Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

John: We ought to obey God rather than man—

Peter: And this we shall certainly do.

(Continued Next Issue)

A Sign of the End?

• Preaching the Gospel to All Nations

"It seems to me that Matthew 24:14 is a prophecy for our time. Could I have your comments."

Matthew 24:14 reads, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." The question is, what is the "end" to which Jesus refers in this text?

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave His apostles this express commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20).

The gospel of Mark also records this commission (Mark 16:15-18), together with a statement that it was fulfilled: "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following" (v. 20).

The apostle Paul was also aware of this commission, and he recognized the missionary work they had accomplished as its fulfillment. These are his words: "But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). Again in his Epistle to the Colossians he confirmed the same fact: that the "hope of the gospel...was preached to every creature which is under heaven" (1:23).

The question is, what "end" followed the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostles? Jesus Himself answers this question in Matthew 24, in the verses following the text in question. It is the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish age. He speaks first of the desolating of the Temple in Jerusalem (Matt. 24:15), then gives a warning to those who would be living at that time: they should "flee into the mountains," allowing nothing to hinder them (Matt. 24:16-20). The command to "flee" indicates that this would not be the popular view at the time.

History confirms that the Jews did not want to flee,

and were adamant in not fleeing; as a result, thousands perished who could have been spared. The invading Romans were victorious, and the Jewish Age came to an end, fulfilling Jesus' prophecy.

We today are not under the commission to the Apostles; the Lord has not given us the means nor the equipment to preach the Gospel "unto all nations," but this will be done when Christ returns, and the "everlasting gospel" shall be preached "unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him: for the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:6-7). This will be the greatest missionary effort in the history of our planet, and it will meet with a measure of success wholly unprecedented. As a result of this effort—and the force that will accompany it—the gospel will be known and accepted worldwide, and "all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God" (Isa. 52:10).

• Who Are the Chosen and Faithful?

"I have been reading your publication, 'Understanding the Bible,' section 22, where you quote this text: 'And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army' (Rev. 19:19).

"You say that 'They that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.' If the unfaithful are the army of the Lord in the battle of Armageddon, this isn't clear to me. I understand the battle does not take place until after the judging of the faithful and unfaithful servants, so why are those with Him said to be chosen and faithful?"

The Bible speaks of two distinct groups of people with Christ, who will serve Him in two distinct capacities.

You are correct in stating that the unfaithful are the army of the Lord. But they are not the same as those who are "with him" who are "called, and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14). Such a description could never be

given to the unfaithful. Those who are "with him" who are "chosen, and faithful" are not His army but are "lords" and "kings" with Him, for "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Christ's army will fight for Him and comprise the "sharp sword" with which He shall "smite the nations" (Rev. 19:15). Those judged unfaithful at the time Christ returns will serve in this capacity, then be destroyed themselves. They doubtless will get some satisfaction from fighting a winning battle, from being able to exercise superhuman might against the forces of evil, and their work will result in removing all the rebellious and incorrigible element and opening the way to true progress, prosperity and happiness. But they will never be able to share in the eternal glories with the faithful.

• The Work of Elijah

"What does it mean that Elijah will turn 'the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers'?"

The passage in question is found in the last two verses of the Old Testament: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6).

Elijah enjoys the rare privilege of being one of two persons to have lived on this earth and not to have tasted death; it is written that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:11). God had a special work for him, to be the herald of the second advent of Christ.

During his ministry as a Prophet, Elijah was sent by God on a number of very difficult missions. When religion was at a low ebb in Israel, he was God's man of the

hour. Before the arrival of the great King, he will be sent to prepare the way, to make ready a people to meet the Lord.

Elijah is recognized as one of the greatest of the prophets, and a man of action. When the nation of Israel was under the most wicked of the kings, Ahab, God sent Elijah the prophet to confront the king and restore worship in Israel. In our own age of wickedness, God will use this same strong personage to awaken people from their lethargy and turn them to Him.

The second advent of Jesus is as certain as tomorrow morning's sunrise, and the arrival of His herald, Elijah the prophet, prophesied by Malachi, is just as certain.

Should Christ return without warning, few indeed would be ready to meet Him. Thus we believe Elijah's chief work will be that performed on a small scale by John the Baptist at Jesus' first advent, to call people to repentance. This is indicated by the great "turning" described by Malachi: "He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers...." This describes a drastic change, although we are not told exactly what the turning consists of. It has been suggested that Elijah will turn the hearts of the "fathers"—of darkness—to the "children"—of light. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians who knew the plan of God, "Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (I Thes. 5:5).

Whether or not this is the exact meaning intended by the Prophet, this drastic turning will surely be accomplished. Elijah's will be a mission of revolutionizing men's thinking such as has never before been accomplished, thereby averting a divinely ordained calamity of global proportions: "Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse."

It has always been God's practice to warn people of impending destruction (Amos 3:7), and this will be Elijah's work.

*The second advent of Jesus is as certain
as tomorrow morning's sunrise, and the arrival of His
herald, Elijah the prophet, is just as certain.*

• “The Kingdom” Here Now?

“I believe the kingdom is right here now. It is in my heart, and your heart, and the hearts of all the believers. Jesus said ‘the kingdom cometh not with observation... the kingdom of God is within you.’”

The text in question reads: “And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21).

In view of the description of the Kingdom given us by Jesus and others of God’s inspired writers, we cannot agree with the conclusion that the Kingdom is literally “right here now.” In our Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” indicating that when the Kingdom has come, God’s will shall be done on earth *as it is in heaven*. Surely no one will argue that this is the present condition of our earth!

Nor is it possible to believe, in view of plain Bible teaching, that the Kingdom can be in your heart, and mine, and the hearts of all believers. Consider, too, that if we are to take this passage literally, we are saying that the Kingdom was literally in the heart of those self-righteous Pharisees, for that is whom He was addressing!

The teaching of Jesus and the apostles points to a kingdom that is to be established at the second coming of Christ, an event still future. The Bible pictures the king-

dom of God as a real, tangible entity having territory (the whole earth, “from sea to sea”—Ps. 72:7-8; “under the whole heaven”—Dan. 7:27); laws (God’s law will be the law of the land, Isa. 2:2-3); a real, personal King (Christ—Zech. 14:9), associate rulers with Christ (the saints, Rev. 5:9-10; 14:1); and a populace to be ruled over, “a great multitude which no man can number” (Rev. 7:9), in other words, a number unrevealed. Christ’s Kingdom, or the Kingdom of God, is yet future. It will be established when Christ returns to earth.

On the surface, Jesus’ words would seem to lead us to the conclusion that the Kingdom was present in His lifetime, hence is here now. But since the church and the hearts of men both fall short of the Bible description of the Kingdom, we must look further. The Greek word, *basileia*, translated “kingdom” in Luke 17:21, has also for its meaning, a “king; his royal majesty.” *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott* renders the verse, “God’s royal majesty is among you.” *Harper’s Greek Testament* states in a footnote that Jesus was “alluding to His own presence in their midst.” The Berkeley Bible translates the verse, “Indeed the kingdom of God is in your midst,” and then adds a footnote as follows: “The translation, ‘within you’ is equally possible, but could hardly be our Lord’s meaning regarding the Pharisees. More likely it means, ‘I am in your midst.’” In our common King James Version, a marginal reference suggests “among” instead of “within”—the King was *among* them. This agrees with the teachings of Scripture that the Kingdom is yet future.

MM

Holiness isn’t just a stance you take in a crisis.

Holiness is for everyday things, like

...how you park (or drive) your car

...how you speak to your wife or husband

...how you spend your money

...how you correct your children

...how you do your job

...how you stand up under pressure

...what you say about your neighbors

...how you take advice.

Search the Scriptures

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

IT was with authority that our Master spoke these words to the Jews. They had claimed to believe Moses and the prophets, but their worship had become merely an outward form which did not move them to bring forth fruits of righteousness. They thought that in the Scriptures, of which they were custodians, they had promise of eternal life according to their own idea of right and wrong. They were complacent, thinking that they were God's chosen people, feeling that if any were saved it should be they. Jesus' teaching was disappointing, for it held no such hope. He publicly denounced them as hypocrites, blind guides, blind Pharisees, whited sepulchres. They claimed faithful Abraham for their father, assuming that they should be blessed with him, but did not consider or attempt to obey God's commandment to him, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1).

Their idea of a Messiah also ran counter to what had been foreshadowed in the Scriptures. They visualized a Christ who at His first advent would come in regal splendor to renew the kingdom of David and release the Jewish nation from the bondage they were in. This He was not doing. Instead He had come as a humble man, working out His salvation, fitting Himself for the high position He should ultimately hold as King of the whole earth. By searching, they would have found the Scriptures revealing that He was to come the first time as Prophet and Priest, and the second time as Conqueror and King.

Moses had said, "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me" (Deut. 18:15). King David said, speaking prophetically for Christ, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, . . . to do thy will, O my God" (Ps. 40:7, 8). Isaiah had said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may

know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (7:14-15). Isaiah also spoke of the Messiah coming to proclaim the "acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God" (61:2), and in Jesus' remarks in the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading the Prophet's words, He purposely omitted the "day of vengeance," showing He understood Isaiah had spoken of both of His comings, and that the day of vengeance was to accompany His second coming.

As Jesus did in His day, so now the true Church continues to sound the gospel call with the invitation to search and study the Divine Record and no longer remain in unbelief. Ignorance will excuse no one, nor will the fact that people are so wrapped up in the cares and affairs of this life. The Apostle gives a very timely warning: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17-18). To say we have no time for this important work is folly, for people find time for the things they really want to do. Eternal life is promised on no other condition but through knowledge of and obedience to the Word of God, therefore the importance of this commandment to search and study the Scriptures cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Through passing years, contrary to Jesus' command (Rev. 22:18-19), men have added to and taken from the Word of God, claiming the Bible was not sufficient to salvation. Others have interpreted it to correspond with their creed and thus have covered the real beauty of the Gospel. It is for this reason truth has to be sought for as men search for any earthly treasure. Indeed, we read just such an admonition from one who possessed the wisdom of God: "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and

searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Prov. 2:3-5).

In the study of this precious Volume we should remember that it is not a Book to be read through once, twice, or thrice and then laid aside. It is to be studied by subjects and that with increasing interest from day to day. In it alone is our hope of eternal life, therefore its understanding is essential. It is not all plain, simple language, as all will admit, for it contains many parables, symbols and allegories. Peter said of Paul, that he wrote some things hard to be understood (II Peter 3:16), but it was Paul who said that to understand the wisdom of God we must learn to compare spiritual with spiritual, and also to rightly divide the word of truth (I Cor. 2:13; II Tim. 2:15). Long before this, the prophet Isaiah had informed us we would find this wisdom "here a little, and there a little" (28:10); that is, one individual writer does not tell the whole story on a certain subject, but we have to acquaint ourselves with the general teaching of the Bible, harmonizing the whole, rather than build a theory on a single text.

OUR READERS WRITE

Traveling, Traveling

We are but few who are "Traveling Toward Sunrise," but often I fear I am not going fast enough. The day's toil, the fret of care many times hampers what should be uppermost. Priorities, yes. We know what should be first. O yes, we say, *I mean* to put Him first, but alas! Martha's dilemma is often, too often, ours—yours and mine.

We have so much to help us in this upward climb, the spiritual food in abundance, so many promises from God, seeing the fulfillment of prophecies, the unrest and fear in the world. Luke 12:35-40 will meet its fulfillment. Thus, we must be on duty for Him, have our loins girded and our lights burning, ready to welcome Him, even if all around us seem to have gone to sleep. There will be a reward for those who stay awake and get ready.

Our first duty is to overcome self. Day by day each Christian child has much to do without and within, a death to die, a weary war to wage with sin. But we do not have to go it alone, for we know God is ever present with us to help us.

England

N. T.

Look Ahead

A word of encouragement is always good to lift our spirits. Also, words of reproof are good to keep our spirits "lowly." We need both, for "reproofs of instruction are the way of life."

It's so easy to deceive ourselves into a false sense of security by thinking that maybe, just maybe, we don't have to be *completely, totally* perfect. But God's plan is plain; God's standards must be ours. He is holy, pure and righteous; and He requires us to be the same.

Why are we so weak and so easily beset by those "little nagging sins"? It's simply because we have let them become bigger than we are. We can get control of self and overcome our sins if we make up our minds to it. Remember, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (I Cor. 10:13).

Let us resolve to make each day better than the day before, not looking back at all the failures but looking ahead to success. Success comes by hard work; there is no need to fail if we put forth enough effort.

A deep love and longing for eternal life alone will stimulate us to search for the wisdom of God, and having found it, to continue our zeal to overcome our carnal natures so as to be worthy of God's honor. Theory alone is not sufficient. One has to be a doer of the Word as well as a hearer to be justified of God (Rom. 2:13). Left to ourselves, we could not know what our life must be, but the Bible enlightens our understanding and guides our souls through this vale of darkness. It becomes the fulness of our hope as we let it reveal our thoughts and motives, as we exchange the wrong for the right. It becomes our consolation in sorrows as we trust its promises with a heart broken with penitence; it becomes the joy of our heart as we delight to do God's will above all else.

We are commanded often through the Bible to write its precepts upon our hearts that they may be with us and lead us through every experience of life. In proportion as we do this and get the law of God in our minds will our faith increase and our hope be more secure. We will progress just as we study this Book and allow its principles to influence and mold our lives to the pattern of Christ.

MM

We have so much to live for—let us never give up but keep an eye on the future reward that awaits the faithful.

Georgia

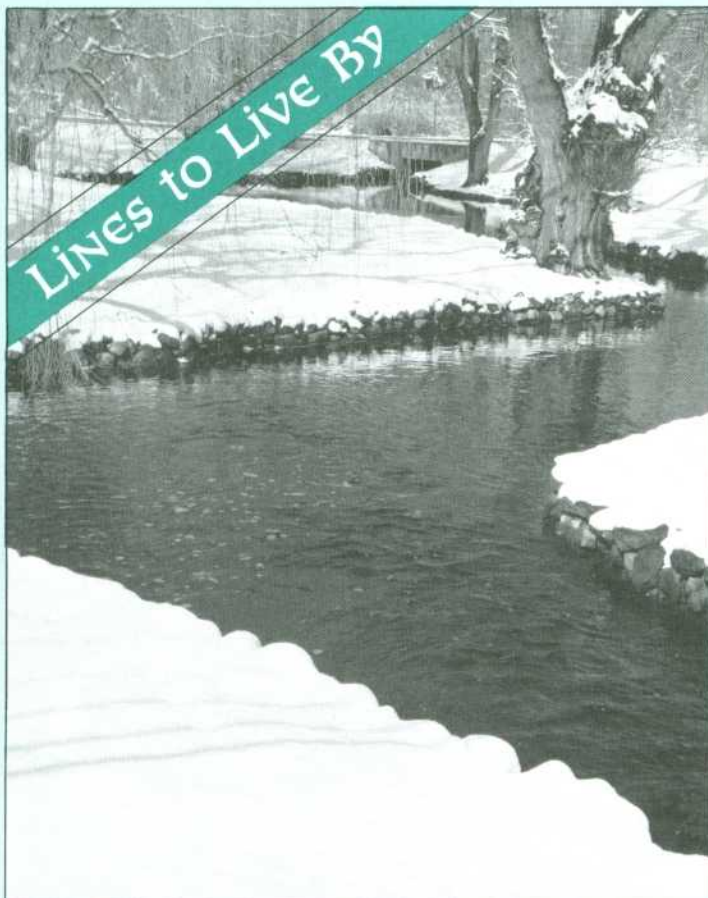
B. P.

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The Last Hour

*The sunset burns across the sky,
Upon the air its warning cry.
The curfew tolls, from tower to tower,
O children, 'tis the last, last hour!*

*The time is short; the harvest white,
Oh work, for lo, soon comes the night
When none can work; 'twill be too late
What's left undone will seal your fate.*

*We hear His footsteps on the way!
Yes, work, while it is called today,
Oh, work with haste, endued with power,
O children, in this last, last hour!*

—Selected

A Bible in the hand is worth two in
the bookcase.

*We recognize other people's faults
so easily because they are so much
like our own.*

Gathered at the Last

*'Mid the losses and the gains,
'Mid the pleasures and the pains,
'Mid the hopings and the fears,
And the restlessness of years,
We repeat this passage o'er
We believe it more and more—
Bread upon the waters cast
Shall be gathered at the last.*

*Gold and silver, like the sands,
Will keep slipping through our hands;
Jewels, gleaming like a spark,
Will be hidden in the dark;
Sun and moon and stars will pale,
But these words will never fail—
Bread upon the waters cast
Shall be gathered at the last.*

*Soon like dust, to you and me,
Will our earthly treasure be;
But the loving word and deed
To a soul in bitterest need,
They will not forgotten be,
They will live eternally—
Bread upon the waters cast
Shall be gathered at the last.*

*Fast the moments slip away,
Soon our mortal pow'rs decay,
Low and lower sinks the sun,
What we do must soon be done;
Then what rapture if we hear
Thousand voices ringing clear—
Bread upon the waters cast
Shall be gathered at the last.*

Gentleness Is Expressed in Graciousness

"Speak evil of no man...be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:2).

Grace is expressed in graciousness. This graciousness is gentleness in action. A cluster of commendable qualities link themselves to it. One is charm—an attractiveness and winsomeness that gives a distinctive magnetism to a gentle person. Another is modesty—a lack of arrogance and the possession of a genuine appreciation that respects the worth of the other person. A third quality of the gracious person is sweetness—the capacity to avoid the hurtful and emphasize the helpful.

A gracious person is graceful in actions, manners, and practices. He is featured by balance, poise, and consistency.

Graciousness is attractive. It makes one likeable, socially adjusted, and respected. This type of person avoids offending people, finds ways of scattering happiness; and gives a lift that makes life brighter.

Gentleness is considerate of the other person's feelings; it equips us to shun the practices of making snap judgments, being blinded by prejudice, and warped by partiality.

The spirit of gentleness permeates the New Testament. It is an essential ingredient for a radiant life. The beauty of its manifestations, the richness of its meanings, and the magnitude of its ramifications make it a key word in the Christian's vocabulary. When gentleness moves from vocabulary to vocation, we discover an approach to life that gives tang and persuasiveness to our influence.

God, give us a greater gentleness; may our supply of grace make us gracious and graceful.



The difference between perseverance and obstinacy is that one comes from a strong WILL and the other from a strong WON'T.



"But godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Tim. 6:6). It is futile to think that we can be content without being godly. Paul said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). But Paul's satisfaction was the result of his righteous and holy life. Contentment is not a result of worldly pleasures, fame or success, but is the fruit of right living. We are content when we put God's *will* ahead of our *wants*.



*Mr. Meant-To has a comrade, and his name is Didn't-Do.
Have you ever chanced to meet them? Did they ever call on you?
These two fellows live together in the house of Never-Win,
And I'm told that they've another friend, a man named "Might-Have-Been."*

after his image, and named him Seth. ⁴The days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters. ⁵Thus all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

⁶When Seth had lived a hundred and five years, he became the father of Enosh. ⁷Seth lived after the birth of Enosh eight hundred and seven years, and had other sons and daughters. ⁸Thus all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

⁹When Enosh had lived seventy years, he became the father of Kenan. ¹⁰Enosh lived after the birth of Kenan eight hundred and fifteen years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹¹Thus all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died.

¹²When Kenan had lived seventy years, he became the father of Ma-halalel. ¹³Kenan lived after the birth of Ma-halalel eight hundred and forty years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁴Thus all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

¹⁵When Ma-halalel had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Jared. ¹⁶Ma-halalel lived after the birth of Jared eight hundred and thirty years, and had other sons and daughters. ¹⁷Thus all the days of Ma-halalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

¹⁸When Jared had lived a hundred and sixty-two years he became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹Jared lived after the birth of Enoch eight hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. ²⁰Thus all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

²¹When Enoch had lived sixty-five years, he became the father of Methuselah. ²²Enoch walked with God after the birth of Methuselah three hundred years, and had other sons and daughters. ²³Thus all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years, and Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

²⁴When Methuselah had lived a hundred and eighty-seven years, he became the father of Lamech. ²⁵Methuselah lived after the birth of Lamech seven hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

²⁶When Lamech had lived a hundred and eighty-two years, he became the father of a son, and called his name Noah, saying, "Quoniam ego exui me." ²⁷The LORD has cursed this one; he shall bring us relief from our work and from the toil of our hands." ²⁸Lamech lived after the birth of Noah five hundred and ninety-five years, and had other sons and daughters. ²⁹Thus all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

"And He Died"

HAVE you ever wondered why so many chapters in the Bible record seemingly endless—and meaningless—genealogies? So little is said of what the person did or was; all we learn is the pattern of the generations as they succeeded one another. So-and-so "begat sons and daughters ...and he died."

The first such account is in Genesis 5. "Adam...begat sons and daughters...and he died. Seth...begat sons and daughters...and he died. Enos...begat sons and daughters...and he died. Cainan...begat sons and daughters...and he died. Jared...begat sons and daughters...and he died." It matters not at all what one accomplished, how many children he had, or how long he lived, he did not escape that final phrase: "And he died." (The Bible records two exceptions, Enoch and Elijah—Gen. 5:24; II Kings 2:11).

Only a few chapters later the pattern is repeated, in Genesis 10, as the sons of Noah and their families are

recorded; and so on, again and again, through the course of Scripture.

Why? Why so much space given to genealogies?

For the Hebrew people there was a purpose. For them as a nation it was necessary to be able to prove one's genealogy.

But perhaps there is another lesson here for us. It is to warn us against the all-but universal feeling that "All men think all men mortal but themselves." It is the stark reminder that life does not continue endlessly for anyone. In the normal course of events, death overpowers all. There is no escaping this very final verdict on each life: "And he died."

The solemn fact is that in the course of time, the same will be written of each of us, unless some heavenly power intervenes. It is the pattern of the human race. We, too, must face it.

But the pattern can be broken. "And he died" need not be the last that is written of us. Were we to

record the activities of a child during a day, we might conclude our account of the day by saying "And he slept." But we would realize that that was not the whole of the story. The next phrase might well be "And he awoke," after which we might record the next day's activities.

So reads the story of each of God's servants. But while the account of each faithful child of God is seemingly ended with "and he died," this state of total unconsciousness is *not the end*. It is only a brief interruption, after which He will be awakened to enjoy a new and abundant life in the Kingdom of Christ.

All depends on the use we make of the time allotted us. We can use it to pursue our own pleasures, seek our own satisfactions, or we can give it to God in wholehearted consecration, to do His will, to live after the pattern of Christ, and receive His "Well done" and a share in all the blessings of eternity.

The choice is ours.

MM

Just Checking Up

YOUNG Tony went into the neighborhood drugstore and dialed a number on the pay phone.

"Do you need a stock boy?" he asked.

There was a slight pause.

"Is his work satisfactory?" the boy continued.

As Tony hung up, the puzzled druggist was looking at him. "I thought your mother told me you already had a job."

"I do," replied Tony promptly. "Those were the people I work for. I was just checking up on myself."

How long since you and I checked up on ourselves? How long since we stood aside and looked hard and long at ourselves as others see us—and as God sees us—and asked dispassionately, "Is *his* work satisfactory? How is *he* really doing?"

This is the attitude that keeps any good worker producing better and still better work. He's concerned about the quality of the work he does and likes to check up on it now and then. He doesn't want to be represented by any piece of work that is less than the very best he can do.

Are you as concerned about your spiritual work as Tony was about his job? Is your work always satisfactory? How about it? How recently have you checked up on yourself? It might pay you to ask for an up-to-date rating from your heavenly Employer tonight. MM

Why should I fear lest by their weight Tomorrow's tasks should prove too great?

I know my Father will not ask

Me to perform a greater task

Than He will give me strength to do:

For in His precious Word so true,

He there has promised you and me,

That "As thy days, thy strength shall be."

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

Words for the Living

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

Suppose a man bicycles from here to Minneapolis (about 90 miles). He starts out at 3 A. M. and just keeps moving. Someone says to him, "So long as you can see yourself going forward, you will get there all right." But by noon he has gone only three miles. Do you think he can get into Minneapolis by sundown? You know if he tries with all his might, he cannot do it.

Because we are moving does not mean that we will arrive on time. Are we moving fast enough so that we will get to the end of our road before the sun sets on our day of salvation?



God does not want an old dirty vessel. And if it is clean, it won't hurt us to wipe it out again.



A certain man came out to one of our meetings. He said if he could get at Mr. Nichols with just three questions, he would wind him up.

Well, he asked one question, and, to my surprise, he asked the second, but he did not know where the verse was that he was quoting. "But Mr. Nichols can tell," he said.

"Oh, yes," I replied, "it is in the 23rd chapter of Revelation."

Then he went on with his sermon until I said, "I am under the necessity of informing our friend that the text he quoted is just outside the Bible."

If you are gold, the fire will melt you, and the dross will come to the surface and be skimmed off; then you will come forth a pure vessel, a vessel in which the Lord will accept your offering. These words will soften you if you are the gold; if not, they will harden you.



A professor told me the other day that angels are spirits materialized. Well, the Bible tells us they are already material, they do not need to materialize. They are real, tangible beings. They are not like his little "souls" that you can neither see, touch or handle, that have neither body, form or parts, or length, breadth, height nor thickness, that will neither contract nor expand, that are neither liquid nor solid, that are so small that you can put a thousand on the point of a pin. All that is the best description of nothing I ever heard of.

The angels of God are not like this.



To consecrate ourselves with all we have to this work, so as to be sure of the reward, is not only a delightful work but a very delightful work, a work that grows lighter and lighter all the time; a work that will cause greater joy than anything else we could engage in. And as we see our heart getting purer and purer, we are filled with joy.

Are You Live-with-able?

FEW are the human creatures who can live successfully alone. We need others, and others need us. Yet—unfortunately—few are those who can live long and happily with others.

It is to some degree everyone's problem. Perhaps the basis is what someone has called "the egocentric predicament." In simple words this means that each person is naturally wrapped up in himself. Each person is a world in himself, with his own interests, desires, ambitions, goals, joys, sorrows and ills. Each sees everything from his own slanted perspective. Each thinks of himself as a sun around which the universe revolves.

Now the problem comes when several of these miniature "suns" must shine in the same "universe." It doesn't work. Little self-centered people quickly find that other little self-centered people are not eager or ready to give way. Everyone is *not* live-with-able.

Entering the sphere of Christian influence does not bring an automatic solution. Ego is born in every one of us; and in a world that is geared to nourish that ego, the would-be Christian has an especially difficult task. The desire to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think asserts itself unbidden again and again. It is part of the old nature, however, which must be placed upon the altar as a "living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1) before one may enjoy the bliss of being truly live-with-able.

But alas! How many of us recoil again and again from the point of sacrifice. That self-centered, self-seeking nature within us does not die easily.

The problem of being live-with-able is two-sided. I must live with others—that is *my* problem. Others must live with me—that is *their* problem. Actually the reverse is true also. But only as we learn to see both sides at the same time in a spirit of Christian love and mutual consideration can we even begin to learn the art of being live-with-able.

Life gives us an abundance of opportunities to practice this delicate art. Persons who live and work together must repeatedly confront the fact that their tastes, values, loyalties and ideas differ. And every way of a man being right in his own eyes and wrong in his brother's eyes, what can we expect but—conflict!

What is the solution? Paul summed it up when he said, "Let your bearing towards one another arise out of your life in Christ Jesus.... There must be no room for rivalry and personal vanity among you, but you must humbly reckon others better than yourselves. Look to each other's interest and not merely to your own" (Phil. 2:6, 3-5, NEB).

When we develop such a perspective, we will see in every point of conflict an opportunity to take another blow at our self-centered nature. And as the old nature in us is replaced by the new, we will find our happiness and joy is multiplied. We will become live-with-able in the fullest sense of the word because our new, outgoing nature will find a common center with others in the larger, expanded realm of holiness.