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# RICH WITHOUT MONEY

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**BY**

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# Introduction

**“All things are yours,” Paul told the Corinthian Christians. And though he did not affirm they were wealthy financially, he declared they, indeed, were “Rich Without Money.” The same riches belong to God’s people today.**

**In this book we try to open that storehouse of wealth. The one hundred short essays are designed to inspire to greater service, lift the discouraged, strengthen the weak, comfort the sorrowing, and offer practical thoughts to enhance the thrill of living for God. Gems of wisdom from both inspired and uninspired writers furnish springboards from which lessons are drawn—lessons so practical and simple they are often overlooked.**

**These essays were written over a period of years, under varying circumstances, and meeting many different needs. In each, however, we have tried to take a positive approach, with the feeling that it is more noble to build than to destroy.**

**It has long been our feeling that it is the business of God’s people to help others, and not to hurt them. If this book can contribute to that end by helping unlock that true wealth that comes from righteousness, and thus make life pleasant and eternity happy, then its purpose shall have been fulfilled.**

**Cleon Lyles**

**Little Rock, Arkansas**

**June 1968.**

## CONTENTS

<b>RICH WITHOUT MONEY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CANDLES THAT GO OUT .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>YOU'VE GOT TO DO YOUR OWN GROWING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>THIS, TOO, SHALL PASS .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>BURDENS ARE BLESSINGS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>UNTIL WE GET BACK TO OUR BEST .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>ENDURANCE .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>TROUBLED HEARTS .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>THEY LACKED NOTHING .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>GOLD IN A SWINE'S SNOUT .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>GOD IN THE CAMP .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>BREAD AND FISH .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>THE LIGHT OF A CANDLE .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>THE LINE IS BUSY .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>STANDING AMONG YOU .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>BECAUSE HE WAS AFRAID HE BEGAN TO SINK .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>A SAFE PLACE .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>TROUBLE ENOUGH .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>PROFITABLE GODLINESS .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>THE EYES OF THE LORD .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>THE MEANING OF YOUR NAME .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>IDLE WORDS .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>FORGIVENESS .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>A CURE FOR LONELINESS .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>BEHAVING WISELY .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>IS THE WORLD GETTING BETTER? .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>"O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM" .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>BORN EQUAL .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>SPEAKING THE TRUTH .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>MORE THAN BURNT OFFERINGS AND SACRIFICES .....</b>	<b>69</b>

JUDGING OTHERS .....	71
GOOD MEDICINE .....	73
"AND BE YE THANKFUL" .....	75
NO MAN NEED BE POOR .....	77
COCKS CROWING IN THE NIGHT .....	79
BEFORE AND AFTER .....	81
WHY DID YOU SMITE ME? .....	83
THE EQUATION OF BALANCE .....	85
HAVE YOU FOUND HAPPINESS? .....	87
A RICH LEGACY .....	89
THINKING DETERMINES LIFE .....	91
DEFINITION OR DEMONSTRATION? .....	93
THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE .....	95
SUPERIOR TO CIRCUMSTANCES .....	97
"I DON'T LIKE HIM" .....	99
LISTEN TO THE SONG .....	101
THAT WHICH I FEAR .....	103
THE CAUSE OF LONELINESS .....	105
ROW AWAY FROM THE ROCKS .....	107
"SUCH AS I HAVE" .....	109
THE GATEWAY TO POWER .....	111
THE SHAME OF SHAM .....	113
LEARNING FROM THE YEARS .....	115
EATEN OF WORMS .....	117
PRACTICE WHAT YOU KNOW .....	119
HOW DO YOU VALUE YOURSELF? .....	121
HAPPINESS, A GOAL OR A TOOL? .....	123
FILLING THE WOODBOX .....	125
TAKE CARE OF THE PIECES .....	127
"FEAR HATH TORMENT" .....	129
LABOR AND THOUGHT .....	131
IS GOD UP TO DATE? .....	133
WHEN THE DARK COMES DOWN .....	135
OUR CONSOLATION .....	137
FALLING FLOWERS .....	139
NO NEED FOR WORRY .....	141
THE GOOSE HANGS HIGH .....	143
LOOKING UP .....	145

THE OTHER OBSTACLES .....	147
TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF .....	149
NEGLECTED HOMES .....	151
WRINKLED SOULS .....	153
TODAY IS OURS .....	155
GOD WILL SUPPLY THE THREAD .....	157
THE HEART OF A MOUSE .....	159
CHEERFUL YESTERDAYS AND CONFIDENT TOMORROWS .....	161
“YOU CAN’T GET LOST ON A STRAIGHT ROAD” .....	163
LASTING FRIENDSHIPS .....	165
PLEASURE AND HAPPINESS .....	167
NOURISHERS OF EACH OTHER .....	169
ALONE WITH GOD .....	171
FEAR OF FAILURE .....	173
THE DUST OF BUTTERFLY WINGS .....	175
OUR SHIELD .....	177
HAPPINESS IS FOR EVERYBODY .....	179
“I” IS MISERABLE .....	181
A TABLE IN THE WILDERNESS .....	183
ON PURPOSE .....	185
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM LIFE? .....	187
DEATH AND LIFE IN THE TONGUE .....	189
CASTING SHADOWS .....	191
LIGHT YOUR OWN LAMP .....	193
MY PRICE .....	195
THE CHRIST OF TODAY .....	197
ANGELS’ FOOD .....	199
THE WRONG BUDDY .....	201
HAPPINESS IN ANOTHER’S KEEPING .....	203
FOLLOWING AFTER .....	205
STIRRUPS REVERSED .....	207

## Rich Without Money

One person said, "Some day we will be rich." Another answered, "We are rich now, but someday we will have money." Of course you understand that they were Christians. The first was thinking in terms of what we commonly call riches, but the other had his mind on true riches.

One can be rich without money. Paul said he had made the Corinthians rich by teaching them the word of the Lord. "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in fastings, in watchings; By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonor, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; *as poor, yet making many rich*; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Cor. 6:1-11).

In James 2:5 we are told that we are rich in faith. How much richer could a person be than one who possesses the kind of faith he ought to have in Jesus Christ? If a person belongs to God all of that which belongs to God is within his reach. The riches we thus receive from our Father are riches that do not pass away with time but reach on into eternity.

Paul told some people they should be "Rich in good works" (1 Tim. 6:18). We can see how this kind of riches will be with us when time is no more by reading Revelation 14:13. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are

the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their *works do follow them.*" Also notice 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Not only can one be rich without money, but one can be poor with it. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:14-18).

There was no question about these people being rich as far as money was concerned. But they lacked the true riches. That is why Jesus said they were poor. No one is more poverty stricken than the person who is failing his Lord. He may possess much of what the world calls riches, but beyond the grave such possessions cannot go. When the time comes for him to enter into another life he will need true riches.

Are you poor or rich? This is not an idle question. It is one that you can answer. The answer is found in whether or not you are really serving Christ. You can be rich without money.



## Candles That Go Out

**“Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be envious at the wicked; For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out” (Prov. 24:19, 20).**

Here is a very common problem which the children of God face, but along with it assurance that the end of the wicked is not going to be good.

In many ways we are prone to fret because of evil men. It may be that we fret because they, seemingly, are getting along better in this world than we are. No doubt this is the main thought Solomon had in mind. We must understand the manner in which God deals with men in order to escape fretting. God said, “It rains on the just and the unjust.” God does not take away a man’s life just because he refuses to serve Him. There was a time during the days of the Jewish economy when this was done. We need to remember, however, that in those days God was dealing with these people as a nation. He was personally directing their national affairs. Thus He provided capitol punishment for those who rebelled against Him. God leaves matters of this kind up to man in our day. He deals with us on the basis of eternal salvation. So God will not strike a man dead because he refuses to obey Him.

Because of this it is possible for the wicked to enjoy much of what the world can produce. What we need to realize, as followers of the Lord, is that we have something that is more than physical blessings. The time will come when the accumulations of men will be worthless to them. When that time comes the Christian has that which will care for him in eternity.

God’s spiritual blessings are withheld from those who refuse to obey Him. All spiritual blessings are in Christ. The man out of Christ has no right to expect these blessings. God has made no such promise to him. All the promises of God are in Christ Jesus. The Christian who knows enough about the Lord,

and serving Him, will realize this. Those of us who take our minds off the Lord and center them on things around us are those who will fret because of evil men. The child of God, without a cent, is much richer than the man of the world, even though he might own all of the world. Jesus taught us that one soul is greater than the world. He said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?" A man who had refused to serve the Lord would gladly trade all he had for one day in heaven with Christ and those that love Him. We have no reason to fret because of evil men.

Not only do we have no reason to fret because of the prosperity of evil men, but we have no reason to fret because of what they may be able to do to us. We are taught that nothing can harm us if we are living for the Lord. He is our shield and our exceeding great reward. If God is for us no one can be against us. There is no power in all the world that can work us harm, for "greater is the power that is in you than that is in the world." When the Lord wraps His mantle around His people there is no power in heaven nor on earth that can harm them.

Then we are assured that the candle of the wicked will go out. It may seem to burn brightly for a time. He may seem to get along well in the world. Men of the world may bow in his presence and worship him. But all of this shall fade as the flower of the grass and shall pass away like the mist before the sea blown gale. When his candle goes out there is nothing left for him but darkness.

But for the child of God there is light. For he will be in a place where no moon, no sun, and no stars are needed to light his way for God Himself shall be his light. Let us be sure to keep our candles trimmed and burning, so we will be ready when the bridegroom cometh.

## You've Got To Do Your Own Growing

"You've got to do your own growing, no matter how tall your grandfather was." No words were ever spoken with more truth than these. It may be for a time we think we are able to get by with the work of someone else, but when the test comes we will see the need of our own growth.

I remember a statement made to me once when I was a boy. I was staying in the home of a very fine gospel preacher who had a son about my age who was also a boy preacher. One day when we were neglecting our studies the good woman of the house said, "Boys, you can get by now with the kind of preaching you do because you are boys, but some day you will be men, then you will see the need of studying now." If I live to be a hundred that statement shall never leave me. The wisdom it contains one realizes more and more as he grows older. She was advising us to do our growing.

One may hitch a ride on the "band wagon" of another and make some advancement, but in every field of labor he will find the necessity of being able to stand on his own feet. If he insists on riding in the other fellow's wagon sometime he will hear a statement like I once heard one make of another: "He never was what he used to be, anyway." The real test will come."

This lesson needs to be realized by many in the church of our Lord. No person can live the Christian life for another. It matters not how faithful a wife is, she can never go to heaven for her children or her husband. Regardless of how faithful a preacher may be, or how hard he may work, he can never do the work that the individual Christian should do for himself. A church may have the most faithful elders in the world, but each member will still have to do his work if the Lord is to grant him the reward of the faithful. "We must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ; that *each one* may receive the

things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

One Christian cannot study the word of God for another. There is too much of the attitude, "I'll ask my preacher." Certainly one should feel like coming to his preacher with any problem. And it is to be expected that one who devotes all his time to a study of the word of God would know a little more about it than one who does not have that much time to devote. But the danger of a situation growing up in the church today is that many are leaving all the study of the word of God up to a very few and depending on their knowledge to direct them. If the one who is doing the directing happens to do wrong, or to be wrong in his judgment, such people will also do wrong. All human beings are subject to err, and Jesus said, "If the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch." We need to study the word of God for ourselves.

One Christian cannot minister to the needs of the unfortunate for another. We live in a day when we are prone to employ someone to do such work for us. Certainly it is good to send another if we are unable to go, but too often we use our ability to send another as an escape from our real duty. The good that is done to the one in need is not all the Lord had in mind. The most valuable lesson is that learned by the one who does the ministering. When it is possible for us to help someone in need it will be much better for us to take that which is needed rather than to send it. When some sick person needs attention, we will gain much more by personally giving the attention than by sending someone to give it. What it does for us is valuable to our own right living. I am afraid of what the way of escape we have invented is going to do to us. Our reward in the last day will be based on what we have done, and not what we have had someone else do.

It matters not which way we may turn to find this lesson, it is there. We must do our own growing. May the Lord help us to so conduct ourselves that when we stand before Him we will need no one to lean on, for in that day, though the whole world will stand before the Lord, when He passes judgment on us we will be standing alone.

## **This, Too, Shall Pass**

One way you look at the truth of the above statement it becomes a great source of comfort. But when we view it again it is with some regret. Either way we view it, however, it should hold many valuable lessons for us.

Time usually takes care of all matters, pleasant or unpleasant. We think at the moment that we can never forget, but we soon learn that we have been wrong. Some loved one is suddenly snatched away from us. Some grief in another form comes upon us. Sadness fills our hearts. But the day comes when the sun shines brighter and the heart is lighter. Smiles take the place of frowns. We begin to look up again. Deep sorrow has passed, and though it may have made some changes within us, we are about the same as before. Or it may be that we have had financial failures. Suddenly what we thought we owned is taken from us. Our outlook on life becomes very narrow. But brighter days come again. We say our "luck" has changed. Things come our way, and we are looking up. In these things there is much comfort in the fact that these things pass.

What is true of experiences we do not appreciate is also true of those to which we would like to hold. They, too, shall pass. We either do what we can in the right way today, or we will never do it. We may awake and fill some other days for the Lord, but not those we have allowed to slip by. Our opportunity shall pass. We will either do it while we can, or else it will never be done. It seems difficult to get the average person to see that we live through each stage of life but once. Usually we are so concerned about the future or afraid because of things in the past, that the years slip by and we never really get a lot of pleasure out of living. It is like the person who spends his life making money so he can live later. When the time comes that he decides he should begin to live, he finds that it is

time to die. What is true of making money is also true of other matters. We are always going to enjoy things in the future. We are always going to do something worthwhile for God in the future. Our opportunity passes, and it is never done.

There has never been a generation, since the early days of the church, when people had an opportunity to do bigger and better things for God, than this generation. We have learned in many ways. Of course we have the word of God to instruct us. But experience has taught us many things also. The past history of the church proves to us that we will either build solidly and surely during our generation, or we shall be parties to another apostasy. We can look either way and see great responsibilities. Intelligent workers of the past have helped to make the great advantages of the present and will certainly feel keen disappointment in a generation that will not use their power to go still farther. Unborn generations shall rise up to call us blessed, or shall wonder at our willingness to give them so many disadvantages.

What we have now we shall never have again. We stand like a young man in the prime of his life. Let us realize that this shall pass. If we are to do great things for God, we must do them now. The day will come when such is beyond our power.

*Since life is short, we need to make it broad;  
Since life is brief, we need to make it bright;  
Then keep the old king's motto well in sight,  
And let its meaning permeate each day,  
Whatever comes—"This, too, shall pass away."*

## Burdens Are Blessings

This may not always be true but it is in most cases. Sometimes we are unable to see the blessing, and that may be because we do not look for it.

Many months ago a friend sent me this clipping: "An ant was carrying home a bit of straw, and came to a crack in the rock it was crossing. The little ant tried in different ways to get its burden across. Finally, it put one end of the straw down at the edge of the crack, pushed it till it reached the other side, then walked across on its burden, making it a bridge." Perhaps Solomon included such wisdom when he talked of the wisdom of the ant. Anyway we can see the lesson in this story. Burdens may become blessings.

Paul had a burden he would have liked to be rid of because of what he had to suffer, but the Lord refused to remove it. He referred to it as his "thorn in the flesh." He did not tell us what it was, but it was very unpleasant. He found, however, that this burden turned out to be a blessing. More souls were brought to Christ because of it. He said it kept him from glorying in the flesh. Perhaps it was the lack of glorying that made him such a power. The whole story has not been told, but it did become a blessing.

Because many of us fail to see the strength in our weakness, we never do for Christ what we are capable of doing, and what we would like to do. We give in when we should be going straight ahead. Paul said when he was weak he was strong. He said there was strength in weakness. If we could recognize this and use ourselves properly we might become what we would like to be in the Lord's service.

Poverty is sometimes a blessing, but few ever think of it as such. There are a lot of things connected with being poor that keep one close to Christ. All of us have seen people leave the Lord when they made money. Not all people leave Him, but

they are all tempted to do so, and most of them yield to the temptation.

Ignorance is not always a curse. I am not talking about being deliberately ignorant, refusing to study the Lord's word. But there is an ignorance that is a blessing. I heard it said of one man once, "He just goes from home, to work, to church, and then starts back on the same circle. He never reads anything except the paper and his Bible, and reads very little of the paper. He does not know what is going on." To save my life I could not see that the man had lost anything. He was ignorant of some of the ways of the world, but such ignorance would not condemn him. He had a lot less to worry about than most folks. He had more time to spend in reading his Bible. He was much happier than the man who made the statement. You can find your own application. Ignorance is many times a blessing. But not ignorance of things that are right.

What, then, should we do? We should stop playing up our weaknesses and giving in to them. We should refuse to be ruled by handicaps and become their ruler. Instead of having the world in our power, as God intended for it to be, many of us are unable to rule ourselves. It is no wonder that other things get out of control. Instead of letting a burden become our master, we should become the master of our burden. Allowing it to rule us will not get rid of it. There is very little satisfaction in nursing it. But there is much happiness in using it for the purpose of doing good.

A boy I once knew became ill and had to be sent to a sanatorium. All who knew him were sorry it happened, but he did not seem to be grieved. He took advantage of it and converted some of the other patients. God used him while he was there and people were converted who perhaps never would have known the Lord had he not gone.

Look at your own burdens. Is there a way to make them a blessing? It is there if you will just find it.



## Until We Get Back To Our Best

I heard a man pray, "Lord, help us in adjusting our lives to the situation before us until we get back to our best." He was praying in a hospital and was praying especially for those who were patients in the hospital. The statement stayed with me, however, and I could not help but think that it is worth considering in every situation with which we may be confronted.

It is a well known fact that most tragedies come because people are not able, or willing, to adjust themselves to circumstances. One man has gained a fortune. He has not thought during the time of gaining it that fortunes come and go like the wind. So one day he finds that he has made some unwise investments. His fortune is suddenly gone. He cannot stand the thought of it so he takes his own life. Another has enjoyed good health all his life. But very few people ever get by always without some difficulties in matters of health. One day disease knocks at his door. It may take a member of his family. Or it may affect his own health. To him it is a bitter blow so he becomes sour and critical. God does not escape his criticism for, although it may have happened to others, God is just unfair if He allows it to happen to him. Or it may be that he turns to self pity and makes others unhappy who associate with him. There are many ways you can illustrate this fact, but in each case it will come back to the same thing. We are often unable to adjust ourselves to situations.

Paul learned the lesson of adjustment. He said that he had learned to be contented in all conditions. He knew how to be hungry and he knew how to be full. He knew how to take troubles and he knew how to use happiness. He knew how to deal with different kinds of people. He summed it all up once when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." There was the secret to his successful living. He lived with and for Christ.

There is no rule from man that can help us in adjusting ourselves to circumstances. Many volumes are written about matters of this kind, but upon close reading we find that the author is about as confused as his readers. It proves that this kind of help does not come from man. It comes from God. If we have the kind of faith we should have in God we believe there are no circumstances over which He cannot have control. He can even control tragedies in that He can make them work out for our good. He can make light out of darkness and make the rose blossom in the desert. All things are possible with God. This being true we can adjust ourselves to the situations with which we are confronted if God is with us. He will be with us if we are with Him, for He never leaves nor forsakes His children. If we are sick, God is with us, and we know that all will work for our good. If we fail in business we still have the promise that if we "seek first the kingdom all these shall be added." We do not fear that we will starve. And if the grim reaper knocks at our door, we know that the one who conquered death is standing by our side, and when the storms cease and the troubled waters are abated, He will preside over a calm that shall heal all our wounds.

Yes, we should learn to adjust our lives to the situations before us until we get back to our best.

## Endurance

Jesus said, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). In this chapter Jesus was warning His disciples about opposition they would face. He said, among other things, there would be false brethren. They would teach false ways. But he warned them not to be moved from the right way, then added that those who endured to the end would be the ones who would be saved.

There are always things that are designed to lead brethren astray. Of course, there are always the temptations that come into our lives individually, but we also face issues and problems that come before the church as a whole. Every age has had its false teachers. In the early days of the church they had their hobby riders who insisted that the Christians had to be circumcised. Some difficulty came about as a result of it, but the church was able to overcome it. Those who are acquainted with the history of the church from then until now know that many have been the false theories that have arisen. Sometimes they did much damage, but the church always emerged a little stronger and a little wiser. Those who were willing to endure not only were saved but also were able to save others.

There is no place in the Christian life for discouragement that will cause letting up in right living. It would be foolish to say that a person never will become discouraged. We all feel the weight of the false theories and false lives that are thrown against ours. But it is one thing to feel the discouragement only to let it cause us to try a little harder, and quite something else when we allow it to cause us to quit. No person should ever become discouraged enough to stop doing that which is right. Sooner or later in the life of every child of God his life will directly cross that of someone else. It may be one of his brethren. Brethren can be as unreasonable as anyone else. Every person who claims to belong to the Lord does not live as he

should. When we come face to face with this kind of person our lives are going to cross. The result may be a certain amount of mistreatment. Things may be said about us that are not true. Insinuations may be made that should have never been uttered. Accusations may be made that are untrue. And sometimes actual harm may be done. But what of it. These things should make us strong, not weaker. And we can be assured that time will take care of the matter; that is, the Lord will take care of it in time. Truth has a way of making itself known. It refuses to be held down. Even those who are anxious to listen to a false report that one brother (or sister) makes about another will learn the truth in time. But if this were not true heaven is worth such a small price. We must endure to the end. It is never right to quit.

One thing that should encourage all of us when we face the things that are against us, is the knowledge that we are doing that which is right. If this is true the Lord is with us. If the Lord is with us all will be well.

There may be times when we feel that He is far away. We may wonder why He does not strike someone down or stop some mouth that we feel should be stopped. But never fear, the Lord will take care of His people and of His cause. And if His people are determined to succeed in the work He wants them to do He will see that they enjoy success. Has it not always been like that? It will continue to be so. Then, whatever comes never become so discouraged that you stop doing your best for the Master.

## Troubled Hearts

Those who left their families and followed Jesus during His personal ministry had no easy life. They often had to run for their lives. They spent most of their time in direct opposition to the leaders of the day, hence were held in contempt by these leaders. Surely if they had any complex that would cause them to have the blues they had plenty of opportunity to exercise it.

If there ever was a group of people that had the right to feel sorry for themselves they had that right. But Jesus did not grant them this privilege. In the most trying hour of their lives He said, "Let not your heart be troubled." He was about to leave them when He said that. He realized they would be prone to lose faith when He went away. Yet, he stated a fact they could well afford to hear.

"Ye believe in God, believe also in me." They believed in God who was absent bodily. They could also believe in the Son of God when He was absent from the flesh. They believed this God who was spiritually present. They could believe also in the presence of Christ.

He told them, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." He expected their belief in His presence to remove the troubles from their hearts. In their lives it did. I doubt that any people has ever been pictured as being happier than these men who lived in the midst of trouble and died miserably. They refused to lose their grip on the Lord. So long as they remained with Him, He remained with them. When He was there all real troubles were over.

Could a person be afraid while riding the bosom of the deep, if he knew that he was riding in a ship that would not sink? Could one be afraid while enduring a storm, if he was sure that the house he was in could not be shaken? Is it not a fact that our fear comes from our lack of faith in the house or

the ship? Surely we know this. We are not sure that our house will not be blown down or that our ship will not sink.

Now let us see if this is not the real cause of our troubled hearts. Are we sure of the Lord? There is no real reason why we should not be. Surely we know He will fulfill His promises. Then of what are we afraid? Perhaps we are afraid of ourselves. We know that God is the "God of the seventh trouble." He will not forsake us. If we are lacking here, then we need to increase our faith. But if our failure rests in our fear of self we need to increase our faithfulness. There is no reason for a person living a life of fear. There is no reason for one allowing trouble to overcome him. When he does he reveals the fact that he has played at loyalty to God or allowed his faith to die. There is no condition in life that Jesus has not seen and for which He has failed to make provision. Even our greatest sorrows, which we face while trying to catch a glimpse of the unseen, have been soothed by the Master.

We are not to believe that Jesus did not want them to be concerned. He had no such idea about anything. The Lord never taught us to be light-hearted in thinking of serious matters. He was often a very serious thinker. His seriousness often led to tears and long, all night prayers. His concern for the souls of men was a burden on His heart. Yet His concern did not cause Him to despair. This was what He wanted to get over to His disciples. God has not told us to refuse to be serious about serious matters, but never to allow them to overcome us.

We cannot leave the ship for it will not sink. Troubles may be of great help to us. They often cause us to move a little closer to the Lord. They often make us have a better feeling toward others who are in trouble. There is no way of knowing how much good may come from them if we will only allow the Lord to direct us in developing a proper attitude toward them. We need to realize that He will see us through. The God of our salvation is the God of troubled hearts.

## They Lacked Nothing

“And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything? And they said, Nothing” (Lk. 22:35). The reason was very simple. Jesus had made them promises concerning providing for them. He did not tell them just how He would do it. He just told them He would and He did. They trusted Him and lacked nothing.

God has always been like that. There is not any record of any time that God failed to make proper provisions for the people who obeyed Him. He has not promised to explain how He will do it, but said He would, and He always has fulfilled His promises.

The Jews left Egypt without sufficient provisions for the journey. In fact they hurried the night they left. God knew they would take little with them. But when they came to the wilderness they lacked nothing. God did not tell them just how their provisions would come, but when they awoke in the morning it was there. In the evening the birds came in and they had meat. There was not a merchant in the entire wilderness. But after forty years of wandering their clothing and shoes were still there. When there was no water, God brought it from a rock. When the water was bitter God made it sweet. So when they crossed over into the land of promise, they could look back and say, “We lacked nothing.”

God is still like that. He has not changed in His attitude toward His children. We are no farther from God than the Jews. We are really closer to God. We have a direct approach through His only Son Jesus Christ. Our entire system of religion is described as better than that of the Jews. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is the same.

In the New Testament we have promises of God’s care. He does not tell us how provision will come. We are prone to disbelieve until He tells us how, but He has not obligated Himself

to do that. One of the first lessons Jesus tried to get over to His disciples was a lesson of trust in God. We read it in the Sermon on the Mount. "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? . . . But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

But someone says, "I don't see how He will do it." The Lord's answer to that person is still the answer He gave in this reading, "O ye of little faith." No lesson is needed today more than the lesson concerning trust in God. We have ways of demonstrating our trust. We do not trust by talking but by acting. Many people have said they trusted God when they have never trusted Him for anything. Others trust Him only as far as they are forced to do it. They trust Him in matters they cannot see and refuse to trust Him in matters they can see.

In God's provision for the Jews there is a very simple lesson concerning gathering more than was needed. God told them how much of the morning food to gather. Those who refused to trust God for provision for the next day tried to hoard some, but found it full of worms next morning. I wonder if we can see the lesson? We are going out of this world with exactly what we had when we came in—nothing. What we have hoarded may be as full of worms as that of the Israelites. It may be the means of condemning our own souls. It may be that which will cause our children to be condemned also. There is no end to what may happen to the person who fails to trust God. But for those who do trust Him, Jesus asked, "Lacked ye anything?" And they can always answer, "Nothing."



## Crucified With Christ

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

This statement of Paul followed the relating of an incident regarding Peter and some brethren favoring the Jewish religion after it had been taken away. Paul states here that the law of Moses did not direct his life, but that Christ had taken possession of him. He had given himself completely to Christ and therefore could not submit to the direction of anybody or anything else.

Christians belong to Christ because they have been purchased by Him. He bought the right to our souls when He redeemed us from all iniquity. Hence He lives in His followers. He said that both He and His Father would come and make their abode with those who follow Him. Thus He lives within the life of the individual. God at one time dwelt in a tabernacle erected by the Jews, but He is not limited to a certain place today. He goes with His people because He lives in them.

Christ lives in us to protect us. This same apostle said God would not allow us to be tempted above that we are able to bear, but would with the temptation make a way of escape. So we are protected from falling. We have sufficient power in Christ to sustain us regardless of what happens. Of course, if we do not choose to take advantage of this power He will not force it upon us. In other words, He will not keep us faithful in spite of our meanness, but will keep us faithful if we want to be. This does not mean that we will not know suffering, but it does mean that we will be protected in it. If all things work together for our good, then no abiding harm can come from suffering.

Christ is in us to direct us. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." After all our research we know so little about life. Some things are beyond our comprehension. But Jesus knows, and He is able to see that all works well. From the twenty-third Psalm we get an idea of the directing power of our Lord, when the writer speaks of the walk through the valley of the shadow of death. He was referring to the narrow, dark places through which the sheep were led. Out in front, with his protecting staff, was the shepherd. Thus, the Lord leads and directs those who are His. There is no condition of life for which He has failed to provide instruction.

Christ lives in us to save us. We make a mistake when we assume that salvation is something that is handed out to us because of a single act on our part. It does not come by obeying in one point, but by obedience in all points. Becoming a follower of Christ will remove the guilt of all past sins but from there on the Lord requires us to be faithful. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). By his death He paid the price of our redemption, but if we are to enjoy that salvation we must live for Him. Salvation comes at the end of the way, not at the beginning.

What more could a person want than Christ living in him? Man, who is made in the image of God, cannot know true happiness without association with God. This association comes by our living in such a way that Christ and God will be pleased to come and make their abode with us. In order that we might know how to live in such a way as to have them abide with us, Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." When we do this Christ lives in us.

## Gold In A Swine's Snout

I can't think of anything more out of place. Yet Solomon said, "As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman which is without discretion" (Prov. 11:22). The idea is a beautiful woman without virtue is ugliness. What is true concerning a woman is true with anyone.

My mother used to say, "Pretty is, as pretty does." The statement did not mean a lot then. Many statements do not mean much to us when they are uttered, but later in life they come to mean something. Perhaps that is why parents never fail in teaching children right ways. They may think at the time they have failed, and the child thinks little about what they are saying, but such lessons are not wasted. They will have their meaning some day.

We can see now the truth of this statement. How many of us have met people for the first time and decided they were about as ugly as anyone we had seen, later to find they were not so ugly? What made the difference? The person had not changed, but the real person had become known. This can be looked at from the other direction. There have been those whose first appearance made a very fine impression, but later a great change took place. The persons in this case had not changed, either, but we had come to know them better. Actions speak louder than looks. What people are is not determined by first appearance, but by what they do and how they speak.

Jesus gave us a very good lesson concerning this matter in Matthew 23. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are

within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Men may not always be able to see within, but God looks on the heart. He knows what we are even before we demonstrate what is in our hearts by our actions.

When Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," he revealed the value of our living as a Christian should in the presence of others. Perhaps there is nothing that has proved so disgusting to people who are only "lookers on" to see a very pious appearing person on Sunday, do evil on Monday. The expression of excuse-makers that "there are too many hypocrites in the church" is not worth a lot of discussion because of the spirit of the person who made the statement, but that does not destroy the fact that people may be turned away from the right path because of unholy conduct on the part of Christians. The fact that some who are faithful in attending services often are seen sinning during the week has caused shallow minds to conclude that they may be Christian without attending the worship. Neither is right. The person who is faithful in attendance must also be faithful in living. God demands both worship and service and none can please God without both worshipping God and serving God.

The Christianity with which I want to make the world sound should make me sound.

## God In The Camp

When the Philistines were fighting against the people of God and the ark of the covenant was brought into the camp of Israel they were afraid and said, "God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore" (1 Sam. 4:7).

Of course, it was because of their rebellion that the Israelites were brought so low. They could not win battles because God was not with them. They were being punished because they had turned their backs on God. Many times God had to show them that they could not get along without Him.

Now that the ark of the covenant had been brought into camp the Philistines had good reason to be afraid. They recognized this as the presence of God. They knew enough from former battles and what they had heard about the power of God's children when God fought with them, that they were fighting against God. With God in the camp the Israelites were assured of victory.

This is a truth that means as much to God's people today as it did then. If God is for us who can be against us? Jesus said concerning those who would follow Him, that He held them in His hand and no man could pluck them out. When He is with us we are assured of victory. The only thing we need to be concerned about is being sure He is with us, or rather that we are with Him. There is no record of any battle ever being lost when God was fighting in the battle. No life is lost, no congregation fails, and no program lacks completion when we fight side by side with God.

Immediately after the Israelites took Jericho, after crossing over into the land of promise, they went to do battle with Ai. Being fresh from a great victory and marching against such a small foe they did not expect any difficulty at all. But they were surprised when they started this battle. They were sorely

beaten. When Joshua began to look for the cause he was told that there was sin in the camp. You cannot win that way. It will not succeed either with an individual or with a congregation. As long as sin is tolerated we can be sure of losing battles.

Paul wrote the church at Corinth about sin that was there. He said a little leaven would leaven the whole lump. To allow or tolerate evil will never bring victory. The Israelites had to get rid of sin that was in the camp, and then they began to win again.

God and sin will not work side by side. That is why Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and mammon." Of course, He was talking about money, but it stands for most evil in one way or another. He went on to say that we cannot serve two masters. God will not fight side by side with the devil. That means that children of God cannot also be children of the devil. Servants of God cannot also serve the devil. We either serve God with all our hearts or He does not accept our service. We cannot serve the devil six days of the week and expect God to be on our side one day. We cannot take a portion of our possessions, or ability, and offer sacrifice to the devil and expect God to accept what sacrifice we might choose to offer Him. With Him it is all or nothing at all.

If we want to win we are assured of victory when God is in the camp. But we are just as sure that we will lose if He is not. Let us always keep God in the camp. This can be done by being sure we do what He wants done. We cannot act because of selfish or personal reasons. In everything we must be sure we are going God's way. The enemy will always tremble if this is true.

## Bread And Fish

One of the greatest lessons taught by the Lord concerning trusting in God is found in Matthew 7. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

A question that arose several times in the minds of these disciples was answered in this statement. "We know not for which we should ask." No doubt they never did know, and without doubt we will never know. For that reason we may request many things that would be harmful to us if God should grant them, and we may through ignorance fail to request some much needed things. Jesus here tells us that our God is watching over and ruling over our requests.

The illustration given is easy to see. No father who had the welfare of his son in mind would grant him a request that would do him harm. No father who is the kind of father he should be would refuse to give his son that which was needed. Jesus said if earthly fathers knew this much, how much more does God know. To see the lesson in these statements will help us much both in our requests and our service.

Much service is refused on the basis of fear. There are a lot of good people who could do great things for God who refuse to do anything because they feel they are unable for the task. Such a feeling is not dangerous unless it is allowed to get the best of us. Then it will result in that which we have feared. If our fear of doing wrong keeps us from doing anything we will be lost as a result of our failure. Right here we need to

trust God and move on. If a child refuses to do anything for fear he will not please his parents, he will find his parents displeased with him. James realized the force of this reasoning when he said, "He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

Is God the kind of Master that makes us fear? I can understand why some children never make requests of their parents. I have heard parents rant and rave because of these requests. A child soon learns that for the present it is easier to ask for nothing than suffer the kind of abuse that parents often give. Hence because of fear necessities are not requested. The result may be a warped mental condition in the child. But is God that kind of a God? Listen to some statements found in the Bible:

"He withholdeth no good thing from those that love him."

"His eyes run to and fro upon the earth showing himself mighty in behalf of those that love him."

"I have been young and now I am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken or his seed begging bread."

You can go on from there. The Bible is filled with such statements. Then in the life of Christ we have many examples. One woman pressed through the crowd to touch His garment. Jesus blessed her. He did not rebuke her, though she selected a very busy time for Him. Children were brought to Him. For some reason the disciples thought they were worrying Him. They rebuked these parents. Jesus took the children in His arms and blessed them. Why should we get the idea that we cannot approach God? Have we been painting the wrong picture of Him? Why should we get the idea that because of the fear of displeasing Him we should refuse to ask? Here again we might ask, have we pictured Him wrong?

Surely we should dread to displease God. One who deliberately does so is placing his soul in danger. But I do not believe that God's displeasure rests on the person who trusts Him completely, and though weak and unworthy, stumbles along rendering whatever service He can. God has a way of turning failure into success, and of exalting the humble. So we need not fear the outcome if God is pleased with us.



## The Light Of A Candle

Someone has said, "There is not enough darkness in the whole world to put out the light of a single candle." The truth of this statement anyone can see, but the lessons that are taught are missed.

There is not enough temptation in the world to destroy one Christian who will refuse to be destroyed. One of the most comforting verses in the Bible is 1 Corinthians 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." When we fall away it is not because some power greater than the power that is in us gained the mastery against our will, but because we allowed it to have the power over us. "Ye are of God, my little children, and have overcome the world: because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 Jno. 4:4).

These statements assure us that we will be able to stand regardless of what comes. But why do so many fall? The reason is not to be found in God's provision for us, or in the strength of the opposition, but within our own lives. We have refused the strength of the Lord. While we were busy with other matters the spirit grew weak. Nothing can remain strong and leave off that which is necessary for strength. As we forsake the study of the word of God and refuse to develop the spirit, we naturally grow weaker. The devil is aware of this weakness and knows exactly where to strike. When temptation comes we fall. Someone says we were overcome by temptation, but it is not true. We were actually overcome by our own neglect.

There is not enough misery in the world to put out the light of one Christian who will not have his light put out. That there is a lot of misery in the world no one will deny. We all have our troubles. Some may have more than others. But everyone

has experiences that are not welcome. Unfortunately some people allow themselves to feel sorry for self; to think constantly of these troubles, and the more they think of them the less they think of God. Soon God is blamed for the trouble. Actually it is not true. No one can prove by the Scriptures that God deliberately sends grief into the life of any person. A little checking up would reveal that we are largely responsible for our difficulties. Few people know that, however, and must find someone to blame. If no person is found God can always be blamed. So we fall away and actually make God responsible for it. That which caused the fall, however, did not come from God, neither was the misery capable of making us fall, but neglect and the wrong use of self brought it all on us. Had we remained as loyal to God as we should we would never have been overcome.

There is not enough criticism in the world to cause one to fall. To be sure everyone who tries to do anything will be criticized. But criticism is only the other fellow's opinion of what we are, and need not have any lasting effect on our behavior. The fact that one criticizes you does not mean what you are doing is wrong. It may mean that he does not know as much about what you are doing as you do. One need not give up, or be hurt, because someone criticizes what he does. If we will be sure we are right, then go ahead regardless of the reaction of others, we can never lose. After all, God is still our protector in these matters as in others. "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Pet. 3:12).

God's children have no darkness to fear as long as they keep their candle burning.

## The Line Is Busy

Someone once wrote, "Keep the telephone of your mind forever transmitting thoughts of love, purity, joy and health; then when disease, sorrow, lust, or hate try to call you up, they will always get the busy signal. After a while they will forget your number."

Paul wrote, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

It is unnecessary to prove that the mind controls every movement of the body. School children soon learn this truth. Paul knew that if the Lord's people kept their minds busy thinking of things that are right they would never do wrong. There is no such thing as one doing without thinking. When you hear someone say, "I said that before I thought," you can just mark it down that it is not true. One who does not think unkind things will not speak unkindly. One who does not allow the mind to entertain evil will not be doing evil. I do not know of anything that we are more careless about than our thinking. This carelessness is the basis for all our evil. Why anyone should ever think he can allow unholy thoughts to stay in his mind without ever being guilty of unholy actions, is more than I can see. Surely we have not been reasonable about this matter. Because the mind is beyond the view of the eyes of others does not mean that it can harbor evil thoughts and be safe.

In the first place, the mind is not beyond the vision of God. He knows what is in the heart. In the second place, evil has no intention of staying in the mind without some outward expression. The devil knows what he is doing when he persuades us to allow evil thoughts to remain in the mind. He knows that they

will find some way of expression. Hence, we should "gird up the loins of our minds."

It is unfortunate that many of us have not realized that evil thoughts can be so far removed from our minds that they will not return. Yet it is easy to see. Most any habit is a matter of mind. We have had experiences with habits. Once we made up our minds to get rid of some habit we have watched it drift farther and farther from our thinking. Soon we go for days without thinking of it, then months, and finally it seldom if ever returns. A person can even forget the evil that others have done to him in this manner. Thoughts that are not allowed to remain in the mind and that are not entertained will depart. We also fail to realize that evil thoughts, chased out of the mind, must be replaced with good thoughts. The mind does not remain empty. As long as we live and are conscious, we will think. And even when we are not conscious a certain amount of thinking goes on. There is no such thing, then, as getting rid of an evil thought and leaving the mind blank. In fact the only way we can crowd out the evil is by moving the good in. Enough good moved in will get rid of the evil. Evil thinking will try to return, but if the good is strong enough to shut the door, evil will go away.

This is not vain thinking or writing. These are facts, and Paul meant for us to understand them when he said concerning things that are right, "Think on these things."

## Standing Among You

When the people asked John why he baptized since he denied being the Christ, John answered, "There standeth one among you, whom ye know not. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me."

Of course there are several valuable lessons in this statement, but we are interested in his statement that Christ was standing among them.

There is no doubt in the minds of Bible students that Christ has been here always. He was with God in the beginning. His earthly existence places no limit on His presence. He was with God when God said, "Let us make man in our image." Neither is there any doubt that Christ is present now. A physical body was not necessary to His being here before He was born of the flesh, and a physical body is not necessary to His being here now. When Jesus said, "I am with you even unto the end of the world," and "where two or more are gathered in my name there am I in their midst," He was announcing His intention to abide with His people until the end. Hence Jesus is here. He stands among us. He walks among the golden candlesticks.

Jesus is here to encourage us. What can give us more strength than the realization that the Son of God is our guest? He who has always influenced His Father in man's behalf has lost none of that influencing power. Thus, it is encouraging to know that One who was "tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin," is in our midst, and that He speaks to God in our behalf. Those of us who become discouraged have forgotten this. We need to increase our own faith when we are discouraged. We need the kind of faith Paul had when he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Not only is Jesus here to encourage us, but He is also here to help us. He knows we need Him and He wants us to see that need. Without Him we can do nothing. With Him all things are

possible. Any failure on our part will come from reckoning without Him. There is no failure when Christ goes with us. "If God be for us who can be against us?"

We need the Lord's help in everything we do. We need His help in building a home. No home is what it should be without Christ. We need His help in building a business. We cannot divorce the influence of Christ from our business life. To build a business without Him is certain failure. We may succeed as far as the world is concerned, but in real values we will fail. We need His help in building our own lives. The most empty life ever lived is the life without Christ. The most full and complete life is the life that Christ directs. There is no way to measure our need of Christ's help. We need Him in everything we are, everything we hope to be, and everything we try to do. Christ is present to help us, and will help us if we will let Him.

Christ is also here to strengthen us. While living in the flesh He realized the need of strength. God sent angels to strengthen Him. Thus Christ can know our needs. His strength is so great that He said when He held His sheep in His hands "no man can pluck them out." Paul declared He is "able to keep us." We have no fear of failure, of falling, or of being lost when we follow Him. Of course, this does not mean we cannot fall, or be lost, but it does mean this cannot happen so long as we will walk with Him. Whatever comes to destroy us will not have power over us if we accept the strength He offers.

This is one of the greatest promises our Lord made. While we live on the earth, and are in search of a better country, the Christ who has lived in both places is among us. We ought to appreciate His presence.

## Because He Was Afraid He Began To Sink

“Peter answered him and said, Lord if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the waters. And he said, Come. And Peter went down from the boat, and walked upon the waters to come to Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and took hold of him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Matt. 14:28-32).

This is one of the most interesting incidents in the ministry of Christ. Several truths stand out for which men in various schools of thought have searched diligently throughout the years. After much searching men have reached conclusions that Jesus taught nearly two thousand years ago. Let's find some of those lessons.

In the first place Peter actually walked on the water. Jesus told him to do it, and so long as he kept his eyes on Christ he did it. Walking on the water was a small matter, but Peter's faith in Christ was something to be concerned about. Christ has not told us to walk on the water, so we know better than to try it, but He has told us to do many things that require such faith. Whatever Christ tells a person to do, he can do it if he will not lose sight of the Christ. Christ does not demand the impossible. When He said, “All things are possible to the one who believes,” He was teaching a very valuable lesson concerning the power of faith. The power of believing can be seen in every phase of life.

A man who makes his living selling goods to others was some time ago talking about the necessity of one first being sold on the goods before he could sell others. He also mentioned that one must first believe in himself. The power of faith in self has been demonstrated in all walks of life. Many times the difference between one who succeeds and one who fails is

only belief in self. If we can see this lesson in personal matters we can also see it in other things. No man can limit the power of faith. Of course, we know that "faith only" never produced anything. But believing has its power when we are doing anything for the Lord.

When he became afraid Peter began to sink. He took his eyes off the Lord. He began to look at the waves instead of the Master of the waves. His fear overcame his faith. Failure will always be the result. I suppose there is nothing so destructive as fear. It is one thing Jesus tried to remove from the hearts of His followers. He once said, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." To fully understand this statement will remove fear. Fear paralyzes, destroys and overcomes. Fear creates what it fears. Hence men are often destroyed by nothing but fear. Depressions are brought on by fear. Fear contributes much to life and death. Diseases are actually brought on by fear. The mind often loses its balance because of fear. The fears that haunt the lives of people generally are legion, but all unnecessary. The Lord knows how to cast out fear. In fact the presence of fear is a sure sign of lack of faith. "Be not afraid" was a favorite statement of Christ.

When fear is allowed to enter the heart doubt creeps in. Jesus asked Peter, "Why did you doubt?" If Peter had not removed his eyes from the Christ and looked at the waves he would never have doubted. But when he did he was bound to sink.

Let us learn the lessons in the simple illustration for they will mean much to us in our living for Christ. They will mean a lot to us in our program of work for Christ. Let us first believe in Christ. Let us believe that He is greater than the world; that He overcame the world. Let us believe in our own ability to do great things for Him if we trust Him. Then let us keep our eyes on Him, instead of the world, and we can be sure of safety.



## A Safe Place

Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will thy heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-22).

Nothing is safe on the earth. Any way you look at it, you can be sure of nothing that has to do with the world. Not even a good name is safe when someone decides to indulge in slander and use you to satisfy his animal desires. There is no place where we can be sure that we may place our savings and know they are safe. When so many people lost money during the time when banks were falling apart, the government decided to insure savings up to a certain amount. But that is only mental relief. We say our savings are as safe as the government. But what of it? Our government is still untried as compared with some others that existed much longer than our own. The day may come when we belong to the government ourselves. Who knows what the future holds? But if we do not live to see the day when savings and property are taken over, we can be sure that all that we have will be taken from us when we die. There is no safety here. Sooner or later, in one way or another, each of us will part with all that he has.

It is a kind act of God that He has provided a place where we may store treasures and feel secure as we do so. Of course, this place of storage will not take just any kind of thing that we may consider a treasure. Treasures are stored there as a result of what we do down here. We cannot buy indulgences from God. We can do good down here, however, and have Him remember it with a blessing up there. We cannot send a few thousand dollars up there, for we will have no use for dollars in eternity. But we can use our money down here in the proper

way, and thus send good deeds ahead that will buy for us blessings throughout eternity. I can know that every good deed is safe.

We often labor in vain down here. Many things we plan and do are just so much wasted energy. But not so when we serve the Lord. Paul said, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). This is easily understood when we remember that nothing is impossible with God. He is capable of making big things out of things that are seemingly small. He can take foolishness and confound the wisdom of men. He can take weakness and yet be stronger than man. God has His own way of making us succeed when we serve Him faithfully. He deals with us on a basis that the world has never understood. He says that we gain life by losing it; that we go up when we get down; and that we get by giving. He has made real life to come out of death. He sees good deeds and grants rewards where men have never been able to behold goodness. That is why we have no fear in our service to Him. Jesus gave us a picture of God's care in our behalf as One who watches the sparrows when they fall and counts the very hairs on our heads.

In all the words of Christ there are none that can afford us more encouragement than these. On every hand we see loss, decay and death. Men seem to get a hold on life only to feel it slip out of their grasp. They heap up a little treasure and then find it is gone. But the servants of God are continually sending treasure on to God in the form of good deeds and liberality, and in so doing are sure that all they send will be waiting for them multiplied by God's own hands a hundred-fold. What a blessing we have in our security with God!

## Trouble Enough

In Moffitt's translation of the Bible we find a most interesting rendering of the last verse of the sixth chapter of Matthew:

"So never be troubled about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. The day's own trouble is enough for the day."

The last statement in the King James Version is "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." You can see that the idea is the same in either reading and both say that today's trouble is enough for today.

The habit of borrowing trouble is universal and very destructive. It will not only ruin one's health, but it will destroy his ability to do well. You can see that if each day has enough trouble for that day, that anything beyond that is an overload. Too many of God's people are violating His "load law." Just because God does not conduct weighing stations down here to see how much load we carry, does not mean that He is not aware of the load we have.

While we may look to our fellows for some sympathy in this matter, it is of no value to expect sympathy from God. His answer is, "I told you not to try so heavy a load." By such actions we violate the law of God and then expect Him to feel sorry for us rather than condemn us. If a vehicle has a load limit and one insists on violating that limit, can he blame the manufacturers if his carriage breaks under the strain? How, then, can one expect any favors from God when he exceeds the limit God has appointed? There are people who seem not to realize that God has commanded us not to be anxious about tomorrow. It is difficult to believe that so many otherwise good people would wilfully disobey this law if they actually knew it was there. Perhaps the Sermon on the Mount needs to be studied again.

I know what many people are thinking as they read along these lines. You are saying, "But I don't have anything to

worry about today. If I don't worry about something that may happen, then I can't worry."

Perhaps it is just that which Jesus had in mind when He advised us about these matters. If we do what God wants us to do today, and make sensible plans in the direction of the future, how the future turns out is His responsibility. There are few people who have had their anxieties come true. Most of our troubles in such matters were entirely unnecessary. They only served to weaken us for the task which is our reason for existing. At best anxiety did not help the matter, and we wasted time, depleted our resources and destroyed our usefulness. The devil got what he wanted and God was disappointed in us. Sectarianism laughed with glee and pushed ahead while so-called conservative saints wrinkled their brows, frosted their heads and watched the cause of Christ suffer one setback after another. It is not a pretty picture, but it is a true one where people will not trust God and insist on borrowing trouble from every source possible.

There is a freedom which few have experienced, but which is the heritage of every son and daughter of God Almighty. That is freedom from anxiety and imagined disappointment. It will serve to lighten every load and light up every path. It will assure success and that much easier than we have imagined. But many have not enjoyed this experience because of an overload which was unnecessary from the beginning.

Let us read again the Lord's language about today and tomorrow, and determine in our hearts that we will never again overload.

## Profitable Godliness

Paul said, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8).

This divides our subject into two thoughts. One concerns the present and the other is regarding the future.

One of the questions often asked, though not so often put into words, is, "What profit is there in living like God wants us to live?" We see around us so many wicked people who are prospering. That is, they are receiving much of what we call prosperity. We see also that it is sometimes difficult for a Christian to be what we call prosperous. Thus, we conclude that, as far as the world is concerned, Christianity is a total loss.

But let us notice some of the statements that would cause Paul to affirm that godliness is profitable in this life:

"Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psa. 37:4).

"For the Lord is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psa. 84:11).

Many statements like this are found in the Old Testament, and the history of God's dealings with His people prove that they always prospered.

Does the New Testament affirm this also? Listen to some statements Christ made:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). The "these things" that are mentioned were clothing, food, shelter, and drink. Begin reading with verse 24 and you will get the whole story.

"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or

father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold *now in this time*, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers; and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mk. 10:29-30).

Now notice another by the apostle Paul: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8: 28). There is no doubt in my mind that the "all things" mentioned here include the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In fact they may be the sum and substance of the "all things." That being true, however, what could a person want more than having these three on his side? What could harm him with Them working for him?

These verses, both from the Old and New Testament, get before us God's promise. There is profit in this world in living a godly life. Those who would deny it have never lived the kind of life God could bless, or else have misunderstood the Lord. I obligate myself to find the flaw in any case that might be presented to prove this truth to be wrong. Sometimes men cite cases to prove the opposite of the Lord's promise, but without being fully acquainted with the illustration they use. When God makes a promise, we can rely upon it. "For God is not slack concerning his promises."

Then godliness is profitable in the world to come. This needs very little discussion. We have always believed this. Man is saved eternally as a result of living as God would have him live. If we can only make ourselves believe the first half of this statement, as thoroughly as we believe the latter half, we will be much better Christians, know more real prosperity, and life will be more pleasant for us all.

## The Eyes Of The Lord

**“The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3).**

I was told once of a preacher having a large eye painted which was looking at you any way you might turn. He placed this large eye over the pulpit with these words under it: “There is an all seeing eye watching you.” Although I did not see it, I was told that it was quite a gruesome sight. People were ill at ease when trying to worship there. I will admit that such does not seem proper in the house of God, but that the eyes of the Lord are upon us is clearly taught throughout the Bible. There is something both good and bad in the thought.

By saying there is something bad in the idea, I mean for those whose actions are not in keeping with the law of God. It is something we have not fully believed. We have rather lived as though we thought God only watched us while we were at worship. Surely He is watching then, but He is also watching in every place. God is as much aware of our business dealings as He is of our worship. We do not hide our actions from Him. He is as aware of what we do at home as in His house. God hears what families say to each other. He knows what kind of recreation is permitted in the home. He is fully aware of the reading material we have in our homes. He sees us when we attend the parties our neighbors have, or our business demands. Although we may not walk with God in the most strict sense, still He is watching in every place. No evil word or act escapes His all seeing eye. It ought to make us all very careful in everything we say and do regardless of where we are.

When I say there is something good about this idea, I mean for those who are honestly trying to serve God. No good escapes His eye. It is impossible for men to know all the good that is done by the saints of God. It would be wrong for one to be always telling others of every little act of kindness that he

does. God's people feed many hungry souls without anyone being aware of it but the two and God. They do many kind things for others, render aid in all ways that human beings can assist others, without it becoming general knowledge. But God knows. That is all that really matters anyway. I would be afraid to face God with only the good that others have seen me do. I am glad that the knowledge of others concerning my goodness will not be that which will face me in the judgment. God sees even the smallest matter and will reward us accordingly.

There is still another encouraging thought here. Not only are the eyes of the Lord in every place beholding the good and the bad, but "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. 16:9). I get from this a most strengthening thought. I see the goodness of God waiting for me in every place. I see a God who is capable of helping us to make joy out of grief and light out of darkness. I see a God who can help me turn losses into gain and weakness into strength. I also see a God waiting at every turn of the way with a blessing that my soul needs.

What a blessed favor to be able to serve a God whose eyes are always upon us and who is constantly searching for some good thing to do for us! Surely those who have turned the eyes of God in their direction are blessed indeed.



## The Meaning Of Your Name

A very interesting poll was taken some time ago concerning some writing that was done which appeared in a religious paper. Several preachers were asked the same question since they read more religious papers than most other people. The answers that were given reveal how much a name can come to mean because of the history of the one who wears that name. One was asked, "Did you read the articles?" His answer was, "No, when I saw who wrote them I did not waste my time. I know him to be insincere and unholy. He is too much of a politician to be a Christian. Hence I did not read what he wrote."

When another was asked the same question, he answered, "No, I did not read them because I knew there would be nothing in them. The man is not capable of saying or writing anything worth reading and when I saw who wrote them, I turned the page."

Still another said, "I did not read them, but someone told me about them, and I knew that they were designed for a certain set-up in the place where they were created, that there was a political 'hope you call me for a meeting' background, so I did not read them."

Many answers like these were given. Few were found who read what was written.

Now what creates a situation like that described above? Surely it is not that men are born to think evil of their fellow-men. No doubt the background would give the answer if one knew all the details. The public cannot be fooled all the time. People often know more than they are willing to admit. Because people do not constantly tell one they are aware of his weakness does not mean that they are not aware of it. Ignorance of their knowledge of the matter will cause one to continue on an evil course until his name comes to stand for noth-

ing except "white-wash" or "politics." Then he is dropped by thinking people and he never knows why because he is never able to, or will never admit his weakness.

When you consider this in your own life it becomes altogether serious. As a Christian, what does your name stand for? If someone who is not a Christian should be told that you are one, what reaction would they have if they really knew you?

It is surprising what some names come to mean. Jonah had a lovely name when he was a baby. The word originally meant "peace," "a dove," but mothers are not naming their children Jonah today because of what it has come to mean. Who changed its meaning? Jonah did by his unfaithfulness to God. I am sure there is nothing wrong with the name Judas, but the only thing I ever knew that bore that name in modern times was a mule, and I wondered if that was not being unkind to dumb animals. Who ruined the name Judas? Judas did.

Now make your own personal application. If your name does not stand for honesty, uprightness, loyalty, gentleness, and goodness, who is responsible for it? There is no reason for our thinking others can be responsible. Men may slander your good name and they may do some harm in so doing, but they cannot do any lasting harm. Unless you do it yourself, your name need not come to mean anything bad. You are the only person who can change the meaning of your name. If it has always stood for loyalty to Christ, righteous judgment in dealing with men, emotional stability, then it need not ever mean any less than this. You can keep it that way.

The sad part of this, or at least the saddest, is that names once gone are difficult to revise. We do not live long enough to do it. Hence, a name that could have stood for something goes down in history as unstable, unrighteous, and not trustworthy. What is the meaning of your name?

## Idle Words

**“But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12:36).**

The term “idle words” here signifies wicked, malicious, injurious, slandering, impious words. This does not refer to innocent talk on subjects secular and social. It gets before us a very serious matter that should be understood, because many innocent people are going into the judgment without realizing they have been guilty of this crime. Some people who would shudder if obscene language should be used in their presence are guilty of this crime. The Lord condemned it as severely as He did any use of the tongue in an improper manner. It involves the same thought as expressed by the Lord through James in James 4: 11. “Speak not evil one of another, brethren.” In other words, “speak nothing to the injury of any one.”

The most common method of doing harm to people and nations is the practice of using idle words. By means of propaganda many countries have been divided and lost. In fact no more effective means have been discovered than the use of words. A false statement will lead to a false conclusion. The statement itself may have enough truth in it to make it sound good, but it may have enough falsehood to make it all false. A little leaven spoils the whole lump. A little error mixed with truth will destroy the truth. “He that keepeth the whole law, yet offends in one point, is guilty of all.”

This is not only a common evil among people of the world, but it is satan’s most effective weapon against the church. He can usually find someone who possesses a heart filled with envy who is willing to be his agent in passing out false propaganda. This agent will look for followers. Usually he has his own method of securing hearers, maybe through appeals to sympathy. When followers are found, or some weak brother is

located, small statements are dropped. He in turn takes them to others. In this way satan has divided many churches and hopes to continue to do so. Simple minds can be used in this way to spread a doctrine that was false from the beginning. The creator of the false doctrine draws back into the shadows and allows someone else to do his dirty work. In this way congregations have been destroyed, false doctrines allowed to creep in, and satan has taken over where the Lord once reigned.

These are serious matters that thinking people can see where many others cannot. When a church prospers, grows stronger and larger, treats its preacher right, preaches the gospel of Christ without fear or favor, stays out of political matters and runs its own business, satan is not pleased. Hence he will see that someone comes to town and plants a few rumors in places he considers weak in order to stop the progress of the church. All growing churches have had this experience and will continue to have it. Those that love the Lord, do what is right, remain united and run their own business will grow stronger and be a credit to the cause of Christ. Others will finally be destroyed.

May the Lord help us to be neither the giver nor receiver of idle words. May He help us to continue to press forward in His service, ever mindful of His will and unmoved by the ways of the world as we accomplish great things for Him. He has brought us this far because we listened to Him only, and He will continue to bless us if we continue to listen to Him.

## Forgiveness

**“They who forgive most, shall be most forgiven.”**

Although this statement comes from some writing of man it states exactly what we find in the Bible. Let us read a few verses that have to do with forgiveness.

**“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15). “Then came Peter to him, and said, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus said unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22). “But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mk. 11:26).**

We see by these statements that our forgiveness depends on our ability to forgive others. If we cannot forgive others we cannot be forgiven because God is going to deal with us as we are prone to deal with others. Jesus related a parable that illustrates how God feels in this matter:

**“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I**

will repay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matt. 18:23-35).

Sometimes you hear a person say, "I just can't forgive a certain person for what he has done." Before we make a statement like that we should think seriously about it. Sometimes we can do what we do not believe is possible. Have we tried to forgive the person? Unfortunately we have associated forgiveness with forgetfulness and have believed that unless we can erase the memory of the evil committed that we have not forgiven. This is not the proper way to view the matter. Forgiveness is not forgetfulness. The Lord does not demand that the memory be completely destroyed when He declares we must forgive. I am sure God has not forgotten the many sins I have committed, but He does not hold them against me any more. Such is the true nature of forgiveness. If we forgive a person of a debt which he owes, he does not owe it any more. I may always recall that he one time owed it, but I am aware of the fact that, having been forgiven, he does not owe it any more. If he has done me wrong and I have forgiven him I do not hold him to account for what he has done. I may forever remember what he did but not in the sense that I still hold him accountable for it.

We need to learn to forgive in order that we might be forgiven. We need to know what forgiveness is so that we may know how to forgive.

## A Cure For Loneliness

There are many lonely people in the world. Places and things seem to have little effect on this loneliness. One of the most lonely places to some people is a large city where there are many people and much to see. The stillness of the country with its different songs being sung by God's creatures breeds loneliness for some people. Most of us have tried to run away from loneliness, but have learned that it is something that you cannot escape by running. It is surprising, many times, to find how many people, though they may be blessed with much, are living a lonely life. The cure for this loneliness is expressed by John Oxenham. "Art thou lonely, O my brother? Share thy little with another!"

We need to share ourselves with others. A life lived alone is no pleasure to anyone, not even to the person who lives it. In each life there is something that another needs, and which the possessor cannot enjoy without sharing with others. The Lord realized this when He taught His disciples to let their lights shine before others. He was not thinking entirely of what others might gain as a result of the rays from that light, but also of the pleasure the one might find in lighting up the path of another.

If you will notice the Lord's instructions to His disciples, you will find that he was always concerned about their own happiness. Immediately after He had tried to drive the loneliness out of their hearts, which existed because of His going away, He gave them instructions to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." If they were prone to sit and brood over their personal loss in His going away, they could have no happiness. But if they would believe in his presence, though He had returned to God, and share this belief with those who were suffering from the lack of it, they would not only bring much happiness to others, but they would

also drive away the gloom that existed in their own lives. Regardless of who you are, you have something that others need. It is not good sense to think that your littleness, or lack of wisdom, makes you unable to share something valuable with others. Many people in the world, perhaps some you know best, are longing for the good life that you may share with them. Christianity under a bushel is of benefit to no person.

We need to share what we have with others. Of course, there is a place and time for this. We cannot escape the fact that we have a personal, person to person responsibility toward others, but our greatest obligation toward others is fulfilled in the combined efforts of many through the church which Christ designed for that purpose. It should be a joy to God's children to know that through their united efforts they can thus share what they have with others. In this way much is done that one could not do alone regardless of how much he might long to do it. By erecting edifices in which to worship and in which others can worship, by feeding the hungry, and preaching the gospel to those who live in darkness, we share what we have with others.

We need to share our information with others. This is true both in and out of the church. In days gone by God said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." This is the answer to most of the ills of God's people as well as those who are not His people. Many on the outside are not obeying God because they do not know how. We can tell them what to do to please God. We should never allow an unsaved person to associate with us without our sharing information we have received from God concerning the salvation of his soul. But we should also be very careful to share our information with our brethren. Many in the church would be happier if they knew how to be. The only real happiness that comes to those who serve the Lord is found in service. Hence, we should show them how to serve. Strengthen them where they are weak, encourage those who are discouraged, and educate those who, for lack of understanding, fail in their duty to God.

Those who learn this lesson will never be lonely. Truly sharing with others will drive loneliness from our own hearts.



## Behaving Wisely

“And Saul was afraid of David, because the Lord was with him, and was departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the Lord was with him. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them” (1 Sam. 18:12-17).

There are a number of valuable lessons in this text. First, we are confronted with the problem of jealousy, its cause and action. Saul hated David because he was jealous of him. David had done him no wrong. In fact he had saved Saul's kingdom. Had it not been for David Saul would no doubt have been slain long before this. But it is hard sometimes to be happy over the success of another, even though the other may have been our benefactor. In fact most jealousy involves those who have been the most help to us. Because of his jealousy Saul sought to get rid of David. Doing so would not bring him happiness, but he did not know it. One who is jealous feels his inferiority of others. He seeks to destroy them because he is miserable so long as one better than he exists. If he cannot destroy him physically he will try to do it otherwise. Many stories are started about people because of jealousy. In fact you can mark it down that when you hear one person constantly running another down, the chances are jealousy is at the bottom of it. Jealousy seeks to destroy any superiority.

The second valuable lesson I see in this is the fact that one who does right is to be feared, not destroyed. It is next to impossible to destroy the usefulness of one who lives right. I do not say that he cannot be hurt. It may be that he will not be permitted to do his best, but one who behaves wisely is to be

feared and respected. There is no better defense than living right. No man has ever amounted to much that has not felt the sting of those who would destroy him because they have not been so fortunate. But the man who keeps himself pure and goes about the Lord's business, is to be feared and not hurt. Perhaps it is that fear that one has for another that causes the jealous one to growl, snarl, and snap, when speaking of the other.

The third lesson we see in this text is that one who behaves wisely has the Lord with him. The Lord will make him prosper. His work shall not be destroyed by his enemies. He shall go from strength to strength. "If the Lord is for us who can be against us?" Whose cause can prosper that is opposed to the Lord? No cause can prosper that fights God and His people. I do not mean that some harm cannot be done, but we cannot reckon until the end. View the lives of those who have been jealous of the Lord's people and see what end they come to. To view them in only one day might be to get the idea that they prosper in their meanness, but take a long look and it will be a different picture. Saul fought David because of jealousy. But in the end Saul lost his life and David became king. You cannot fight against God and win. Neither can you fight against God's people and win because God will not forsake His people. The only sure life one can live is a life with God, in which he remains true to God in every way. That man will receive no lasting harm.

## Is The World Getting Better?

It is not difficult to find people in our day who will tell you without any hesitation that the world is "going to the dogs." On the other hand there are some who claim that the world is getting better with every generation. We can find plenty on both sides of this question in the writings of men.

I do not believe either view is correct. I certainly do not believe the world has "gone to the dogs," but neither do I believe that it is showing a lot of improvement.

I believe the correct question is not so much what is happening to the world as what is happening to me. Am I getting better? If I can find the answer to this question I will not need the answer concerning the world.

Are the experiences I am having with life giving me a more broad and charitable outlook? Am I learning more about life and about my fellow man? Surely the experiences we have in our dealings with others should teach us better methods of dealing with people. They should help us to make life better for others as we more completely understand their problems.

Do the things that happen to me which are unpleasant, and the disappointments I meet in life, teach me sympathy for others who are likewise having their difficulties? After all, the world has a way of dealing with us all in about the same way. I doubt that there are any people who do not suffer disappointments and disagreeable experiences as they go through life. Although the troubles of others may not come to them in the same way they come to me, they have the same reaction in their lives. These things can either give me a broader outlook on life and help me in assisting others to find happiness, or they can make me sullen and resentful. There should be some education in them.

Are the successes in my life giving me inspiration to pause long enough to offer a helping hand to someone who has not

yet reached the top of the grade? A stretched out hand can mean a lot to a person who is struggling up the pathway of life. A little assistance from someone may be the difference between success and failure. Surely the need of the hand of another should help me to realize that someone may also need my hand.

As I look into my own heart can I truthfully say that it is growing better as it grows older? "Experience is the best teacher," we are told. Have the years taught me the value of growing better? Am I a better friend to others than in years gone by? Can I truthfully say that I am a better Christian today than I was a few years ago? The Good Book teaches me that I should grow better as I grow older. Experience is always there to help me if I will only receive the help.

I believe if we can say "yes" to these questions the world will take care of itself. After all I am a part of the world. I cannot be responsible for all of it. It is entirely too large for me to influence it for either good or bad. But I can take care of myself. If enough of us do that there will be no question as to which direction the world is going.

## **“O Little Town Of Bethlehem”**

**“O little town of Bethlehem!”**

Those words have come to mean a lot to us. They are the opening words of one of our favorite hymns. They have served as the title for sermons, for books, and for many articles. There is something magic about the words. They create so many memories and arouse sacred thoughts.

Bethlehem! What the word must have meant to Mary! Before her son was born there it was just a small town within the country where she lived. It was the place to go when it was necessary to enroll for taxes. That is why she was there the night her son was born.

But she would not remember it as the place to enroll. I am sure she even forgot it as the city of David. To her it was the birthplace of her son. That meant everything. You and I have often thought of the modern conveniences of which she was deprived. No hospital. No electric lights. No doctor. No nurse. No bed. Just a stable and a manger and some straw. But there is where her son was born. I doubt that she thought much of the things of which she was deprived. Mothers are like that. The joy of a new-born child seems to erase the trouble they cause. She would always remember Bethlehem as a great place in her life. As the greatness of her son became known she no doubt told of his humble birth.

To Joseph the city might take on another meaning. Of course, he would remember it with much joy because his son was born there. But if his wife would have better care at home I am sure it pained him very much to see her give birth to her son in such an humble environment. The Bible does not tell us how he felt about the matter. I am sure there was much wisdom in sparing us a look into all the secret chambers of their hearts that night. Whether he ever talked with Mary about the matter or not, we will never know, but all fathers and husbands can

realize some of the emotions that crowded into his heart that night.

The shepherds, abiding in the fields, found new hope in what was taking place in Bethlehem. They had an experience that night which few mortals have ever known. They talked with an angel from God about what was happening in Bethlehem. They had the rare privilege of hearing a great host of heavenly beings praise God in song. How the mountains and valleys must have rung that night as the heavenly music floated through the air. They were singing about God's glory, about peace on the earth and about good will to men. They were so inspired that they just had to go into Bethlehem and see what the angel was talking about. So they left their flocks and went to see the baby. Then they told abroad what had happened in Bethlehem that night.

Heaven was hovering close to Bethlehem the night Christ was born. The Bible does not tell us anything about any expression from God directly, but He had His representatives there. Angels were in that country that night and they were always attending to the Father's business.

To the whole world Bethlehem has become the magic word that made man realize that salvation was possible. For what happened that night in Bethlehem was the fulfillment of the dreams of God's people throughout many generations. The hopes and fears of all the years had met in Bethlehem that night and the world could look forward to a better day.

Thank God for what happened in Bethlehem.

## Born Equal

I have often wondered about the statement that we are "born equal." In many respects it cannot be true. Some of us are born in poverty and some with every material need. Some are born into an environment above which they are forced to rise if they ever obtain any happiness, while others are born into an environment that produces happiness.

Actually that is only a political statement. As far as the things of the world are concerned I doubt that we can say that we are born equal.

There is one respect in which it is true. I believe people are born equal to the problems and opportunities that come their way. Believing in the keeping of the Almighty God, we cannot fail to see this. And it does not matter what the problems or opportunities are. Some are greater than others, but we are able to rise up and meet them. We will never be tempted above that we are able to bear. We have this promise in the Word of God. Also we can do what God expects us to do. I believe that promise is also in God's Word.

Jesus taught that men can be equal to their opportunities in a number of parables. Let us read a portion of one:

"For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto

me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawn: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents."

Notice in this story that they were given talents according to their several ability. In this sense they were born equal. The man with five talents was capable of handling that many. So was the man with two talents capable of handling two. Each was blessed because he handled his opportunities. The one talent man did not fail because he was not equal to his opportunity, but because he failed to use what he had.

So it is with every person who fails today. We may not be able to do as great service as some others, but we are equal to what God expects us to do. Let us be careful that we do not find an excuse, as did the one talent man, that will keep us from taking advantage of the opportunities we have. After all, God knows what is in us. In His sight we are equal if we do what we are capable of doing, regardless of how much the other person is able to do.



## Speaking The Truth

**“Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye the truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25).**

There are so many ways for a person to be a party to spreading something false about others that we sometimes are guilty of it without realizing what we are doing. Few people would just come right out and lie about another, but many of us might be guilty by refusing to speak the truth. Let us notice some of the thoughts contained in this verse, which was written for our learning.

I may refuse to speak the truth by giving some coloring to narratives. One of the most difficult tasks one ever faced was telling a thing exactly as he read or heard it. That is why so many times you hear the Bible misquoted. It is not the intention of the person to do this, but it is difficult to state the exact words of the text. We do not always listen to every detail of the things we hear. The result is we only get a part of the story. When we tell it the story may be as different from the original as day is from night. Then there is always the temptation to make our conversation a little more interesting by adding something to the story. Thus we may be guilty of speaking falsehood.

One of the most common methods of spreading falsehood is by catching up some flying rumor and spreading it. If it is found to be false we can always say, “I didn’t start it.” That will make no difference in the sight of God. Before I tell or write anything I should be sure that what I am saying is true. Too many people are constantly quoting someone they admire. If it happens to be a publication, then whatever is in it is law and gospel. If it is a person, then what he says must not be questioned. This is dangerous. It is always possible for wrong information to be passed out. If I take this misinforma-

tion and quote it I become guilty of lying. It does not matter whether I am responsible for the beginning of the rumor or not. I cannot afford to relate something that I do not know is true. It is surprising how much of our conversations consist of quotations of either what we have heard or read. Many false statements are carried about in this way by innocent people. I do not mean they are guiltless, but innocent in that they did not know they were spreading falsehood. I should always be sure that what I say is right before I say it.

Then I might be guilty of failing to speak the truth by disregarding my promises. One of the easiest ways to get rid of a situation is to make a promise. If I promise to do something, then I ought to do it. If it turns out that what I promised is wrong, then I certainly should apologize for it. It is wrong for me to leave the promise unfilled with no correction at all.

Then I might be guilty of falsehood by leaving a false impression. I might indicate something, but not come right out and say it. I could just say enough to get the person's mind going in the right direction, and leave it there. Of course, I did not come right out and say what he concluded, so I feel innocent in the matter. But I am not innocent. It is just as false to leave a false impression as it is to tell a falsehood. God's children should always speak the truth.

There are many ways to illustrate this thought, but you can go on from here.

## More Than Burnt Offerings And Sacrifices

“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mk. 12:28-34).

The scribe did not say there was no value in burnt offerings and sacrifices. They were still living in the Jewish age when those things were necessary. The old law did not pass away until Christ died. The commandments that required these offerings and sacrifices were still in force. But the offerings and sacrifices without the proper attitude in the heart were worthless. The chief mistake made by the Jews was in placing the act above the condition of the heart that should cause the act. Because of this their sacrifices became worthless to God. He refused to accept them. He would not have refused them had their hearts been right.

Jesus said, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matt. 23:23). What they were doing was right as far as the act was concerned, but what they left undone proved

that their hearts were wrong. No act was of value if the attitude was not right.

An application of this lesson to our present day is not difficult. It can be used to illustrate any action where the heart is wrong. For example, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, wrote much about liberality. As much as people need to give in order to please God, He taught that the gift without the proper attitude was worthless. He said give freely and cheerfully. In partaking of the Lord's supper, the Holy Spirit again called attention to the necessity of not only doing it but being right in heart when we eat the supper. "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:27-30).

The importance of being right in heart cannot be stressed too much. Many have gone to the extreme concerning the heart and have said that if the heart is right it does not matter about the action. There is nothing wrong with that statement if we understand that the heart cannot be right without the right acts. But if we understand that, we do not need the statement. In any service to God we are required not only to do what is demanded of us but also to have the proper attitude while doing what is demanded. Perhaps the reason so many of God's people get little pleasure from their service to Him is because they have thought only of what He said do while refusing to get the heart right. May God help us to remember that we should be right both in attitude and in action.

## Judging Others

Someone gave me this statement: "Judging others is a dangerous thing, not so much because you may make mistakes about them but because you may be revealing the truth about yourself." It is not difficult to find illustrations of this truth in the lives of men.

One person is guilty of wrong doing, but does not know that others are aware of it, and it is possible that they do not know it. But because of his own guilty feeling he will go about judging others until he finally tells on himself. Usually such a person can excuse himself for doing wrong if he can find someone else doing the same thing. If he is unable to find someone he will imagine that others are guilty and falsely accuse them. In doing this he usually selects someone about whose life there is no question and who stands higher in the estimation of others than he does. In this way he thinks he can exalt his own name and lessen his guilt. Thus he goes about suggesting that others are guilty until his own sin finds him out. He reveals the truth about himself while looking for evil in others.

Another does not want to go to the trouble of being a real Christian, but wants all the joys of Christianity without any of its burdens. He knows that he should be working for the Lord. All he does is go to worship. He never tries to save souls. He spends no time at all in strengthening weak brethren. If interest in the Lord's work is increased it will not be by his help. Knowing that he should be doing something for the Lord, but not wanting others to know he is guilty, he will go about judging others whom he does not believe are working. As a rule this kind of person will select a most trusted and respected person.

I remember being in a meeting where I saw a good example of this. We were conducting a vacation Bible school along with the meeting. This lady did not even have the energy to send her children to the school. She did nothing for either

the school or meeting, except to attend the night services, and usually she was late for this service. One night I was talking to the members of the church about the fact that they should be working for the Lord. After services she said to me, "I'm doing as much as the preacher." I knew that was not true, for I worked with him every day during the meeting. He was a tireless worker, but she was a chronic shirker. Had there been no other way of knowing that she was not at work for the Lord, she revealed it by judging another.

What a person is will always be known. He will tell on himself one way or another. He may get by with pretending for a time, but not for long. His real character has a way of making itself known. For this reason good men have nothing to fear. No doubt every good man has been judged falsely many times without even knowing about it. Time took care of it. Those who judged him falsely finally revealed what they were by their own judgment and his character stood out greater than it was before.

We need have no fear when others judge us if we know we are living as we should. But if we are guilty of judging others, while guilty of evil ourselves, we will reveal our wrong doing to others. No doubt Jesus had this in mind when He said, "Judge not that ye be not judged."

## Good Medicine

There is a cure for most diseases that is within reach of us all. Solomon said, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Prov. 17:22).

Physicians will tell us that the mental condition of a patient must be controlled if we are to be healthy. Thus, more teaching is being done concerning mental health.

This medicine Solomon talks about is good for those who give it and those who receive it. If a person will be merry in his dealings with others he will help them more than he can know. At the same time he is making his own day brighter. Things work out better when we are happy. Jesus wanted that kind of service even in liberality, so demanded that we give "cheerfully." If we are to receive any benefit at all from what we do we must do it with the right motive. No service should be rendered grudgingly. Neither God nor man receive any benefit from grudging service.

How to keep a good supply of this medicine is a problem with which all of us have to deal. "I know that being merry helps," says one, "but how can you be merry under all circumstances?" The answer is easy. Of course, after we find the answer we must do what we learn is necessary. Let us notice some things that will help us to have a merry heart.

In the first place we must be fair with ourselves. Sometimes we are much more unfair in dealing with ourselves than we are with others. The idea of "being good to yourself" is a good one. You deserve much that is good and should not deprive yourself of it. We must be wise, however, in choosing what is good, for if we are not we will find ourselves making the wrong choice. What we think is good often turns out to be bad. Here is where we need the help of God and the experiences of others. Certain things are forbidden by the Lord because He knows

they are not good for us. Some things experience proves to be bad for us. We cannot afford to be blind regarding either.

Then we must be fair with others. Much of our sadness comes as a direct result of the realization that we have not been as fair in our dealings with others as we could have been. If we could get rid of the remorse that follows mistreating those with whom we associate, we would rid ourselves of much unhappiness. Certainly, fair dealing with others will help, and not hinder, a merry heart.

More important than anything is our being fair with God. He is responsible for all good things in the world. Every good and perfect gift comes from Him. It is in His world that we live and in His presence we enjoy the blessings of His creative power. Also He has redeemed us from our sins. Paul said He bought us with a price, and that price is the blood of Christ. We belong to Him and should use ourselves in His service. It is certainly unfair to enjoy so many of God's blessings and the redemption of our souls, and be unfair in our dealings with Him. Most of us have known the hours of regret that we brought on ourselves because we failed the God who has never failed us. It is impossible to be merry while realizing our failure in this matter.

So the answer to the whole question is in dealing in fairness. If we are fair with man and God, we have a right to be merry. Since God has promised us sufficient protection and constant care, the future need not worry us. If we will believe in Him, lean upon Him, and do His will we can always have a merry heart. That is our best medicine.



## **“And Be Ye Thankful”**

**“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful” (Col. 3: 15).**

**Have you ever considered how much we have for which to be thankful? Is it possible that we take our blessings for granted without expressing proper gratitude for them? Would God say we are thankful?**

**If we have health we have much for which to be thankful. One must lose his health to realize how fortunate he was when he had it. We often deal with it as though we would never lose it. I heard a prayer not long ago in which a person used an expression often heard. He said, “We thank Thee for a reasonable portion of health.” A person who has that much has something for which to really be thankful. But even if we have lost our health we have reason to give thanks that we serve a God who does not desert us when we are not at our best. He has a way of turning such difficulty into blessings. The thorn Paul had to endure turned out to be a blessing. At the time he asked the Lord to remove it he did not understand that he was better off with it, but he learned later and thanked God for it.**

**If we have a good family we have much for which to be thankful. To be surrounded by people you love, and who in turn love you, provides blessings that nothing else can. Material blessings cannot make up for the lack of these. We often deal with our loved ones as though we would never be without them, but when we are without them we realize how much we have lost.**

**If you are a Christian you have much for which to be thankful. All that the world can provide cannot make up for the loss of Christianity. Not even a much loved and loving family can substitute for belonging to Christ. Man was made to give glory to God. If he has not learned how to draw near to**

God and have God draw near to him he has missed the greatest blessing God has provided. I sometimes wonder if we realize how fortunate we are. Is it possible that these great blessings may have become so common to us that we have learned to despise them? This happened to God's people in days gone by. They came to despise the sacrifice and service to God. The flesh took over and they longed for its satisfaction and forgot God. Later they realized what they had done, but it was too late for that generation.

This lesson concerning being thankful could go on for a long time, but you can go on from here.

I wonder if we express our gratitude in the proper manner? Is it possible that in this we give only lip service? Do we tell the Lord we are thankful for His goodness and then show our ingratitude by the way we live? Could you say the person who is not interested in the hour of Bible study or other services of the church is really thankful? Is it not a fact that thankfulness expresses itself in service? Surely a thankful person cannot find enough to do for his benefactor. If we spent every hour of every day in direct service to God and parted with all we have, we would still be far behind in payment for what He has done for us.

If there is any lesson we need to learn it is that we must show our gratitude in living according to God's will. How about you. Do you express your thanks only from your lips or also from your life?

## No Man Need Be Poor

**“No man is poor who has a sterling character and a heart of gold.”**

We can all have sterling character and a heart of gold. But they do not come without effort. Neither God nor man can give us a good character or heart of gold unless we are willing to receive them. If we are willing they are within our grasp.

Have you ever thought about the fact that most of our worries come about as a result of developing the wrong kind of character or the wrong kind of heart? If we could get rid of the worries that come to us as a result of wrong doing we would have our worry problem just about solved. In this way our character would be above reproach. But since it all begins in the heart, perhaps we should find some things the Bible says about it.

We might begin with Psalm 119:11. “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” God’s word does not dwell in the heart of the person who insists on sinning. It is not necessary to tell you why the word of God is not in the hearts of many of His people. They have not placed it there. God is not going to put His word into our hearts without any effort on our part. We need to study the word of God and meditate on it that it might dwell in our hearts.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). We might add to this a statement of Jesus: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Here is the place where all thoughts originate. From the heart will come all expression, good or bad. This expression may come in the form of words or actions, but they have their beginning in the heart. No wonder he said that out of the heart come the issues of life. Along with these two verses another statement of Jesus should be considered: “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:

34). Impure words do not come from a pure heart. The person whose heart is right does not think about unholy things and neither does he think evil thoughts about his fellow man. When you hear a person utter unkind words about another you can be sure that he is corrupt in heart. Pure hearts do not go around imagining ungodly things about others, or giving expression to them. In order to keep our hearts pure in such matters we need to follow the advice of the apostle Paul: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:7-8).

The same thought is expressed in a negative way by James: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish" (Jas. 3:14-15). Surely there is no man in all the world as poor as the person whose heart is not right.

But our statement in the beginning said no man was poor who has a sterling character and a heart of gold. Can you think of one richer than a person who possesses these two virtues? That man need not worry about what he has said about another, or done to another, for he has said nothing, nor done anything that is not right. His conscience will not bother him because he has cheated someone, for he has treated his fellow-man right in all his dealings. The difficulties that come from a frustrated life he never knows, for the peace of God guards his heart.

Is it not a pity that so many riches are within the reach of all of us, yet so few of us possess them?

## Cocks Crowing In The Night

“Jesus answered him, . . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice” (Jno. 13:38).

Peter had said he was willing to lay down his life for the Christ. Jesus then made the above statement. Mark records it, “Before the cock crow twice, thou shall deny me thrice.” It happened just as Jesus said. Before the morning, which usually was called the cock crowing, Peter had denied the Lord three times. He went out and wept bitterly.

Cocks crowing, dogs howling, doves cooing, and other sounds in the night have been signs to the superstitious throughout the years. This means nothing to us. But there is something in the incident that is interesting. How do you suppose Peter reacted in years to come when he heard a cock crow in the night? The Bible does not say. Yet because we know something of human nature you feel sure that no sound in the night caused more anxiety in the heart of Peter than the crowing of the cock. Since the cock crowed both at midnight and in the morning his feelings might be determined by the time he heard it. Of this one thing we are sure, that he did not allow it to overcome him, but rather moved a little closer to the Lord whom he had denied.

There are many such incidents in life that can serve us well here, if we are able to use them. When we are reminded of the unfortunate things of life we can draw closer to the Lord, try to put them out of our minds, or refuse to gain advantage because of them. The idea of trying to forget every unfortunate thing is not as wise as it sounds. God did not want the Israelites to forget, so said, “Remember all the way.” Paul did not want the Ephesians to forget, so asked them to remember what they were at one time. Forgetting former things will lead to neglect of God. We cannot afford it.

I do not know what you may be able to remember in your life, or what may recall it to your mind. It may be the death of one you loved. It may be that you almost lost your soul in some man-made body, and you shudder when you think of it. It may be some calamity that almost drove you away from the Lord. Or, it may be that the unfaithfulness of someone in whom you had confidence shook you for the moment. There may be many things that recall these occasions to your mind. Perhaps a place, a song, a certain time of the year. The things will differ with the individual and the incident. We may have very unwelcome feelings when memory runs back over these things we have tried so hard to forget. It will always be thus.

But we suggest a remedy. Stop trying to forget. You have overcome. You have tried to restore what you have torn down. Your life is better now. Perhaps you gained more from the experience than you know. I do not ask that you enjoy recalling the incident, but allow it to help you to draw a little closer to God. I do not even ask that you deliberately recall it, but that memory can serve well if we will but use it in shaping our lives for the future.

Life cannot all be pleasant. The Lord did not plan for it to be. He has not promised to remove the undesirable things of living. He has not even suggested that we ask for lighter burdens, but He has promised that the Lord will give us strength to stand up under any load. Our task, then, is to be sure that we devote our lives to His service. If we do this, He promises that good can come into our lives, even as a result of much struggle. And whatever the occasion, those who are faithful to Him can always draw closer, since they know He is near, when they hear cocks crowing in the night.

## Before And After

**“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest before hand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid” (1 Tim. 5:24-25).**

Nothing is stated more positively in the Bible than the fact that God is aware of what is going on among His people. He can see both the light and darkness, both the good and the bad. The largest deed does not escape His eye, and the smallest is seen as well as the largest. God knows what is going on.

God is aware of our sins. Many of our sins are hidden from the public, and may never be known by man. But God is aware of the sins we commit. Sometimes our sins are known and produce much evil even before we go to our reward. Some of our sins will continue to produce evil after we are gone. There is no way of measuring the effect of sin. Many generations may know difficulty as a result of a life of sin in one man. Nations have suffered for generations as the result of the evil of one generation. Sin has a way of finding us out. Few of us realize how serious it is to sin. When we do realize it, it will be too late for many of us.

But God is also aware of our good works. This is a very encouraging thought. Nothing that we do in this matter escapes His eyes. He is as fully aware of our good deeds as He is of our evil. He even notices the cup of cold water that is given with the right motive. He sees the sparrow fall and knows every time a hair falls from the head. He is as much aware of the two mites that are given as He is of the two million. Behind all of this living and giving is the motive in our own hearts. God knows the motive. For most of us this should be a bracing thought. Not many of us are ever able to have the opportunity to do something that will challenge the attention of the world. Big things just do not fit into our lives. We must be content in do-

ing what is generally considered the smaller things. These are seldom noticed by our fellows. If we go about telling them about them the motive is wrong. Even then it would make the wrong impression on those who heard us. So we must be satisfied in doing many little things that are never noticed and for which few ever say thanks.

But we do our works to be seen of God and He has promised that they are noticed by Him. Not only does He know but He sees to it that long after we are gone those good deeds continue to bear fruit. I am thinking right now of a fine couple who obeyed the gospel. One man and his wife were largely responsible for their conversion. This couple want to do right and the more of the right they learn the more they will do. They will be instrumental in bringing other souls to Christ. Those they bring will bring others. If the world continues to exist for a number of years no doubt thousands will be brought to Christ as a result of what was begun in the humble work of two of God's people. Thus long after they are gone their work will continue to bear fruit. What a glorious thought, to know that even when our bodies are mixing with the dust the work we did continues to bear fruit.

There is no reason for anyone saying, "I have lost my influence," or "I have done all the good I can." Even if time has slowed down activity, it does not stop the progress of influence. Good will continue to bear fruit. We never know how much good we do.



## Why Did You Smite Me?

**“The high priest therefore asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his teaching. Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world; I even taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews came together; and in secret spake I nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them that have heard me, what I spake unto them: behold, these know the things which I said. And when he had said this, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?” (Jno. 18: 19-24).**

This is one of the incidents in the life of the Lord that would make any man's blood boil who loves Him and knows what He suffered for our sakes. He said nothing that would give the officer excuse to slap Him. But that was true throughout His life. Every time they hit Him He was innocent, and they knew it.

These things happened a long time ago. Never will the Lord suffer on the earth again. Never will men be permitted to abuse His fleshly body. But this is not the only way to hurt the Christ. In all that they did against Him we have no record of His crying because of it, but He stood looking at the city where so much good had been done seemingly in vain, and He cried.

He is not beyond being hurt even today, though we cannot spit in His face as they did while He was here. Jesus said in His picture of the judgment, “In as much as ye did it not to these little ones ye did it not to me.” This shows us how we can be good to Him, or how we can do Him harm. He gave us an institution through which we can do Him good. When I am good to His people I am good to Him. When I am good to His church I am good to Him. For His church is His people. Every time I do anything that would destroy the peace of His people,

or that would divide His body, I am doing Him more harm than the man who smote Him.

Why people have not always been able to see this is more than I can see. Churches have often been divided and destroyed by those who claim to be working to secure the peace of the Lord's people. But those with intelligence can see that the claim is not true. Can one of the Lord's people say harmful things about another servant of the Lord and not speak harm of Christ? Can one of the Lord's servants harm another of His servants and still do no harm to Christ? Surely he cannot. The man who slapped Him is no worse than the person who would do Him harm today. But how can this be done? There are many ways. To refuse to work for Christ is to work against Him. Jesus taught this truth while He was here. He said those who were not for Him were against Him. There are many ways of doing evil to Him besides openly causing division among His people. Every unprofitable servant, every person who refuses to do his duty, is openly working against Christ. Do you suppose He ever feels like asking us, "Why do you do me this way?"

He said where two or three assembled in His name He was there. Paul warned us not to forsake this assembly. Do you suppose Jesus thinks the person loves Him who refuses to meet with Him? Does the person do Him less harm who forsakes the assembly than the man who slapped Him? What about the person who refuses to study His word? This question could also be asked concerning every other command of the Lord. We have no right or reason to forsake Him under any condition. Every time we do we only reveal to Him our lack of love and appreciation for His standing up under such conditions, suffering so much in order that we might have remission of sins.

Had we been there we would have wanted to punish that officer for slapping our Lord. We cannot read about it without wishing that something could have been done for Him. But let us be careful that we do not wound Him more by our failure to recognize His right to our service. May we so conduct ourselves that He will not ask, "Why did you smite me?"

## The Equation Of Balance

Life is not easy to understand. It cannot be understood without God. Because it is difficult to understand, and because people have so little faith in God, life is always tripping us up. There are so many things that we cannot understand. Because we cannot understand we often feel like giving up. For example, some cannot see why wars are allowed to happen, or why criminals are allowed to do their dirty work. It is difficult to understand why an innocent person suffers and why people who love each other are separated. And always we say, "Why did this have to happen to me? What have I done to deserve this?"

In the first place we need to understand that God is not responsible for anything bad that happens to us. We may find it difficult to locate the cause of our trouble, but we can be sure that the trouble is not with God. The Bible teaches us that "God is good." Everything God does is good. Do not make the mistake of accusing God of being responsible for evil. But since evil is in the world God can either destroy all living creatures because they are evil, or try to save man in spite of his evil. I am thankful that God chose to make an effort to save us. And God can permit these difficulties to overcome us, or He can show us a way to make them a blessing. I am thankful that He chose the latter.

In making it possible for us to enjoy a blessing from our troubles God has written the equation of balance everywhere. We appreciate light because of darkness. The sun always looks better when the clouds depart. The air seems much clearer and fresher when the dust storm departs. Spring would not be half so beautiful without the winter. The shade is inviting because of the heat of the sun. Water is good because we are thirsty. Life is precious because of death. Hence, the negative always gives the positive its beauty and purpose.

Our greatest mistake is in not recognizing this equation of balance. If we forget the sun and complain about the clouds we will not enjoy it when it does shine. If we constantly think of our troubles we will miss the joy of the moments of pleasure that come our way. If we look for that which is bad and refuse to look for the good we will find that for which we are looking. The happiest people in the world are not those who have had the least trouble. The most joyous people on earth are not those who have known no sadness. Those who are happy usually have known more trouble than the average person. But instead of being overcome by the troubles that came their way, they learned to look for and appreciate the hours that were free of trouble. They come to appreciate these hours so much that those which bring troubles are almost forgotten.

God will see that everything comes out alright regardless of what comes into our lives. But we must learn to trust Him in order for this to be possible.

## Have You Found Happiness?

We are all seeking happiness. Which way we turn to find it will be determined by a number of things. Sometimes we think we have found it only to learn later that it was just another dream. Happiness is such a tender flower that those who go forth to seek it usually crush it.

When Jesus entered upon His ministry He found a very unhappy people. Some were trying to find happiness in condemning others. He found this attitude among the Pharisees. They had built up within themselves a feeling that they were the only righteous people on the earth. They thought happiness was found in ceremony and had neglected the heart. Although this had been going on for many years they still had not found the satisfaction they sought. They had only succeeded in turning all other people against them and getting so far away from God that He did not recognize them. Their idea of religious service had not paid off and they were rather desperate about the matter when the Lord came. He used some very strong language in trying to shock them into seeing where they were, but in most cases they had completely crushed their opportunity to be happy. They found that instead of condemning others they were most condemned.

Then there were those who had sought happiness in service to idols. God seemed too far away to them. They wanted something they could reach out and feel with their hands. Hence they bowed down to gods made of gold and silver and wood. When they were blessed the idols always received the glory. When trouble came they had none with understanding to whom they could turn. A god of wood or gold could not understand their troubles. They had built up within their hearts a false belief and had drifted farther from God and real happiness.

There were also those who had looked for happiness in satisfying every desire of the flesh. They found that the satisfying of one desire only led to a stronger craving for that which was evil. In following this course they had become worse than the beasts of the wilderness. Paul described them in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans.

No doubt many other methods were adopted, but these three were outstanding when Jesus came.

Our Lord tried to teach these people that true happiness is not found in satisfying the flesh, or in condemning others. He tried to show them that in their own lives they were allowing the things they condemned. He told them that in their judging they were practicing the same thing they were condemning in others. And He tried to show them that happiness comes from the inside out, and not from the outside in. After all, one must live with himself and with his God. If one is unable to live peacefully with himself he can never be happy. He cannot thus live without knowing in his heart that he has been fair with his own life as well as the lives of others. Knowing our obligations to God in this world, a man with a conscience cannot be really happy while doing God wrong. So Jesus established the fact that happiness is found in complete obedience to God, which makes us deal fairly with men.

If we want happiness we will have to find it God's way. Happiness sought in the proper manner can be had and enjoyed and will never be crushed.

## A Rich Legacy

Shakespeare said: "No legacy is so rich as honesty."

The Holy Spirit said: "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Rom. 13:13). "Having your conversation [conduct] honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12). "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing" (1 Thess. 4:12). These and many other passages state the position of our Lord on this important subject. He demands that His followers be honest.

We should be honest with our brethren. In this way we will deal with them fairly. We will not say things about them that we would not appreciate their saying and doing against us. It is just as dishonest to destroy the reputation of another as it is to steal his money. Many people who would not think of stealing one cent from others are too prone to try to destroy their good name without realizing that they are dishonest in so doing. Not only should we be honest with our brethren in what we say about them, but also in carrying our end of the load. A person cannot be honest and allow others to do most, or all, of the giving, and do all of the work. He is placing a burden on the other person that he should be wearing himself. One cannot be honest and do this. We need to check up on our honesty in more ways than handling money.

We should be honest with the person who is yet in the world. The only sermon he will read is the sermon we preach by the way we live. He does not know anything about the Bible, but he does know that we claim to be Christians. He has come to expect Christians to be fair in their dealings. If he finds one who is not he will lose all the faith he has in the Christian way

of living. This will make him despise God. It may cause him to forever refuse to listen to one who would teach him the way of Christ. Thus we should always be honest in our dealings with those who do not belong to Christ. Not only is this true in the matter of buying and selling, but it is also true in the kind of life we live before him. If we claim to be Christians, yet fail to work at the job, we are being dishonest before the person whom we hope to influence for Christ. Naturally he is going to believe that we are living a false life. We say one thing and do another. We tell him that the Lord's church is the greatest institution on earth and that we are a part of it, but we never do anything for it. Even the man on the outside can see this is dishonest.

We need to be honest with ourselves. I believe that we are often more dishonest with ourselves than we are with anybody else. We fail to face up to the facts of life. Thus we are constantly trying to convince ourselves of something that we know is wrong. Unfortunately we do not always understand that we can fool ourselves as well as others. Sometimes it is much easier. Of course, we do not fool our conscience, and perhaps that is what brings on so much frustration, but we at least convince ourselves sufficiently to go ahead in our wrong doing. Perhaps we tell ourselves that we have been mistreated and we have a right to get even. We tell ourselves that nobody is honest because we have found one dishonest person. We feel that we have as much right to a good time as other people. Hence, when we see them with more than we have we feel that we are justified in obtaining something although we must stoop to falsehood to have it.

You can go on from here. Perhaps more than anything else we need to learn to be honest with ourselves. When we learn how to do this we will have learned how to be happy.



## Thinking Determines Life

**“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your minds and hearts through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:6-9).**

Most of us have had moments when we thought life had dealt us an unfair blow. It is but natural that we look for the reason. A man recently complained of his life, and said he could not understand why it had not served him any better. He could think of nothing that he had done, especially in recent years, that should cause his suffering and disappointment. He was searching for something to blame for his unhappy condition. When he finds that something he will be satisfied with the fact that he has been in no way to blame. It is a very common habit among us to blame life upon environment. We excuse ourselves for our weaknesses by thinking that our environment would not allow us to do better. Those who live in the same environment and do better just had better opportunities. Sometimes we go back to conditions that may have existed many years ago. Perhaps we did not get a square deal when we were children. We are now grown and things are not working out so well. It is easy to think of the present as being determined by the unhappy things of the past. Hence we excuse our present wrong doing on the basis that we did not get a fair deal many years ago. We need to learn that environment modifies life but does not govern life. For, as someone said, “The soul is stronger than its surroundings.”

The Holy Spirit recognized the fact that thinking determines life. That is why He instructed Paul to write such statements as the one we have read. Notice the very first thought has to do with material things. "Be careful for nothing." That is, "be anxious for nothing." Jesus taught that life is much more than substance, and that substance does not govern life. A man's life does not consist of things. If God is able to watch over us in spiritual matters He is also able to care for us in other matters. Hence, Paul said we should make our requests known to God. He will provide. Then, in order to get a true picture of life and live at our best, he told us that life is governed by what we think. Here is the reason for thinking upon lovely things. Since thinking determines life, it can be good or bad by our own thinking. If we choose to have the mind on that which is unholy we can expect unholy actions and habits. Nothing ever becomes a habit with us unless it has first been entertained in our minds. If something evil needs to be removed from our lives it must first be removed from our thinking. We cannot escape the results of our thoughts.

In trying to make a successful person in the business world, we are taught to think success, think big, and success will come. To a certain extent this is true. If it is true in the world of business it is also true in the Lord's work. We usually become what we think we can become. If we think failure we will live that way. If we think there is a way to succeed for the Lord, and will turn to Him in prayer, all the while removing from our minds any thoughts of failure, success is bound to come.

Yes, thinking determines life.

## Definition Or Demonstration?

There are some things that are difficult to define. They call for a demonstration. There are several words from which we get our word "love" that are used in the Bible, but few of us know those words. All of us, however, know the demonstration. Actually, a definition does not amount to much, but a demonstration is something we all can see.

The greatest demonstration of the love of God was the giving of His Son. Man was not worthy of this gift, but the love of God reaches far beyond the worth of man. We would need to understand the heart of God in order to comprehend such a love as this. The love of God does not need to be defined because it has been demonstrated.

We talk much about our love for God, and surely we cannot expect to be saved if we do not love Him, but God wants a demonstration also. In fact God wants us to demonstrate how we feel about Him in everything we do. One thing that stands out in the book of James, as well as other books, is the fact that God wants a faith that can be demonstrated. He does not care for faith without works.

We demonstrate our love for God in our attitude toward His Word. Can it be said that one really loves the Lord who cares nothing for the Word He has given? The more we love God the more we meditate on His Word. David said he loved the Word of God and it was his meditation all the day. I hardly see how one could claim to be in love with God who refused to read the letter God has written to His lover.

We demonstrate our love for God by obeying the Word. This is true with both sinner and saint. The man who knows what Jesus wants him to do in order to be saved will not refuse to do it if he really loves Christ. Neither will the follower of Christ refuse to do what Christ has commanded if he truly loves Him. Does the person love Christ when he refuses to go

to the place where Christ promised to meet with those He loves? When you love someone you long to be with them. If it becomes possible to meet them at a given place you do not hesitate to do so. Christ said where His followers were gathered in His name He would be in their midst. People who love Him do not entertain any thought of staying away.

Does the person love Christ who does not give liberally to support the work He wants done? Would you say a man loved his family if he refused to support his family? Not long ago I heard a story of a man who makes good money but his wife is not allowed to see much of it. She has very little clothing and no spending money at all. But her husband has thousands of dollars saved. Very few wives would think that such a man loved his wife. How can we say we love Christ when we have been so wonderfully blessed by Him and yet do not give as we should to His cause? Paul wrote the Corinthians that their gifts revealed their love. Hence in our giving we say, "I love you this much." When our Lord is aware of how much we use for our own pleasures and sees the gift we make to His church, He knows how much we love Him. All the talk we can do will not take the place of a demonstration.

The world needs a demonstration of Christianity. Certainly we must teach others, but the greatest medium of teaching we have is the life we live.

## The Philosopher's Stone

In olden times men looked for the philosopher's stone which, they believed, would turn whatever it touched into gold. Here is the philosopher's stone: touch any act or word with love, and instantly it is precious in the sight of God.

Think with me for a moment of some of the statements made in the Bible about love. "Love suffers long and is kind." "Love covers a multitude of sins." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Love thinketh no evil."

Men knew something about love before Christ came, but they had never had the privilege of seeing the depths of it. God revealed His love by sending His only Son to die for the sins of man. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son." We talk much about this love and we think we can understand it. But when we have learned all we can know I doubt that we will ever be able to comprehend all that was involved in a love that was willing to give a son to die for sinful man. God continues to demonstrate His love for us by surrounding us with the many blessings that are ours to enjoy each day. We live, bathed in the love of Almighty God.

Christ and the inspired apostles taught us that the way of real pleasure is the way of love. In fact Paul went so far as to say, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." From this statement we can see that no sacrifice is of any value without love. No service is what it should be if it is not prompted by love. Love must be the motive that moves us in service both to God and man. We may

serve without love, but there will be no blessing that will come to us for the service rendered.

Love for our fellowmen will lead us to perform needed services at all times. We cannot see a friend on his way to eternal destruction, and fail to halt his downward plunge, if we love him. Love for the souls of men drove the early Christians to their death. They knew it was not by accident that they died. They were fully aware that the path they had taken would lead to giving up their lives, but the love they had did not fear death. Souls were more valuable to them than physical life.

Love for God will lead His children in the pathway of duty toward Him. "If ye love me keep my commandments. One cannot love God and refuse to do His bidding. This will be true in attending services, studying His word, or rendering some service that will advance the cause of Christ. Love longs to share, and will be constantly serving in every way possible. We cannot love God and refuse to serve Him.

Whatever we do in our relationship to God or man should be done because of love. When we know that someone loves us, even the things that are for the moment disagreeable will be understood and appreciated. And when we love others we will not turn back because of anything disagreeable that we may be called upon to do. Every act and every word will be driven on by love, and when love directs us everything works out right.

## Superior To Circumstances

God made us superior to circumstances. If circumstances overcome us it is because we allow them to become the captain of our souls. God did not intend for them to have control of our lives. They take control when we invite them to do so.

As one looks back over the years he cannot help but realize that worry, grouchiness, anger, or a miserable disposition have in no wise succeeded in altering conditions. They contribute to misery but they never relieve it.

I know a person who began to have troubles. The troubles were real enough. He did not imagine they were present. They made him irritable. His family suffered because of what he allowed his troubles to do to him. He could not be happy in anything he tried to do. Even his church-going became a burden. He finally developed ulcers and was forced to spend some time in a hospital. Later he had what is generally called a nervous breakdown. Then finally he came to himself. He began to realize that he could not change the world. He could not even change those who were trying to destroy him. The more he tried to change them the greater power they gained over him. So he decided to begin work from within. The last time I saw him he was a happy man. He still had the same enemies. They were still trying to hurt him. But somehow they were unable to touch him. When he gained control of himself his life became pleasant again.

Everyone has his troubles. Those who succeed in any work will have their critics. The things people say about us, and sometimes do to us, will be unfair and unjust, but there is not a great deal we can do about that. If we slay one enemy there will always be another to take his place. If one difficulty grows tired and leaves us there will be a fresh one to take its place. No person lives without some kind of troubles. But some

people have learned to live in spite of them. They have learned to be bigger than circumstances.

I am sure no one ever walked on the earth who had more troubles than Jesus Christ. He had a few friends but some of them were anxious to disown Him in the hour of severe trial. His own people could not accept Him because they did not know from what source He obtained His knowledge. People were always trying to hurt Him. When He went to sleep at night He had nothing to which He could look forward but more trouble in the days that followed. He was fully aware of the fact that every step He took brought Him that much closer to many hours of severe misery that would end on a cross. But in spite of all this He was a happy man. Instead of allowing His troubles to get the best of Him He was always trying to help people who had been overcome by their troubles. The answer was in His heart.

When one has really found the Master, and not just made a sham at finding Him, he becomes superior to circumstances. A weakling will turn and run. Or he may become frustrated and angry. He may develop a strong case of self-pity. But one who knows the Master becomes stronger than environment. A touchy, disgruntled disposition is evidence of extreme weakness. It means that we are not the master of circumstances and conditions. It means we have completely surrendered to them. But when one finds the true spirit of Christ the very difficulties of life become stepping stones to greater things. He does not allow outward circumstances to destroy his inward peace.

Christ told His disciples, "My peace I leave with you." A greater gift could not have been given. Then let us find that peace and we will be the possessors of something stronger than the hardest blow that can be struck by the unfortunate things that come into our lives. God intended for us to be superior to circumstances.



## **“I Don’t Like Him”**

**“I don’t like him,” is a common expression among young people. We heard it often when we were children. Of course, children do not know what is involved in the statement. As a rule they mean that they do not like what a person is doing. But this attitude does not disappear with childhood. Although we may express our dislike in another way, we are prone to carry this same attitude with us when we grow up.**

**Learning to like people is not easy if we think only of making them fit our pattern. Henry Wise Miller once said, “You must like people for what they are and not because they are the sort of people you like.”**

**Seldom do we find two people alike in every respect. It is natural for us to want to judge others by ourselves. Since we are not apt to find someone exactly like ourselves it is easy to develop a dislike for others.**

**In order to like people we need to get to know them. You can’t very well dislike a person you know very well. We need to learn to overlook peculiarities. After all, we all have them. I am sure our own seem as strange to others as theirs do to us. These peculiarities come as a result of many things. Some come from our early training. Some come from environment. The customs and habits of the people with whom we grow up have a lot to do in their development. In the Bible we are taught to be longsuffering and forbearing in our dealings with others. This carries the idea of bearing patiently with the faults and peculiarities of those with whom we associate. If we expect them to bear patiently with us we ought to be patient in our dealings with them.**

**We need to be generous in our attitude toward others. There is a reason for the peculiarities that bother us. If we knew them better we might be more charitable toward them. For example, we may meet a person today and find a warm,**

friendly welcome. Tomorrow we may meet that person and he may hardly be aware of our presence. Why the difference? It may have come because of many reasons. We know not what has happened in his life from the time we met him at first. Sorrow may have flooded his soul. Calamity may have suddenly changed life for him. His health may not be as good as it was the first time. He may have been disappointed in someone he trusted. There are many reasons why he may be different. If we will examine ourselves we will find that we are not the same every day. Hence we ought to be generous in our attitude toward others.

We need to recognize that we also have weaknesses. This is sometimes difficult for us to admit. Hence we are prone to condemn in others that which is no worse than what we are doing. I have noticed on the part of those who set themselves up as critics of others, an attitude that says, "What if I am not consistent, does that make you right?" No, it does not make the other person right, but it does disqualify you as a critic. "Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?" It is not easy to listen to one criticize others when you know he is guilty of sins that are just as bad. Usually the person who is quick to condemn others is trying to hide his own weakness.

Most differences among people would be dissolved if we understood each other. That being true we need to make an effort to understand the other person before we feel free to dislike him. If we recognize that we also have peculiarities and weaknesses, and if we are generous in our attitude toward others, we may find it pleasant to like many people we otherwise despise. After all, since we have to live with people it is better to learn to like them.

## Listen To The Song

Two friends were sitting in a church building engrossed in their own thoughts. One of them was blind. As they sat there the one who could see was listening to the various sounds coming in through the windows. He heard a child cry, a truck with a loud exhaust, a plane passing over. Then he became conscious of a new sound with a melody that lifted. It was a mocking bird's song, coming from far up the street. He asked his blind friend, "Can you hear that bird?" He nodded, then said, "I suspect I heard it before you did, for I listen for the song."

In Psalm 42 the writer talks about his being cast down. Then he said, "Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

In Psalm 77, he talks about the days of his trouble. He said, "I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night."

If there is any lesson we need to learn it is to listen for the melody that God provides in our lives. His advice was, "Be still, and know that I am God." If we will let the song come in, that which disturbs and frustrates will be crowded out. Life has its bitter moments. No one who has lived a few years can deny this. Life brings with it many sorrows. These sorrows come through sickness and pain. They also come through failure and disappointment. They have a way of crowding in and trying to shut out everything else. They continue to prod us until we are prone to give in and center all our attention on them. That is the position trouble wants to occupy. If it can absorb all our attention it can consume us. But while the noises of trouble are clamoring for our attention somewhere out there is a song. We can hear it if we will listen. Very few people have ever lived who, if they will honestly investigate, could say they have not enjoyed many pleasant things of life. And if one knows the

true secret of walking with God, he will be able to see joy in many things that are unpleasant. If we will refuse to major on our disappointments, and will look about us, we will find much happiness we did not know existed. There are times when we can even welcome a shadow.

When we look into the lives of ancient saints who were able to do so much in the service of God, we find that they spent much time alone with Him. Sometimes I fear we are afraid to be alone with Him. Yet I know if we spent more hours in communion with God we could see that life is not made to bring us unhappiness. We would find the answer to many problems that vex us. We could see much more value in that which we are prone to cast aside. And many things over which we have been prone to weep would bring a smile, because then we would understand.

No person who has remained close to God has been disappointed in life. Neither is that person afraid to be alone with God, either in life or death. The person who is close to God can hear the song above all the noise that troubles can make.

Do you listen for the song?

## **That Which I Fear**

Fear is creative. It creates what we fear. Job said, "The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me" (Job 3:25).

This is a lesson that is being learned in the field of medicine. Many of our fears have a way of expressing themselves in some disagreeable fashion. Sometimes they even bring on disease and trouble of various kinds. More and more we are learning that these fears we have been holding on to are dangerous to our mental and physical health. So now we are trying to learn how to get rid of them. It is not easy. That which we have carried around for years is not anxious to depart. And sometimes when we are able to chase it away for a short time we find it coming back. When it comes back its place is still empty because we did not realize that it was important to fill its place with something worthwhile. So it comes back to its old home and is much harder to get rid of the second time than the first.

Creative fear is not only dangerous in the matter of good health, but it is more dangerous when allowed to get into the Lord's work. Many works have failed because of the power of fear. And many of those who suffered from failure never knew how or why the failure came. I know of a big business in this country that is beginning to go on the rocks. A great struggle has been going on for leadership in that company. It is reported that the person at the head of it has almost a hundred million dollars laid up for a depression. This fear of hard times is causing him to use his influence to make decisions and commit acts that are beginning to destroy the business. While this is going on other large concerns are expanding. Instead of their money being laid up to benefit no one, they are using it to enlarge their present stores and build more. Any person who knows anything about business knows that this attitude is

much more wholesome than the first and that the first is actually what creates depressions. If enough large companies did what this one is doing we would have a depression. The very thing that the head of the concern fears would happen and he would be responsible for it.

Now look at this attitude in the Lord's work. If expansion depended on the person with such fears there would be no expansion. His attitude is always, "Let's get the money first and then do the work." But it does not work that way, either in religion or business, if we want to succeed. Also such a person is fooling no one but himself. When such a one gets the money he still would not want to spend it. Throughout the brotherhood I have seen such men kill churches because they had enough influence to stop progress. They did not mean to do so. They meant to do right, but eventually that which they feared came to pass. They helped to bring it to pass, but never realized it.

I believe in using good judgment in the Lord's work, but I believe in using good *judgment* and not poor reasoning. Churches that have moved forward have had enough business sense to launch out into the deep.

There is an individual application in this lesson. After all, each member of a church is a part of that church. His fears and his faith will have a way of finding expression not only as an individual but also as a part of a great organization. Hence, when individual fears are controlled other matters will take care of themselves. Then if in the place of fear a creative faith can begin to work we will find that we can do everything the Lord wants us to do and we will get much joy from doing it.

## The Cause Of Loneliness

Joseph Newton said: "People are lonely because they build walls instead of bridges." Perhaps this is the greatest cause of loneliness.

All of us know that there are a lot of lonely people in the world. Some are lonely and alone. Others are lonely while surrounded by a great number of people. It is possible for some to be more lonely in the city where they see a lot of people than in the country where they see very few. It causes us sometimes to wonder if people make much difference. At least we know that the number of people makes little difference.

Lonely people are not all in the world. Many of them are in the church, and some of them have been in the church for many years. Sometimes they drift from one congregation to another seeking relief from their loneliness. Sometimes they move from one neighborhood to another, or maybe one city or state to another in search of something to cure their loneliness. But they find that people are about alike anywhere they find them. Unfortunately these people live and die without finding out what is their real trouble.

Building walls seems to be a habit with a great number of people. Those who are lonely in their church work often are responsible for it. They complain of never being spoken to or visited. I am sure there are some people who do not care, and it may be that some congregations as a whole do not care, but they are few in number. The person who rushes away from the church service, or who is always late, has built a wall. He shuts people out. It certainly is not right to talk with him during the services. So those who would give him some attention do not have an opportunity. Quite often those who are not guilty of coming in late and leaving early are responsible for being avoided because of other reasons. I have had people tell me that they would never again approach certain people in con-

versation. The reason was that that person had struck a sour note and could not be tuned to anything else. He was critical of everything and everybody. Or it might be some soured woman who could not talk without lecturing women on how to rear their children, or on some other pet subject. No one enjoys being preached to in this fashion. So they naturally learn to avoid such people. You can go on from here and find your own illustration. There are many ways in which we may build walls.

Building bridges is what all of us should learn. We need to build a bridge into the lives of others. When we do this it will be impossible for us to be lonely. We cannot be selfish and do this. We will have to learn to love people and become interested in them and their welfare. This interest should be real and not something we feel we should do because we read it in a book. When we learn to be interested in others, how to rejoice with them when they rejoice and weep with them when they weep, we will soon forget to be so interested in self. Then we will find a companionship we did not know could exist for us.

Try it in your religious life and see if it does not work. If you have been prone to feel critical of the program of the church, try entering into it. Build a bridge from your life into it, and see if there is not much joy awaiting you. If you have felt a loneliness in your worship, try putting everything into your worship and fellowship. Move among the most interested people. Enter into every part of the service. You will receive much joy from doing so and you will be a great help to the work and worship of the church. There is no need for you to be lonely.



## Row Away From The Rocks

An old Indian proverb says, "Call on God, but row away from the rocks."

Even in ancient times and among those who knew less about God than we know, there was wisdom enough to know that it was necessary for man to do what he could toward answering his own prayers. Perhaps right here has been one of the stumbling blocks for many people. We have thought of prayer only as we look at God's side of the question. We must remember that there is also a human side. God does not do for us what we are able to do for ourselves. We cannot expect God to save us from death when we deliberately seek it. We need not ask God to save our souls when we are trying to lose them. Even in our salvation, and our daily blessings, God does for us only what we are unable to do. We till the soil and God sends the sunshine and the rain. We grind the wheat for bread, but God made it grow out of the ground. We plant seed, but God gives it life. So we can see that in all things God demands effort on our part, and He will do what we are unable to do.

Let's notice some things we should pray for and what we can do in order to answer our prayers in the way we desire to have them answered.

We should pray for the sick. It is not necessary to point out the verses in the Bible that teach us this lesson. We are all familiar with such statements from God. But does that relieve us of our duty toward the sick? No, there is no release from our responsibility. We pray for the sick, but we nurse them back to health. We do what we can and God will take care of the rest.

We should pray for our daily bread. Yet God has taught that we should work for our bread. Work on our part does not destroy what God can do. Hence we work and pray.

We should pray for the church. But God is not going to bless a church that refuses to be blessed.

It is right that we pray when we contemplate the construction of a new building in which to worship or a house in which to live. And we can have no doubt that God will do His part. He makes it possible that we can make the necessary money. "It is God who giveth power to get wealth." God grew the trees out of which the lumber is cut. But God does not take the trees to the mill and saw the necessary lumber. God does not force my hand into my pocket in order to make me give as I should or pay my bills. But He does teach me that I should do these things. So God grows the trees and man saws the lumber. God gives power to get wealth and man uses it in the service of God. Any way you look at it the story is the same. God does what we are unable to do.

We have no right to question God. He is able to answer our prayers as He is able to forgive sins. It is not necessary that I understand how He does it. I need to trust Him. When I have the kind of faith I should there will be no doubt concerning the ability of God.

A faithful Negro was once asked about his faith in God concerning answering prayers. The man asked, "Sam, what would you do if the Lord said for you to run your head into a brick wall?" Sam replied, "If God said for me to do that, it would be mine to run my head into the wall and God's to make a hole for my head." That is the kind of faith we are talking about. I don't have to understand every little detail concerning how God does His work. "The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us that we may do all the words of His law."

Surely it is right to pray to God, but as we pray, let's row away from the rocks.

## “Such As I Have”

One of the interesting stories of the Acts is found in the early part of the third chapter:

“Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple. Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him, with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.”

Silver and gold represented what this man thought he needed, but he received a gift that silver and gold could not furnish.

When we view the needs of the world we are prone to think in terms of silver and gold. We are constantly reminded of the multitudes of hungry people in the world. We cannot deny that many are hungry and do not suggest that they should not be fed. We look at our own children and plan for their future in terms of silver and gold. It is our desire to provide the very best in the way of education, and in every way possible equip them with that which is necessary to make a good living. But there is a gift that the world and our children need more than all the money the world can provide. We cannot afford to neglect them regarding this gift.

It is good to be able to give something to somebody who needs it. When Jesus taught that it is more blessed to give than to receive He covered a multitude of things. When we do good

for others and see their happiness because of what we have done we are much happier because we did it. There are many blessings that come from giving.

From the lesson in our text we learn that there is something everyone can give. Hence we can all occupy the position of the giver, although we may be found without silver and gold. There are so many things that people need more than they need money, which money cannot buy.

A sad person needs to be glad. A sick person needs to be well. A lonely person needs companionship. A discouraged person needs encouragement. A lost person needs to be saved. This opens up a field so wide that all of us can find work to do in it. It provides a service that we can render regardless of how little money we have, or how little we may know from the standpoint of worldly knowledge. It opens up a field of service which needs the energies of all of God's people and which can bring genuine happiness that cannot be purchased.

Have you ever thought of the people who need the service you can render? A little service on your part may be the means of bringing joy to a heart that may otherwise remain sad. Just a small service may bring salvation to a life that longs for it without knowing that for which it yearns. Can you afford to refuse to give such as you have? As you view what you have to offer it may seem to be very small, but to the person who cannot live without it, it is a large gift. So let us never fail to serve because we have little to offer. Such as we have can save multitudes if we will only give it.

It is a great privilege to be a blessing to others. It is a wonderful feeling to know that we have the honor of helping Christ in His mission. The small service we are capable of rendering can be responsible for the happiness and salvation of thousands.

## The Gateway To Power

**“Obedience is the gateway to power.”**

Every person who has become a leader among men has learned this lesson. They always followed someone higher up, and thus became the greater.

Physical health depends on obeying the laws of our physical nature. We pay for every act of disobedience. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap,” is true of physical health as well as our spiritual well being. Whether we know the actual cause or not, lack of health comes from lack of obedience.

Those who are strong in character have learned to obey a well educated conscience. This does not mean that a conscience is always right, but it does mean that the conscience will always tell us to do right. If we know what is right we can follow our conscience in developing a strong character.

Jesus taught His apostles to follow Him. They in turn taught us to follow them as we follow Christ. We have One higher up to whom we may look for blessings, and whose example we may follow. “Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

The strongest characters we read about in the Bible were men who obeyed their God. We might begin with Abraham. No one has commanded more respect than this good man, even after he has been gone for many years. As long as the world stands he will stand out as one of the strongest, most powerful and most successful men who ever lived. Yet he was a man who did what God demanded of him regardless of the cost or difficulty. In order to obey God it was necessary for him to go through the form of offering his own son, and in that offering he had no idea that God would give his son back. But the voice

of God meant more to him than life itself, or the life of his beloved son. Hence he gained a power that few men have ever known.

We might also think of Moses, of Daniel, and many ancient characters who were able to defy the world, and even death, and still come out victorious.

In the New Testament we also find men of great strength. No one can doubt that Paul was one of the strongest characters the world has ever known. He said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." From the time he became a follower of Christ until the very end he never wavered in his obedience. He even found strength in weakness. Whatever he faced he always found himself to be the master of it. Thus he gained power in obedience.

The weakest characters are those who have not learned obedience. This is true both in and out of the church. "Obedience is not the mark of a slave." It is an important quality in leadership. If we would enjoy power that the disobedient have never discovered, and if we would develop a character that is stronger than the world, let us always faithfully obey our leader whose strength defied the devil and won.

## The Shame Of Sham

The "shame of sham" is that in life and in religion there really is no sham—it is the devil's decoy used to entice the Christian into sin. If people knew that they were going to tell on themselves for what they do much evil would cease. The Christian who sings, "Nobody Knows But Jesus," is fooling no one but himself. He might better sing, "Most Everybody Knows, and So Does Jesus," because self has such an uncontrollable way of shining through one's eyes, words, deeds, and facial expressions.

The man who first drinks in private soon becomes so addicted to his weakness that he brazenly does so in public and while under the influence of his addiction still thinks nobody knows. If he would only lift his lips above his drink to get a good smell of himself, he would realize the shame of sham. Many times I have had people come by the church building seeking help who have been drinking. Sometimes they try to hide it by turning the head away when they talk, but it refuses to be hidden. I have come accidentally into the company of some brother who has just had his bottle of beer, and watched him try to hide it by smoking, gum chewing, or some other distraction, but it refuses to be hidden. There is no way to cover up the fact that one drinks. And there is no use in one thinking that nobody knows. Most everybody knows.

The person who leads the wrong kind of life when away from home with the thought that nobody knows will come to know the shame of sham. Sooner or later he is going to meet someone who knows him. And sooner or later the information will come home. If it does not come home from the lips of someone else it will be brought home by the guilty party. There is something about people that keeps them from being silent about the things with which they think they are getting by.

Those who make a sham of religion to open gateways through which they desire to enter will some day know the shame of sham. A person who is not serious about his religion cannot fool people long. There have been people become very religious for purposes other than eternal salvation. Perhaps it was a desire to use the good name or the good reputation of one in order to cause another to bow to their will. But such a person is soon found out. If evil is reported about one person in order to get a third party to do wrong, time will take care of the innocent and sham will turn into shame.

Jesus despised those who sought to live a life of sham. He said to some whose life was a sham, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. . . . Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Yes, the shame of sham is that it really does not exist. Certainly the Lord knows what is going on, and not many people are fooled very long. The person who engages in wrong doing will tell on himself one way or another. It may be by an unguarded word spoken, the expression on the face, or a general appearance of dissipation. One way or another sham will turn into shame.



## Learning From The Years

It was Emerson who said, "The years teach much which the days never knew."

Those who have been living for years can testify to the truth of this statement. There is not a lot of information in a day. But when days are multiplied many lessons are learned. If we could only learn this truth and seek the information of the years, our happiness would be more complete.

Take, for example, the youth who has just begun to enjoy life. If he is not careful he will try to crowd an entire life into a few days, and thus take away happiness that is waiting him in the future. If he is not wise he will refuse to listen to the years. Those who have been educated by the years seem very old-fashioned to him. He sees them as having been born and lived in so much of the distant past that they have no valuable advice for the present generation. Perhaps his parents lack understanding in his own estimation of them. He does not realize that the nature of a human being has always been the same.

Through the years we have added many things to our way of living, but they are only conveniences. They do not change the nature of a person. It is true that we have often changed our field of thought, and have discovered many valuable truths as we have continued to discover God's world, but such does not change the nature of the person. We may change the curriculum in our schools, but people will remain the same. But because he does not realize this a youth is prone to set aside what advice others are able to give because of the stored up information of having lived, and he decides to live life in his own way. The years will reveal his folly. Unfortunately, however, when the years bring the lesson home to him it is too late to do a lot about it. Only when he lives to see the same thing happening to his own children will the bitterness of his mistake be realized.

The rest of his life will be spent in regretting his foolishness. I am certainly a friend of education. We do not want our children to grow up in ignorance, but the years have taught us that learning from text books is very small compared to what can be learned from the years. Wise is the youth who has learned this lesson.

The years have taught us much in religion. I do not mean that the religion of Christ has been changed during the years, but that His truths have come home to us. The Israelites could have escaped much suffering had they been acquainted with God's law. They chose, however, to neglect it for what would have then been called the "modern thought." Thus, God was soon divorced from their minds. When God leaves a person's mind all that is left is idolatry. So they began to serve idols. Soon they refused to have God in their thinking. Their fall is known to every student of the Bible. Oh, the misery and heart-ache they suffered! Paul declared the reason for these things being written was "for our learning." Will we listen to them?

When we listen to the years we listen to God, for only God has a complete history of man through the years. It is a thrill to read of the faithfulness of some of the ancient men of God. God intended for us to be wiser than they, and for that reason preserved their story for us. May we learn against the great truths they have taught us. Then, having learned, may we live close to the law God has for us today. And may we never despise the wisdom of the years!

## Eaten Of Worms

There is an interesting story recorded in the latter part of Acts 12 which teaches a valuable lesson which all of us should learn. Let us read a few verses beginning with verse 20:

“And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king’s chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king’s country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.”

Several charges might have been brought against this man. The very circumstances would suggest more than one, but only one is brought. He did not give God the glory for what he was able to do. He had rather be considered a god than recognize the true God. When a man gets to the point where he is unwilling to glorify God he is fit for nothing but the worms. Hence the worms ate him.

In Daniel 5 we find the story of the hand-writing on the wall. Daniel was able to read the message and when he did he pronounced the doom of a careless nation. The charge that was brought against the king and the people was that they did not glorify the God who had given them life. “And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thus hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are

all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." So the answer was, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

Paul once referred to a time when men had gotten so far from God that there was nothing good about them. Among other things, he said, "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21).

Man was created to give God glory. One of the first things that He said when giving the law, was, "thou shalt have no other gods before me." Unless God is given His rightful place He does not have a place. Since salvation comes from Him we must look to Him for salvation. He is the author and giver of all that is good. Hence he must be glorified for His goodness. It is only right that He expect it and receive it.

When man lives as he ought to live he glorifies the Lord. When he fails he is worth nothing to God. The purpose of his living is destroyed. Glorifying God is more than lip service. We have heard men speak much of glory when praising God with their lips but who did just the opposite in their lives. That kind of praise is worse than meaningless to God. Certainly we are expected to glorify His name when we pray. We must praise Him both in prayer and song, but this praise must come from a life that is a living monument of His goodness and mercy. We must express in our actions what we express with the lips.

When we fail to do this we are worth no more to God than Herod who was eaten of worms.

## Practice What You Know

James said, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).

Rembrandt said, "Try to put well in practice what you already know; and in so doing, in good time, discover the hidden things which you now inquire about. Practice what you know, and it will help to make clear what now you do not know."

We need to practice what we know. If we wait until we know everything before we practice anything we will practice nothing. God has always demanded that one do only what he is capable of doing and no more. But he has insisted that if it is but little it is still required. Some of our Lord's parables had to do with this very thing. He told once of a man leaving his goods to his servants. To one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one. When he returned two of them gave good account of what had been left to their care. The other failed. He did not lose what he had but he failed to use it. The Lord said he was condemned. He said the kingdom of heaven was like this story. In other words some people in the kingdom are able to do greater things for the Lord than others. Whatever one is capable of doing is demanded of him. Since everyone is capable of doing something no one is excluded. And no excuse that we may offer for our weakness will suffice. This one talent man offered his excuses. They all summed up to the fact that he accused his lord of being unfair. Out of his own mouth he was condemned.

We need to tell what we know. We are not obligated to tell what we do not know. In fact we are forbidden to undertake this. What we know may be what someone else needs in order to know how to obey the Lord. Too often we leave the teaching of others to those who are supposed to be experts in the teaching field and fail to share the knowledge we possess with others. If we would only look at the matter as it really is there

are no experts in this way that men view the matter. We have seen this demonstrated too many times. Some of the greatest teaching that is being done is by those who would not be considered the world's greatest teachers. And some of the poorest teaching is done by those who are supposed to be capable. Of course we would not have anyone think that we would argue against preparation for teaching. One should make all preparation possible. But one should never wait to instruct others to the very best of his ability. It is altogether possible that one with little knowledge can approach some people who would shy away from one with superior learning.

When one fails to teach what he knows or practice what he knows, he will find that it will cease to be of benefit to him. We lose what we do not use. We often hear someone say, "I used to be able to remember the scriptures, but lately I find it difficult to remember." A little investigation would no doubt prove that the same person once used the scriptures that he remembered much more than he is doing at the present. We do not lose what we use. When we fail in the use of our knowledge or in practicing religion we not only deprive others of the blessing that they might receive from the knowledge and ability we possess, but we also find that we lose the blessing ourselves. Not only is this true but we sin before almighty God. Since we belong to Him the only honorable thing we can do is use our knowledge and our ability in His service.

Never refuse to work because you cannot do big things. Never fail to tell others about the Christ because you know so little. Tell what you know and live as best you can and the Lord will be pleased. That is all that matters because He is the one we are trying to please.

## How Do You Value Yourself?

An ancient writer said, "Every one stamps his own value on himself. The price we challenge for ourselves is given us. Man is great or little by his own will."

Jesus said the lord of the one talent man told him that out of his own mouth he would be judged. He pronounced his own doom. There is no doubt that most of us are doing this very same thing.

It is not difficult to find people who do not claim to amount to much, especially in living for the Lord. Of course, there is always the question as to whether a person is really stating what he believes or is trying to be modest, but with many they express their honest opinion about their value. And it may be that they are expressing the truth, but not a truth that needs to be. They could be much greater if they desired to be.

In the long ago the people of God marched to the border of the land that was to be their home. It was a good land. When their fathers had left it years ago it was a land of want, but now it is a land of plenty. For some time they had been led by Jehovah. He had brought them through the sea as on dry land. Other things He had done that proved He was able to care for them under any circumstances. Some of them were sent over to spy out the land. They saw a land of plenty but they also saw giants. They felt very little in the presence of the giants. They had forgotten that with God they were larger than any other power. In their fear they turned a nation against an onward march, and as a result wasted away in the wilderness. They said they were unable to take the land. Since they felt this way about the matter God allowed them to remain outside until they died. Two men thought they could take it. They lived to enter the land forty years later, but the others perished because they failed to place a proper value on their ability. Surely no person in his right mind would assume that he has much

power by himself, but with God there is a greater power in him than is in the world.

This one talent man, of whom Jesus spoke, was not able to do as much as the man with ten. He was expected to use what he had, however, and his failure to do this was what brought on his downfall. There was nothing unfair about the distributing of the talents. Each man was given only what he was capable of using. He had the ability to use the one and that is why it was given to him. He failed to use his ability. Not only that, but in trying to find an excuse for his own littleness he accused his lord of being unfair in his reckoning. Hence what he had was taken from him. He received exactly what he pictured in his mind. He named his own price and was paid accordingly.

It is a dangerous thing for a person to undervalue himself. I have known people who were able to give much into the Lord's work who were always saying they were unable to do so. I would be afraid to do that for fear the day might actually come when I was unable because of losing what I had. The same is true in the matter of our ability to serve God. Men excuse themselves from performing certain services because in their own minds they are unable to do so. Yet they have never tried. The unfortunate day may come for such people when what they say is the truth. Jesus taught that from those who have not shall be taken even that which they have.

God will not allow a person to go on and on refusing to use his abilities in His service. There will be a day of reckoning some day. And even if that day does not come until the end of the way it is going to be an awful day when all we have is taken from us. Then, deprived of all that could have been a blessing to us, we will be forced to march out into eternity without the presence of God. Then we will wish in vain that we had placed a proper value on ourselves and lived accordingly.



## Happiness, A Goal Or A Tool?

The dictionary defines happiness as: "A state of pleasurable content with one's condition of life."

All the definitions one might read cannot add anything to that one. Not only that, but this definition gives us something to work on regarding the use of happiness. Happiness can be a goal or a tool.

If we make happiness a tool for living we can find pleasure in living now. To thus use it we need not have ideal conditions, but we can learn to be happy with the present. One who is content with the present can plan his life with imagination and he can be enthusiastic about his work. When one uses happiness as a tool he finds contentment in his work. It does not matter if his work is not as great as that of others. There is satisfaction in knowing that whatever we do, we do it well. Good work will produce better conditions, and the habit of being happy goes right along with it. Anyone who has lived a few years has not failed to notice that happy people are not always the most intelligent. At least they are not considered so by the world. Neither are they of the number that possess a great amount of worldly goods. They have made happiness such a happiness that it goes with them regardless of where they go. They find it in their work and in their play. They enjoy it in their homes and their worship. They have learned to use happiness to bring pleasure to living.

On the other hand if we make happiness a goal we are always struggling for it, but never finding it within our grasp. It is something we look forward to, struggle for, but it is always in the future and is never a part of now. Unfortunately when this is true, we discover that life is change. Our desires change. Our tastes change. Even the physical surroundings of life change. Today we identify happiness with certain material things and find tomorrow that it is not identified with those

things at all. When happiness is a goal we find it always changing. It is always farther away from us, and it becomes more difficult to find. Hence we find ourselves always looking forward to it, but never really finding it.

A few years ago a test was made on several thousand people concerning happiness. It was found that most of them were waiting for it to come later. Some were waiting until a child was born. Some were waiting until their children grew up. Some were waiting to become married. Some were waiting until they made their fortune. People were waiting for hundreds of things to happen, but few of them were happy with the present. Such people will spend their lives waiting and never really find happiness. They are like the people who are waiting to serve the Lord later on. They seldom get around to giving Him any service.

The happiest person who walked the earth was Jesus Christ. He knew His Father and that He was in His keeping. His life was difficult. It was filled with more disappointment than we will ever know, but He found happiness in spite of the difficulty. The wonderful thing about this is that His Father is our Father. We can go where He has gone. We can find the satisfaction He found in living on the earth and can be thrilled with the assurance He had in turning His life over to God. If we go through life searching for happiness but never finding it, we cannot blame circumstances for our failure, because Jesus has pointed the way.

Is happiness your goal or a tool to live by?

## Filling The Woodbox

"Mother," exclaimed a little girl, "I love you so much! When I grow up I am going to buy you a great big automobile so that you can ride everywhere and see everything."

Her little sister, not to be outdone, said, "Mother, I love you, too, and when I grow up I am going to buy you a house—a great big house with fifty rooms, and lots of servants so you won't have to work any more."

The mother was delighted. But she wanted to hear what Johnny meant to do for her when he was a man. Johnny said nothing. Finally she asked: "Johnny, don't you love me?"

"Yes, I do, Mother. I've just been filling up the wood box for you."

That story is well worth a lot of thinking. We are represented in that story. Where does our attitude toward the Lord place us? It is good to have plans for the future of the Lord's work. Any church or member without plans will not accomplish much for the Lord. But plans without action are of no value. Unfortunately we often formulate plans and make promises without any real intention of carrying them out. Such people view their promises as a fulfillment of agreement. When the satisfaction received from making promises wears off other promises can be made. But little or no action is ever taken. Such a person never gets any place in business. All of us know that a dreamer of this sort is doomed before he starts. But it is also true in the Lord's work. It is not difficult to get people to promise, but it is not easy to persuade them to fulfill those promises. When I hear someone say, "I am going to work for the Lord when . . .," I am quite sure that the time will never come. That person never really comes to grip with reality in the Lord's service. He feels free to make promises of great gifts, if and when he makes much money, but when he makes the money it is easy to forget the promise. If someone who

happens to remember, reminds him of his promises he will turn against that person. But the chances are he will not fulfill his promise. He can also make promises regarding what he intends to do in the future. At the present he is always covered up with business. Someone else will have to do the Lord's work because he is busy. Of course he may apologize for pushing all the work off on other shoulders, but the apology is only lip service. He is not sorry. He just does not intend to work for the Lord, but wants to save face. Such a person will not hesitate to tell the Lord how much he loves Him when he prays. He is glad that songs have been written that speak of our love for God. He is always happy when "Oh, How I Love Jesus" is selected. But singing and acting are two different things.

The Lord knows when we love Him. He said, "If ye love me keep my commandments." We have applied this statement to the man who has not obeyed the gospel so long that we have forgotten that Jesus was talking to His disciples. Followers of Christ show their love by what they do. The Lord is not concerned so much about what we intend to do next year. Of course it is wise to make plans years ahead and carry them out. But the important thing is what we are doing today.

It will not be worth much to strike oil five years from now if the wood box is empty today. Does this lesson mean anything to us?

## Take Care Of The Pieces

A mother in India was talking to her daughter just before her marriage. In answer to her daughter's spoken fears regarding future happiness, she said, "This we have been taught . . . Truth is our mother, justice our father, pity our husbands, respect for others, our friends; surrounded by such relatives, we have nothing to fear. God alone knows the future—it is given to us piece by piece. Take each piece and make something out of it."

Only those who have learned this lesson about life have been able to find real happiness. I cannot think of a way whereby God could bring more unhappiness into the world than by opening up the future and letting all of us see all of it. There are people who often express a desire to know what the future will bring, but that is the idle wish of an unreasoning moment. They do not realize what a curse they are wishing on themselves.

If we could look beyond the portals of tomorrow, would we be less unhappy or more contented? Would we have the wisdom and courage as well as the fortitude to profit by that knowledge? If we chanced to see much sorrow and disappointment along the road ahead would we dare go on with a song on our lips? Would we not be prone to lose hope and courage and sink down, helpless and useless?

Really there is something thrilling in the very uncertainty of mortal strife and struggle. I am told that "Soldiers on the battlefield, under conditions that would otherwise drive men mad, are cheerful, hopeful, and sane, because of the intriguing uncertainty of what the next hour may bring forth." The excitement of hopeful anticipations is a powerful sustaining force. Hope drives away fears. Hope dashed to the earth is replaced by new hopes. Hope, adventurous hope, is that on which we must feed our lives. Yea, "hope maketh not ashamed."

Piece by piece! Yes, life comes that way. A moment at a time. And the secret of getting the best of it is in the idea expressed by this mother—take care of the pieces.

All of us have great plans for tomorrow. Certainly we could not afford to destroy this right to plan. "Where there is no vision the people perish." But tomorrow is made of many hours. Getting the best from it is not one task but many. And he who neglects the pieces can never have the whole. The person who is unable to take care of his pennies can never expect to save his dollars. One who does not know words will never be able to utter sentences. We must take care of the pieces.

I once read of a young fellow who took a job with a large company. It was not much of a job and he received little pay for it. One day someone asked his boss how he was getting along. The boss answered, "He is plodding along back there." And he was doing just that. Some time later he was the head of the company. This was made possible because of his willingness to "plod along." In other words, he did a small job well and by so doing he made himself ready for the big job that came later. This is the story of many lives. Certainly no one is going to be trusted to do bigger things when he reveals he is unable to take care of smaller matters. Jesus said if one could not care for his own he would not be given the opportunity of caring for that which belonged to another.

There can be no better advice than, "Take care of the pieces."

## **“Fear Hath Torment”**

**“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (1 Jno. 4:18).**

Have you ever been afraid? In most instances it seems utterly foolish to ask the question. There are so many things of which to be afraid that most people have developed a fear of some of them. I have seen people who were afraid of storms. I do not mean such fear as would lead us to protect ourselves, but fear that almost drove them out of their minds. They said it was something they could not help. One look at them would convince you that it was real. They were afraid and nothing seemed to be able to help for the moment.

I have known people who were afraid of poverty. It might have developed because they had seen days when they wondered where they could find enough to eat. This fear of poverty drove them to neglect the best things in life while they sought security in possessions. What they accumulated they were always afraid would be lost. This also is real fear.

Then there are those who fear disease and death until it takes all reason out of them.

In each case no one would deny what John said. “Fear hath torment.” And it is difficult to know how tormented one can be with fear unless we have experienced it. There is no pleasure in being afraid. One who is afraid would like very much to be rid of the fear. No one wants to be tormented. Yet millions continue to live in torment because of the many fears that prowl around in their minds.

There is an answer to this problem. We need not carry these fears around. When people say they cannot help being afraid they speak the truth, but only because they do not know how to help it. That statement does not express hopelessness, even though the person may think that his case is hopeless. His

task is to make himself believe that there is a way out of his torment. Look at the passage and see how the way opens up. "Perfect love casteth out fear." There is the answer and it is not nearly so difficult as we have imagined.

God loves us. Do we doubt that He does? No one would express any doubt who has known God. If God loves He is going to do that which is for our best. Do we believe that? Do we believe that all things work together for our good? We cannot deny this. So the question of God's love is settled. God loves us and He is going to watch over us.

Do we love God? Ah, there is where we face our difficulty. Some of us have thought that we love Him, but upon close investigation have learned that we did not love Him so much. We love Him while everything is going along as we desire, but the moment something happens we do not love Him so much. The test of love does not come when everything runs smoothly. When the going is hard love either makes the way easier, or love is not there. Our realization of our own weakness opens the gates and lets fear in. Most of us can see this. Then, why do we not do something about it? Love can be developed for both God and man. We can learn to love that which God wants us to love. When we do we will be doing what God wants us to do. When this is true we will not be carrying around a lot of regrets because of our littleness. And when we can get rid of these, perfect love will enter in. Then fear is gone, torment ceases, for "perfect love casteth out fear."



## Labor And Thought

Alexander Hamilton said, "Men give me credit for some genius. All the genius I have lies in this: When I have a subject in hand, I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. My mind becomes pervaded with it. Then the effort which I have made is what people are pleased to call the fruit of genius. It is the fruit of labor and thought."

Here we have a statement of the difference between a successful person and one who has not been successful. About the only difference between one who has amounted to little in the Lord's work and one who has done great things, can be summed up in the two words "labor and thought."

Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his own goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many

things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou are a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usuary. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents" (Matt. 25:14-29).

Notice the difference between the one talent man and the others—thought and labor. In the first place the one talent man had not been expected to do more than he was capable of doing. It is definitely stated that the talents were distributed according to the ability of the servants. But he refused to use his ability. He was not asked to do something that he was not capable of doing. His lord only asked him to do what he could. He refused to do what he was capable of doing and was cast out because in refusing he revealed that he was wicked and slothful.

Jesus did not relate these parables just to have something to say. There is a great lesson in this story for us. God does not expect us to do what we are not capable of doing, but he does demand that we use what ability we have. We cannot excuse ourselves on the ground of our littleness and expect the Lord to bless us. I can do everything the Lord wants me to do. I may not be able to do as much as others but I can do something. If I refuse to do what I am able to do I become wicked and slothful in the eyes of God.

I say again, the only difference between those who do great things for the Lord and those who do nothing, can be summed up in the two words, "labor and thought."

## Is God Up To Date?

That God is ancient goes without question. God has always been. Of course we are unable to comprehend the real meaning of this truth, but we accept it by faith. Before time, God was. In the beginning God was there. God is eternal. He has always existed.

He has watched over the world ever since He created it. He has seen the multiplied millions of the earth come and go. He knows every dot on the earth under which a body sleeps. He has seen the millions fall in battle. He has been aware of every transgression of man. When Adam was in the garden God was there. He knew when Cain killed his brother. He walked with Abraham when he left his native land and journeyed to a strange land. Every generation from the beginning until now has been watched over by the Almighty. Yes, God is ancient.

He has been tried over and over again. His triumphs are written in both human and divine history. When most of the inhabitants of the world stood against God, He stood with His faithful few. He did not forget eight souls when they alone in the world believed in God. We read of the triumphs of the faithful in the old days and thrill at the very fact that God was standing over them. God has always been. God has never failed. We can trust God.

But God is modern. Too many people think only of the fact that God was in the world many years ago. So we wonder if God can understand the problems of modern man. Does God know anything about electricity? Yes, God made it. Does God understand all about the atomic bomb? Yes, He made everything that goes into it. Nothing escapes our God. He is as up-to-date as an early morning sunrise. God understands the thoughts that crowd their way into our hearts. Our problems are fully known to Him. He also knows the answer to our problems.

God understands as much about how I live as He did about how Abraham lived. God understands as much about the problems of America as He did about the nation of Israel. God is just as aware of the work and problems of the church as He was of the worship in the Temple. He does not need to learn because He knows. You and I learn, but God already knew long before we were born to learn. The answers to all our problems are in His mind long before the problems arise. He knows the answer to every question of the heart before it is asked. He is as much aware of what is going on as He was in ancient times.

And God still cares about His people and how things are with them. He cares as much for us as He did for Abraham. He is as close to us as He was to any of the faithful prophets. He wants to know about us, and does know. He wants to hear from us and requests that we talk to Him. He is concerned with our cares and asks us to bring them to Him. He is our Father and wants us to conduct ourselves as His sons and daughters. God wants to be trusted and loved. He wants to be needed and worshipped. He invites us to draw close to Him and promises that His nearness will sustain us. He holds out His hand to lead us and promises that in so doing we will never go astray. He invites us to lay our heads on His bosom while He watches over us with eyes that never slumber. He knows how to deal with everything that would hurt us, and He knows how to make our joys complete.

He is ancient, but He is modern. "We are thankful, God, to have Thee as our Father."

## When The Dark Comes Down

I believe it was Winston Churchill who said, "It is only when the dark comes down that the stars shine."

There are many lessons in that statement for those who will look for them.

There is something here for those in trouble. Many times trouble is the forerunner of great good. A preacher told me some time ago about all the members of a family who were not Christians obeying the gospel because the death of one member of the family shocked them into thinking about the salvation of their souls. In this case one death brought the salvation of several. The shock and grief that fills one part of their life will be crowded out by the rays from the light which they have let in.

The greatest periods of prosperity of the nations have always come after a period of struggle and trouble. The things that make for happiness in the life of an individual have a way of slipping into our hearts after some real sacrifice that hurt us. The sun seems to shine much brighter after a long rainy spell. I am told by people who live out west where dust storms have become common in the past few years that the air always seems purer and the sun brighter after a dust storm. I have wondered when they told me if things were that different or if contrast was not revealing how good it was to breathe pure air and enjoy pure sunshine. We enjoy resting much more when we are tired. The hungry person seldom has much complaint about his food. People enjoy living much more after being ill for a time.

There is also a lesson in this for those who must struggle for existence. People who do not have to work are not to be envied. They are to be pitied. They never know the real joy of accomplishment. A very common statement is, "People appreciate much more that for which they have to work." We know this is

true in everything. Why do we enjoy reading about those who "came up the hard way?" The people who stand out in our American history are not those who had an easy time. We talk about our pilgrim fathers and most everyone is trying to find some of his people who came over on the first ship. We enjoy talking about the hard times they had. Some of the days that meant much to them still mean much to us. We keep their day of thanksgiving. We teach our children about their trials. We honor their memory. Why do we thus honor them? It is not because they had things pleasant and easy.

Take a glance back along the path you have come. Who are the people who stand out most in your memory in religious matters? Who are the people responsible for bringing the church through trying times. They were people who had to do a lot of sacrificing. Many of them walked much farther than we drive to worship. They hovered around an old stove in the middle of the room in order to keep warm. They sat on uncomfortable pews. Some of them often gave everything they had to keep the church alive. We honor their memory today. We are happy to claim kin to them. Many others have been forgotten. We cannot even recall their names. Why is this true? Which group do we remember and honor? Those who struggled. Their lives were bright because they walked through many shadows.

We should be thankful for the privilege of working, sacrificing, of suffering, and of giving to the cause of Christ. It is only in these things that our lights can really shine. Before a world in darkness, Jesus said, "Let your lights shine."

## Our Consolation

Love is something of great strength. It has added more to life than anything else. This comes as no surprise to us because we know that life is bound up in what we love. Love was that which prompted the sending of Christ into the world. "God so loved the world that he gave his son." Love was what made Christ willing to come to earth and die for us. His love was deep and abiding. It reached into the souls of men and sanctified their most secret thoughts. It lifted them out of their own mental loneliness and selfishness, and planted their affections on that which is real and worthwhile. It gave a zest to life that had never been known. No one can fully describe the effect of this great love.

The Bible speaks much of our love. It talks about our love for the brethren, our love for the Lord, and our love for the church, the bride of Christ. So great was the love of Paul for the church that he counted all other things as refuse. When he mentioned many of the harmful things that had befallen him during his ministry he said his care for the churches stood out above them all. What a consolation it must have been to him when he finally had to give his life into the hands of his tormentors, to know that his love for the Lord's church, hence the Lord's people, had directed him in all of his work. When one comes to the end of the way there certainly can be no consolation in remembering that he has mistreated those whom the Father loved, or that he has brought shame, rather than glory, to the world's greatest institution. But, regardless of how one must die, if he can realize that at all times his love for that which was right had controlling power in his life, he can die without a whimper because he knows that he has loved much, and that is his consolation.

There is a selfish love that gets instead of gives. It is doubtful that such can be called love at all, but it has been mentioned

as such. This is a love for self and not for others, not even for the church. It is a love that drives hard for its own way without any thought of the well-being of others. It may go so far as to mistreat others. It may retard the growth of the body of Christ. It may even cast a shadow over the church that people in the community will remember for years to come. It will even divide families. It cares not for the rights of others. It has little use for what is right and what is wrong. The fact that others may be starving is of little concern since first thoughts have to do with a full table for self. It does not consider that souls are dying out of Christ every hour of the day, so concerned is that love in satisfying its own selfish ambitions. Such love, if it can be called love, is never satisfied or consoled. When one with selfish love comes to die there is no happiness in departing.

But above and beyond this is the unselfish love that the Bible talks about. It is a love that finds its true joy in giving and not in getting. It finds real happiness in serving and not in being served. Such a love can make poverty a temptation and glorify the humble environment, because such love walks with Him who walks among all classes of men and loved them. When one is able to shake loose from too close association with self and replace his selfishness; when he can fully know the meaning of "seeking first the kingdom of God;" and when he can really feel his brothers' woes and be refreshed by holding out a helping hand, he is learning the meaning of love. Thus he is developing strength. Such love will hold him up in life and make his death a pleasant journey. This is our consolation.



## Falling Flowers

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever” (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

Let's add a statement of James to the one by Peter: “Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14).

Others have described life as “thread cut by the weaver,” and “water spilled on the ground.” These thoughts get before us the fact that at its longest life is short.

There is no reason to talk with you about the brevity of life. We see it all around us. We feel it in our own bodies. It is something no one can escape or deny. Life is short and you cannot depend on it. That is, you cannot know just the moment it will end. But if we enjoy a long life, it is still short. But we do not seem to want to admit this to ourselves. We know it is true with others, but with us, not so. Of course we do not deny it, but we just fail to face it. With us there is always plenty of time.

How long do you think you will live? If you have no longer time than you think, what are you going to do with it? Let us just suppose a case. The average person in America lives to be about sixty-five years old. Some live to be older and some never reach that age. That is the average. Now, just suppose you live an average life. How much do you have left? If you are sixty you have five years. If you are fifty you have just fifteen years. Figure from your age and see where you stand. Neither man nor God promises that you will live that long, but suppose you do, what are you doing with it? If you have fifteen years left are you going to spend them like you have the last fifteen? If you have just five will they be used like you have been using your years? It is time all of us were serious about this matter.

The time is coming when our work, our lives, will be ended. Then what? It will all depend on how we have used these years.

Too many of us are waiting to live the kind of life we know we should. This is as true with God's people as with anyone. In fact I believe this weakness is greater among the Lord's people than among those who do not belong to Him. Out yonder in the future we intend to do something for God. It is not our intention to always be like we are or to always live like we do. But the years slip by hardly noticed, and before we are aware of it time is up. What a sad awakening is it going to be for many of us.

These examples prove to us how precious life is. There is no way to value it. Jesus said one soul is greater than the whole world. We reveal how precious we think it is by our willingness to spend large amounts to keep our health. If necessary we will spend all we have and mortgage ourselves, if necessary, just to be able to hold onto life. But even then it cannot be held. It disappears like a vapor. It falls like the flower. If we will be sober about this matter we will want to use every moment we can for God. If we expect God to save us when life leaves the body we must use this life for Him. God is not going to keep a life throughout eternity that refused to live for Him while it existed on the earth. A life that denies God on the earth will be denied by Him in the judgment.

What are you doing with the flower God has given you? What will happen when it falls?

## No Need For Worry

In this day of unrest and disappointment when more people are worrying about what has not happened than at any period in the history of the world, such a statement as this is most refreshing: "Make a success of today, and you need not worry about tomorrow."

Most of our worries are about tomorrow. We wonder if we will be able to make a living tomorrow. This causes us to forget that we are making a living today. In fact it may cause us to cease to live as we should today in order to get ready for tomorrow. Jesus answered this problem for us when He said, "Be not anxious about the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). In the verse before this He gave the true cure for such worry. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." He was talking about such things as food, clothing and shelter. It would do us all good to read Matthew 6 often. No one will deny that life is very complicated, but the God who has brought us this far can carry us on from here. Making a living is only one of many worries that people have in our day.

We should be concerned about making a success of today. There will be no pleasure tomorrow in looking back on the failures of today. Most of us live between two parts of our lives which are constantly dealing us much misery. We are afraid of the future and worry about it while we regret the past. Why should anyone be forced to regret the past? The answer is found in the fact that he failed to realize the value of taking care of today. We often try to escape from the responsibilities of today by saying, "Oh, well, there will be another day tomorrow." If we will stop and think we will realize that if there is another day it cannot be enjoyed unless we have made a success of the day before it. Anything that I might put off doing

today by saying I will do it tomorrow, will either never be done, or else I will be forced to neglect something tomorrow in order to do what should have been done today. One thing we cannot do is cheat in the matter of time. Each day has the same number of hours as the day before. Those hours demand certain things of us. We will never have time to make up for the hours we have lost. They are gone and will never return. We all know this is true, and yet we go on acting as though we did not realize it. All of this does not mean that I may not be able to be a greater success tomorrow than I have been today, but it does mean that the measure of success tomorrow depends on how well we succeed today.

One might ask, "Where do I start, since I have already made some failures in days gone by?" You can start today. God will forgive you for past failures in His service if you will genuinely repent. When He has freed you from the burden of yesterday's failures, then make today what it should be in order that you may have no worries tomorrow. This does not mean that we will not have problems, but we are serving a God who can solve all our difficulties if we succeed in living for Him a day at a time.

## The Goose Hangs High

I don't know where, or with whom, this statement originated, but I know what it means. It means, "All is well," and in the language of men it expresses that which takes place in Christ.

One of our greatest blessings in being followers of Christ is that of knowing that the condition of the world has no effect on us. Paul said, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:33-39). If we cannot be separated from the love of Christ, then all is well.

All was well with the disciples when they were caught in the middle of a storm. Old Galilee was restless that night. She was tossing as one unable to find a resting place. The little ship was rocking in the storm and the disciples were afraid. The Lord was asleep. They awoke Him and He rebuked the winds. All was well. The presence of the Lord made it so. Then there was the night that Galilee again was unable to find rest, and the disciples were in the ship alone. They were sore afraid. But in the middle of the night the Lord came walking on the water, and all was well. There was always a great calm when Christ appeared.

All was well with the multitude when Christ was there to satisfy their hunger. Through the heat of the day and until the shadows were gradually wrapping their blanket around the earth for the night, this multitude had followed Christ. They were tired and hungry. The disciples wanted to send them away, but the Lord knew they needed to be refreshed. They had, however, only a few loaves and fishes. Jesus had them to sit down upon the ground. Taking the bread He gave thanks to God. They fed the multitude, five thousand men, beside women

and children, and the multitude went away satisfied. All was well because the Lord was there.

All was well at the grave of Lazarus when Christ appeared. For several days they had been grieving. Many times his sisters had looked down the road to see if Christ was coming. Some time before they had sent Him word that His friend was very ill. Already he had died, and yet Christ had not come. The sisters had given up the idea that they could be helped. But Jesus came. By His word, Lazarus walked out of the tomb, and all was well.

This is almost an endless story. His life is summed up in the statement, "He went about doing good." Where He went people were blessed, but all that time He was making possible something greater for them and for generations yet to come. When He died it was that all things might be well. Man had no power to save himself. No law had been given that could take away sins. No sacrifice had been made that was sufficient to atone for sins. But Jesus became that sacrifice. In doing this He answered every question that had been throbbing in the human mind throughout many generations. He opened the way from earth to heaven and made all things well.

If we view this lesson from the standpoint of a faithful congregation of the Lord's people, the answer is the same. All is well. When people are willing to draw near to Christ and serve Him, He will see that all is well. No power on earth can keep the Lord's people from moving on to greater things for Him if they will remain close to Him, for He has the power to see us through.

We read of His power over all that would hinder His cause. In our own lives we have witnessed this power. When life has been most bitter, we have always found the outstretched hand of Him who was able to put restless Galilee to sleep and feed a multitude with a few loaves and fishes. We lean upon His promise that we are in a kingdom that cannot be shaken. So while the world seems unable to find a resting place, and the enemies of Christ are trying to destroy the happiness of His people, we lean securely upon Him, and realize that all is well.

"The goose hangs high."

## Looking Up

Someone has said, "If Providence did not knock us flat on our backs once in a while, many of us would never learn to look up."

Why do we wait until trouble comes before we look up to God? This is one of the most difficult things to understand about human beings. We know that we live in God's world. Regardless of how much energy we may use to obtain the blessings of life, they are gifts of God. Without God all our efforts would be in vain. But when we are enjoying life we are prone to forget that God is the giver of all our joy.

The history of God's people in Old Testament times reveals that they were like us in this matter. We see periods of prosperity and of calamity. When they served God with all their hearts everything worked out well for them. Of course that does not mean that they escaped the common happenings of life. They grew old and died. They knew disease and separation. God does not promise to keep these things from happening. But there were times when they forgot their God and often turned to serving idol gods. They allowed their heathen neighbors to have more influence in their lives than the true God. When, because of their sinfulness, God allowed some enemy to take them into bondage they always cried to God for deliverance. Never did the city of Jerusalem look so beautiful as it did the years they had to spend away from it. But when they were living in their own country, surrounded by so many blessings from God, they forgot God again.

The history of the first fifty years of the church on earth is one of the most thrilling records ever written. We read in the Acts about the joy of God's people. They were so thankful that after so long the promises of God had been fulfilled and their Christ had come. They were so filled with zeal for the house of God that they could not rest until they had told others about it.

People were added to the church by the thousands, and they found happiness in spite of the opposition they encountered from the Jews and from the Roman government. But the church soon grew in favor and was rapidly becoming the most powerful force on the earth. Then God was forgotten. His people began to pattern their worship after pagan worship and after the orders of Rome. Before Paul died he could see the great fall coming that was to take away most of the power of the Lord's body for a period of time. God was forgotten and men began to perish.

"Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the world," is a promise on which all of us can depend. I can be assured by this promise that the guiding hand of the Almighty will be with me in the days when I enjoy good health and also in the days when my health is gone. He will be with me when I am surrounded by plenty, and He will be with me when I have little of this world's goods. And the history of God's dealings with His people proves that when God is present, whether I have little or much, everything works for my good and all is well. Why, then, should we wait until our health is gone to look up to God?

Why should we wait until some loved one is separated from us by death to call on Him? Why should we wait until our material substance is taken away to come crawling back to Him? Some of God's people have stayed close to Him always, and they are those with whom He has been well pleased.

Job said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord." I am not surprised that God said, "There are none like Job on the earth."



## The Other Obstacles

“What helped you most over the obstacles of life?” the newsman asked the successful man. He replied, “The other obstacles.”

Some of our greatest blessings are often thought of as being our worst enemies. A little thinking will reveal the fact that sometimes an enemy can be a very good friend. People become great, not because everything came their way, but because they made everything come their way.

Nearly everyone likes to read stories of the lives of great men. Of course, some of these stories do not tell all the truth, but we have read enough of them to know that men rise to greatness because of the problems they have to solve. It is in meeting difficulties that we develop our strength. When Paul realized this he thanked God for the troubles that came his way.

Since my life has been spent preaching and most of my work has been of a religious nature, my thinking naturally turns to religious work. What do we remember most about Christ? His trials. What do we remember most about the apostles? The difficulties they encountered. How were they able to do the most for us? Same answer. As I look back through the years I can recall many great preachers, elders and teachers I have known. Without exception those I know gained strength through difficulties. Life was not always easy for them. But they were among the most winsome company who were able to make their obstacles stepping stones to greater things. Some great saints I have known became great because of their problems.

That which is true of the individual is also true of the church. I am thinking now about a church that existed for many years without doing much for the Lord. One wealthy member of the church gave most of the money necessary to

carry on the work. This went on for years. The one member built and paid for a lovely building. This one member paid the preacher's salary. Not only his salary, but frequently the elders would go to that person for added help because the congregation was not giving much. People learned to depend on this one member. This church never met the ordinary problems of a growing church because one member saw that these problems did not arise. One day this member died. Suddenly the church was faced with something that it had not faced before. If the church survived it had to do so without the aid of one who had financed it for many years. Brethren arose to the task. They got down to business. They began to plan and do their own work. The result was surprising even to them. They had more strength than they had known. Without the aid of the one, the many had to get to work and to giving. It was good for them, and the church grew to greater strength than was ever known before. Obstacles made for growth, and the end of one member's support proved to be a blessing.

It is easy, when we are hurt, to say, "What have I done to deserve this?" This means we are feeling great sympathy for ourselves. We feel that we have been mistreated. Surely the Lord got mixed up and brought the troubles of someone else to us. But if we could only believe in what we read in the Bible, and could see in the lives of others, we would recognize our problems for what they really are. God does not allow them to happen because He hates us or because we have been bad. If He did not allow them to happen He would not love us. If obstacles never came we would be nothing but weak, selfish, spoiled, undeveloped little children. But if we have the proper attitude toward them we will use them for the very purpose they are allowed to come. Then, if in the providence of God, we are able to look back from the heights, we will say with David, "It was good for me to have been in trouble."

## Take A Look At Yourself

I read once about a man who had his home lined with mirrors because he believed they were educational. He believed if people would look at self more often they would be better people. Someone put it this way: "Most people are well-behaved before their mirrors. If the looking glass could be placed before them frequently enough, they might be uniformly well-behaved. Look into a mirror often . . . not for vanity's sake, but to assimilate character into your immortal soul."

Another story is about a public school teacher whose pupils gave her a desk mirror, and at the same time suggested to her that she look into it any time and see how pretty she was when she smiled and how ugly when she frowned. That mirror, we are told, worked a wonderful transformation. The teacher was changed from a cross and crabbed character to one that smiled often and steadily regained her popularity.

If people could only see themselves as they really are the world would be a much better place in which to live. Or perhaps we should say that we need to see ourselves as others see us.

The Holy Spirit provided us a mirror for our souls, but it is sadly neglected. He said, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. For whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deeds" (Jas. 1:21-26).

No doubt one of the reasons people do not read the word often is because it reveals what they are, and this is an image we do not like to see.

Many books have been written telling us how we can be well-liked people. Much is said about developing a friendly attitude. We have been told of the value of learning to like others and conducting ourselves toward them as if we did like them. Some have written much about the value of being helpful to others. None of us can deny the value of the advice that is given, but some of us know that such advice was given by the Holy Spirit hundreds of years before the authors of some of our best sellers were born. Any person who will apply the teaching contained in the Sermon on the Mount to his own life will become a person that anyone would enjoy being around. Not only is this true, but the very attitude that following this advice would develop in us, would lead us to success in any worthwhile undertaking.

We need to take a look at ourselves more often than we do. When we do look, instead of denying the blemishes that the mirror shows, we should try to remove them. To make excuse for our failures is to keep them and suffer because of them. To face them and admit they are there is the first step toward finding a way to remove them. The word of God not only tells us what is wrong with us, but it also tells us how we can get rid of that which is wrong. We can become the kind of people with whom any good person would like to associate, and one with whom God would delight to dwell, if we would only look into the mirror He has provided often enough, and follow the directions He gives for getting rid of our blemishes.

## Neglected Homes

There is no question in the minds of those who think that one of the major problems of our civilization is the break-down of the American home. It has not come about suddenly, and neither did it come about intentionally. I believe it has come about as a result of our failure to recognize our greatest values.

Some time ago I read this statement: "If he's really active in a group dedicated to fighting juvenile delinquency, integrating the family, and making fathers pals of their sons, a man can avoid having dinner or an evening at home for months at a time." Now, who would question the value of these things? But, are they more valuable than the home?

One person is busy making a living. A man once came to talk with me about the problems that were wrecking his home. He said, "I have been so busy trying to make enough to pay bills and provide better things for my family that I have not been a very good husband or father." That which caught up with him has also caught up with many men and will catch up with many others. What he was doing is fine in its place. It is good for a man to provide for his family. But there comes a time when he must decide whether it is best to provide all the physical comforts of a home at the expense of being a husband and father. Those who have tried it have found that it is too great a price to pay. Why should a man use all his time building a home that can never be a home? What will his family have for which to thank him? Too many people believe that the greatest duty of being the head of a house is providing food and clothing. Actually, in the eyes of Jesus, those were the lesser things of life.

Then there is the woman who feels that she must be a part of every social organization in her community. Of course, we recognize the value of most of these organizations. But many mothers never get to spend much time with their children be-

cause they are busy entertaining or being entertained. Children are reared by others or left to pester the neighbors. Later, when the children get into trouble, the mother does not understand wherein she failed. Somehow many women expect their children, and husbands, to be proud of them because they are able to do a lot of things socially, but many women have lost their husbands for that very reason. Children need a mother and men need wives. Whatever it takes to be a good homemaker should be first in relation to the home. A home can never be made while staying away from it.

These social activities also have a way of destroying our usefulness to God. Any time they are allowed to interfere with our service to God they are wrong, regardless of how right they may be otherwise. Jesus said, "seek ye first the kingdom of God." Sometimes they keep people from attending services at night. They have a meeting with their club. Or they keep people from attending many night of a gospel meeting. You cannot afford to use club night for church, you know. I remember having dinner in the home of a man during a meeting. After dinner he said, "My son and I won't be at services tonight. This is our show night. We always go to the show on this night each week." He thought he was doing that which was best for his child. He wanted to be a pal with his boy. But, while doing what he thought was good, he was teaching his boy that the show was more important than worshipping God. Even God could stand aside while they went to the show. It is no wonder that a boy who has such disadvantages, which some call advantages, grows up with little respect for the church.

America needs to get back to the home and home life: a home where people love to be together; a home where people can read the Bible together, pray together, and attend worship together. Such homes will make any nation strong. Without them any nation is weak.

## Wrinkled Souls

“Years wrinkle the skin; but to give up activity wrinkles the soul.”

Listen to a few statements from the Bible:

“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whosoever looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (Jas. 1:22-25).

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

Christ recognized the value of work and spoke of it often. He saw the value in it for those who work and also for those for whom the work is done. Serving Christ, and thus serving humanity, has a twofold blessing. The greater blessings come to the person doing the work.

A person who is content to sit back and have his leisure-time pursuits slapped onto him like a mustard plaster starts degenerating and growing old the moment he develops that attitude toward life. It is a well known fact that a person is young as long as he is a *doer*. When he becomes only a spectator, it is a sure sign of approaching old age, regardless of how many years he may have lived. One thing we can easily see about youth is that it assumes continuous growing. A person is as young as his faith, his confidence, his enthusiasm, and energy. He is as old as his doubt, despair, fear, and love for the easy chair. But one who continues to be a doer never becomes old. Only the onlooker grows old.

Many people are growing old before their time and are becoming useless to the cause of Christ because they have become hearers and not doers. Some people never become anything but hearers. From the moment they learned that baptism is for the remission of sins, they closed their ears and refused to learn more. They decided to stake their all on obedience to that one commandment. Hence, about all they can offer when they stand in judgment is, "I've been baptized." Others realize that baptism only removes past sins but does not suffice for the work that a child of God must do. These people become active in the Lord's work. They are responsible for the conversion of many who are lost. They help to make possible many great works done by the church of which they are members. They thrill to the growth of the cause of Christ without ever giving a thought to the idea of being only an onlooker. Thus their faith continues to grow, and regardless of how their bodies may decay their spirits are renewed day by day. And when the years have pressed many wrinkles upon the face, changed the color of the hair, and made the form to stoop toward the grave, the soul continues without the wrinkles of old age. They die physically because the body has grown old, but they continue to live in the joy of youth made possible by a closer walk with the giver of life.

Are you a spectator or a participator? Are you an onlooker or a worker? Find the answer to these questions and you can know whether you are growing old or remaining young. The answer will also tell us where we will spend eternity.



## Today Is Ours

Most people spend their lives in anticipation, in determining to be happy at some period when they have time, without realizing that the only time they have is the present. Someone has said, "We may lay in a stock of pleasures as we would lay in a stock of wine, but if we defer the tasting of them too long, we shall find that both are soured by age."

I do not know why it is that we will listen to neither experience nor the Bible in matters of this kind. Experience has taught us that the person who waits to live seldom gets around to doing so. The Bible says, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. . . . Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:13-17). But in spite of all we have learned by living and reading the Bible we continue to plan to do better tomorrow and allow today to slip by without accomplishing that which it makes possible.

Most of us deal with our families in this way. We fully intend to give more time to our children sometime in the future, but we are busy making a living today. Tomorrow comes and the baby is grown into a lad, or the lad into a man, and the things we had thought to do are no longer welcomed by the child. Besides we have found that in growing older we do not have the taste for the things we would have enjoyed when younger. So the child grows up without the close association and guidance that he desires and needs.

Husbands and wives deal that way with each other. We intend to get around to being together more, or telling each other how much he, or she, has meant to our lives, but we are busy at the present. That can always wait. Time slips by and the word

is never spoken that might have made life worth living a long time ago. The grim reaper comes along and snatches one away and we wish we had uttered the unspoken words or had taken the time to do what we planned for the day that was never allowed to be.

Our greatest mistake is in thus dealing with the Lord. Many times I have had people say to me, "I'm going to do this or that and then I will be in position to do more in the Lord's work. You'll see what I will do then." But "this and that" is allowed to crowd the Lord out for the present. Time goes by and those who thus plan do not seem to be able to get around to doing what they intended. Or if the time does come they find that they have grown too old, or too far away from the Lord, to be able to do the work they once could have done.

If only we could convince ourselves that today is all we have! If we do not make the best of it we will lose it forever. If today is not what it should be the chances are that tomorrow will not be either, even if God allows us to live until tomorrow. Many a soul has been lost that would have responded to the gospel had we spoken about it, but all the time we were waiting until tomorrow to talk with them about obeying the Lord. Many a discouraged child of God does without being able to touch hands with the Master who would have gladly joined hands with Him had we not delayed to encourage him to do right. How sad many of us will be in the judgment when we realize that some are eternally separated from God who might have lived with Him throughout eternity had we not allowed today to slip by while we were waiting to speak to them tomorrow.

Today is ours. It is all we have. Tomorrow may never be. Then let us use today as though we would not have another. If tomorrow does come we will know how to use it properly. Only in this way can we expect to enjoy life either here or hereafter.

## God Will Supply The Thread

An old proverb says, "Begin your web, and God will supply the thread."

As we take a glance into the lives of people who lived for God in the long ago we are made aware of the provision of God for those who were willing to begin. No better example is recorded than that of Abraham. God told him some things that were going to happen if he would follow God's directions. There was no way to tell him how God was going to bring these things to pass. They were beyond the comprehension of man. Had He told him He would have taken away the action by faith. Without knowing how God would accomplish His promises, Abraham began his journey, and sure enough God took care of things as they went along. This was true in the lives of all the saints of Old Testament times.

Not only was this true of people who lived for God before the coming of Christ, but it was also true of those who followed Christ when He came. It was as necessary for them to walk by faith as it was for those who had lived before. The only difference was that a little more light was shining on their path. Christ called on people to do things they could not understand the reason for doing, but when they were willing to do as He directed everything turned out as He said it would.

We need to learn that God is dealing with us in the same way today. God has never expected anything of man that he was not able to do, but God does not always accept our conclusion concerning our ability. He taught this lesson in the parable of the talents. The man who failed to use what he had was condemned. Nothing was expected of him beyond his ability. There was nothing unfair in what took place. He was given the talent "according to his ability," but he failed to use it. He was unwilling to begin. The other two used what they had been given and gained more. They were blessed because of it.

I believe there is enough ability going to waste in the Lord's church to convert the world. Many people would make good teachers who have never been willing to try. There are others who would be outstanding personal workers who are afraid to venture. There are others who could be much more liberal with the Lord than they are, but they are afraid they would lose something by doing so. They cannot accept the promise of Christ when He said, "give and it shall be given unto you." The many needs of human beings present a great challenge to the Lord's people, but thousands never have their needs supplied because the very person who could help them is unwilling to begin with God because of fear of failure.

One day God called on a man to do something that seemed impossible. He asked him to leave his sheep and go into the most powerful nation in the world and lead about three million slaves out. This man protested, but God insisted. He called attention to his weakness, but God reminded him that He would make provision for weakness. Finally he went, as God directed, and these people were led out of bondage and finally into their own land. On the journey things happened that would have completely destroyed them had they not been marching with God. These impossible situations turned into blessings and everything turned out well.

When the Bible is filled with stories as this, and we can see that God has always provided for His people, how can we refuse to believe that God will provide for us if we will follow His directions? Yes, if we will begin our web, God will provide the thread.

## The Heart Of A Mouse

According to an old fable a mouse once lived in the home of a magician. The mouse was in constant fear of cats. Taking pity on the mouse, the magician changed it into a cat. But immediately it began to suffer with fear of dogs, so the magician turned it into a dog. Then it began to fear the tigers, and the magician turned it into a tiger. In the form of a tiger it trembled at the sight of hunters. Thereupon the magician bellowed: "Out upon you! Be a mouse again! You have only the heart of a mouse!"

Perhaps one of the greatest handicaps people have is fear, and it can never be erased by material things. Nations arm themselves because of their fear of other nations, but the superior power does not erase the fear. A man loses his health, and his religion, trying to lay up treasure because he is afraid of being in want. I have yet to see the person satisfied when he has an abundance laid up. His fears are still with him. If he is afraid of want when he has plenty he will be afraid of losing it. Usually the person who is most afraid of ill health has less good health than others.

Fear has a way of creating what it fears. It does not matter whether a thing is real or just a part of our imagination, it will do the same damage in either case. We are told that many of our diseases are created by imagination. Also we are told that many times we imagine that we are ill when in reality we are in good health. In either case we do the same suffering. I have heard many people say that if they drink coffee at night it will keep them awake. Others say it is only their imagination. In either case they stay awake. Fear takes on many forms, and it has its way of destroying people.

I know people, and churches, that are able to do much more than they are doing for the Lord. In many cases the reason they are not doing as they should is because they are

afraid. The church may have some men within the leadership who are afraid to venture. Their minds are settled on material things. They believe in God, surely, but they do not believe all God says. They are afraid to trust either God or man. As a result much work is not done. Many people are not measuring up to their ability in serving Christ, not because of lack of ability, but because they are afraid to venture. They are like the one talent man who hid his talent because of fear.

The Holy Spirit caused John to write, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." We can understand this when we remember that Jesus said if we love Him we would keep His commandments. Anyone who is willing to keep the commands of God and shape his life according to His plans has nothing to fear. After all, God is with us, and when He is with us nothing can be against us. Since I am a child of God and live in His world why should I be afraid? Since I am a part of the body of Christ, which He promises to save, why be overcome with fear? Peter gave us good advice when he said, "Casting all your cares on Him for He careth for you."

I can understand why anyone would live in fear if he tried to live without God. After all, if one does not have God with him he has nothing. But I cannot understand why we live in fear when we walk with the One who is responsible for our being, our keeping, and our destiny.

## **Cheerful Yesterdays And Confident Tomorrows**

It was Wordsworth who said about one of whom he was writing, "He is a man of cheerful yesterdays and confident tomorrows." Surely there is much in this statement worth thinking about.

*Cheerful yesterdays!* How fortunate one is who has them. Most people look back on their yesterdays with a feeling of regret. There are so many things they would change if they had the power now to change them. Hence they go through life living in constant regret of yesterday. Usually this person does not find himself in that condition without having been warned. People of every generation have had their warnings. Those who find themselves living in constant remorse because of the evil of their yesterdays deliberately defied warnings and placed themselves in this position. They saw others falling all around them but they thought they would be able to stand. They believed they were big enough to trample others under their feet. They could ignore the rights of others. They could force others to bow to them or they would run them out of the country. They could make others quake at the very sound of their voice of warning. But time has a way of making things catch up with us. Then comes remorse.

Others believed they could go right on ignoring the laws of nature and of good health. They could use both mind and body as they would. Doctors warned them about what was happening. Gradually disease developed, mentality became warped, and then old rumors set in. They were too busy making money to listen. Having a good time, satisfying every lustful desire of the flesh, was their chief aim. It did not matter that they had to ignore the rest of the world and every right

principle they were determined to satisfy every longing of both mind and body. But now remorse has set in. Pain reminds them each day of the mistakes of yesterday. Disease is creeping toward the heart, or the mind, and they see no hope of brighter days. Yesterday is a nightmare and tomorrow is a snake pit. What living this must be! What a price to pay for a little foolishness.

*Confident tomorrows!* Of course the cheerful yesterdays have helped to make tomorrow what it is. It is to be admitted that all of us are going to look back on mistakes. Even the best of us will do this. But if we have heeded the warning soon enough and through the help of God blotted out those mistakes, tomorrow takes on a brightness for us even in the face of yesterday's defeat. Those who have served God can look back through the years and see the guiding hand of the Almighty. Then they can say, "He who hath brought us hitherto shall keep us all our journey through."

These people have a right to look with confidence on tomorrow for the hand that knows how to guide men is holding their hand as they march through life. There may be those who say, "I have no cheerful yesterdays, what shall I do?" One need not continue through life without them. You can begin today to store up cheerful yesterdays for tomorrow. Just because some mistakes have been made in life does not mean that the whole life needs be a mistake. At the present looking back may hold no ray for you at all, but tomorrow you will be looking back on today.

What are you doing today? Someone has said, "Today is the tomorrow you dreamed about yesterday; what are you doing with today?" It is possible that all the sons and daughters of God can have both cheerful yesterdays and confident tomorrows. But in order to have them we must begin to do right today. If we will take care of today the yesterdays and tomorrows will soon be taking care of themselves.



## **“You Can’t Get Lost On A Straight Road”**

The late John McCutcheon once was asked to give some advice to the young. He hesitated a moment and then repeated the words of Akbar, the ancient Mogul emperor: “I have lived a long time, but I have yet to see a man lost on a straight road.”

Jesus said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

If all the people who once started out to walk in the way of Christ marked out before them, could be reclaimed, multiplied thousands would be saved who are headed for destruction.

Some start in the right way and perhaps live for Christ for a time, but they are side-tracked by the call of the world. They think they can see more satisfaction in being what others want them to be than in being what the Lord demands. Of course, they have to make some change in their thinking in order to allow themselves this departure. They may become offended at some of the Lord’s people and use that as an excuse to depart. They may persuade themselves that it does not matter whether one is strict in his obedience or not, so long as he does what he thinks is right, and with this excuse departs. Or it may be that they have no intention of going so far when they decide to go a little way into evil. They intend to get back. And using their intentions to soothe their conscience they drift away from Christ without realizing how far they have gone. It is sometimes easier for people to be influenced by their associates than by Christ. The demands of the moment often cast a shadow on the outcome. Hence, those who are weak can be easily led astray.

Others follow the strait and narrow for a time but do not find any satisfaction for a craving for attention. For the

moment they become more interested in turning the light on themselves than holding before others the light of the world. They follow some person who has a new doctrine. It may have much truth in it, but also some error. It may point out some things that those who are in the right way are doing which seem to be wrong. Without any investigation weak people become the followers of one who has a doctrine that contradicts the teaching of Christ. In the early days of the church this was a major problem. This problem has always been with us. There have always been those who would cry, "Lo, here and lo, there," but the early disciples were warned to "believe them not." The history of such conduct reveals nothing but sorrow and separation from that which is right.

Then there are those who are led astray by the pressure of business. They believe that "their line of work" calls for so much compromise with evil and that Christ will understand and overlook their conduct. They have forgotten that Jesus said, "Except ye love me more than houses and lands, ye are not worthy to be my disciples." His call is to forsake all and follow Him.

No, you can't get lost on a straight road. When one decides to follow Christ, and only Christ, and thus refuses to be tempted by the call of the world, or led astray by the hobbies of men, he need have no worries of losing his way. The way of righteousness is the way of the inspired word of God, and any other way will only lead to unhappiness and destruction.

## **Lasting Friendships**

Someone has said, "Two persons cannot long be friends if they cannot forgive each other's little failings." We can understand the truth of this statement because of the differences among people.

Had it not been for the principle of forgiveness established by the Lord, life would be bitter for all of us. One time Peter came to Christ, and said, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, until seventy times seven." If I understand the lesson of the Lord here, He was declaring there is no end to the matter so long as a person is willing to repent.

Little failings among people are numerous. It is doubtful that any two people ever completely satisfied each other. This does not happen even in the close ties of family life. This does not mean that the differences cause difficulty, but that they are overlooked. We are willing to overlook the faults of others because we love them. After all, it is no crime to differ with another. But a friendship that cannot overlook differences in opinion is not much friendship.

There are many reasons why we do not all think and act alike. After all, we have not all had the same advantages and opportunities. We have been reared in different environments. We have viewed life from the background that has been a part of our lives. We have seen things and had experiences that others have escaped. Hence, our thinking is apt to be colored by these experiences. Others who have had a different life are naturally going to think in terms of the knowledge they have gained from living. This may cause a clash in our ideas and our outlook on life. We are not to blame for these early experiences. Many of them we are forced to overcome if we would

live successfully, and many attitudes must be overlooked by those who would remain our friends.

We have all had our close friends. Life would be utterly miserable without them. But a close examination will prove that these friends have not always agreed with us on everything. Neither have they approved everything we have done. But they have been our friends, and hence have been willing to be friends in spite of our differences. Lasting friendships are built upon this foundation. This does not mean that our friends would approve of anything wrong we might do. Neither does it mean they would uphold us in wrong. But it does mean that they try to help us when they believe us to be wrong. They do not turn their backs on us because they disagree with us. We have all heard some referred to as "fair-weather" friends. The expression suggests that they were friends so long as it was to their advantage, but when they ceased to gain something by the friendship they turned away. Actually it is a mistake to refer to that kind of association as friendship, for a real friend remains such regardless of the sunshine or rain. Real friendship is like love, it comes from within. Outward circumstances cannot destroy it.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Henceforth I call ye friends." He was, and is, a friend in spite of our weaknesses. He never fails. One who is a friend of Christ does not fail Him. Christ's friends are those who do not allow outward conditions to affect their spiritual lives. They allow nothing to come between them and their Christ. Regardless of what happens, they go on loving and serving. I am sure the Lord receives pleasure in saying to the Father, "These are my friends." For He said, "Ye are my friends if ye do what I command you."

## Pleasure And Happiness

Many people make the mistake of thinking pleasure is happiness. As a result happiness is never found. However, neither in the writings of wise men nor inspired men do we find any suggestion that pleasure is happiness.

When Jesus was here He warned against following our own pleasures. The apostles sounded the same warning. The world had existed for several thousand years and in all of man's struggles he had never located happiness. Jesus taught that one should look the other way.

Many things are pleasant according to the standard of man. And all that is pleasant is not wrong. We are not taught to deliberately seek unpleasantness, or create it for others. But that which is pleasant to man does not always bring real happiness. People who have developed a taste for alcohol find drinking a pleasant experience. The effects are not pleasant, but there is a certain amount of pleasure or they would not drink. Those who gamble find a certain thrill in trying to get something as a result of chance. Those who engage in satisfying the lusts of the flesh find pleasure in the satisfaction. There is "pleasure in sin for a season."

If all sinning was unpleasant there would be no more sinning. When the devil tempted Eve to sin he pointed out the fact that the forbidden fruit was something to be desired. It would be pleasant to become like God. It would be a delightful experience to know good from evil. Had he told her that death would come as the result of eating the forbidden fruit, as God said it would, she would never have eaten it. But he told her God was wrong in what He said. I am sure, whatever this forbidden fruit was, she received a thrill from partaking of it. But all of us know the results.

The fact that people think pleasure is happiness is demonstrated in the way we live. Some time ago I read about six

answers to the question: "What would you do if you suddenly became heir to a million dollars." Only one person in the six said anything about giving any of it to the Lord's work. Others were concerned about bank accounts, new homes, and the like. This is not to say these would be wrong if we allowed God to come first in our lives, but it does point out the fact that the first concern of most people is pleasure. And the reason for that concern is the fact that they believe happiness can be found there.

As you and I view it, there was not much pleasure on earth for our Christ. He had no place to lay His head. According to His own estimation He did not have as much as a fox or fowl, but we cannot read in any book about a happier person. No one ever brought so much sunshine to so many. This was also true of the disciples. They found that happiness did not depend on pleasure.

Because we do think that pleasure is happiness, we search for pleasure. While we are so doing happiness passes us by. We need to accept the Lord's estimate of life. When we do we will see that real happiness comes from service. He told His disciples that the one who would be greatest among them must be the servant of all. Sometimes our most happy experiences are not the most pleasant. The person who learns this knows how to live. And he has found something that will not only afford him satisfaction while he lives on earth, but something that can reach on into the next world and be waiting for him with treasure that will last forever.

## Nourishers Of Each Other

John Bunyan once said, "Christians are like the several flowers in a garden that have each of them the dew of Heaven, which, being shaken with the wind, they let fall at each other's roots, whereby they are jointly nourished, and become nourishers of each other."

People were not made to live alone. God said in the beginning He saw it was not good for man to be alone. We need each other in more ways than we can imagine. We can see it in everything else, but it is equally true in our religious work.

Paul once put it this way: "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacketh: That there should be no schism in the body: but that the members should have the same care for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:14-27).

In speaking of the body to the Ephesians Paul said Christ was the head, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said Christ was the head "from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Col. 2:19).

Thus we have a picture of people receiving their existence from one source, that is from Christ, and each person of the body supplying something to the well-being of the body.

It is a mistake for a person to think he can live without nourishment he receives from his brethren. Those who get to thinking they can usually separate themselves from the church and die. It is in like manner a mistake for one to think that he need not contribute something to the good of the rest of the body. Regardless of why he may think this, he has no right to so think. Some people think in terms of their littleness, as compared to the greatness of another. Thus they feel justified in withdrawing into their own little shell because they do not feel that others need the little service they can render. This is a serious misake. It is a dangerous attitude. Go back again, if you have been feeling like that, and read what Paul said to the Corinthians about the smaller parts. God will be the one to value your service anyway. Let us not place ourselves in the position of trying to dictate to God. Let us render our service to Him, assist our brethren in every way possible, build up the body of Christ, and though it may be very little in our eyes, God will consider it great.

Truly we are nourishers of each other.



## Alone With God

We have often wondered how Jesus could have had the strength to stand what He did the night He died. I have known some very strong people, but I doubt that I have known one strong enough to take what He took. He was a man. He had feelings just like other men. He was tempted in all points just as we are yet without sin. So we know that He suffered as we would and much more because He carried the burdens of the world on His shoulders.

Yet, He did not break. The only answer that sounds reasonable to me is found in the long hours He spent alone with God. With Him it was not a minute snatched here and there for a hurried prayer, but hours and sometimes all night. He spent much time talking things over with God. Just before they took Him to kill Him He prayed three times alone in the garden. Much time alone with God must have given Him great strength that many of us know little about.

Moses spent a lot of time alone with God. Once when God became angry with the Israelites because they turned their backs on Him and told Moses to stand aside while He destroyed them, Moses started praying. He did not pray for just a few minutes, but forty days and forty nights. He did not let up until he had persuaded God to change His mind and save the nation. The more we read about Moses the stronger we see he was. His was a great work but he was great enough to do it. Hence he saved a nation. Where did he get his strength? He spent much time alone with God.

Elijah stood against a very wicked nation. So corrupt had the nation become that he felt he stood alone for God in the whole wide world. It was not exactly that bad but it was bad enough. It was his duty to cry against the wickedness of that nation. In order to bring the people to their knees God had Elijah to tell them something was going to happen that they

would not like. In fact, it became necessary for God to hide Elijah because of it. Once when Elijah had to flee for his life because Jezebel had sent him word she would kill him, he went a day's journey into the wilderness and sat under a juniper tree and wanted to die. God put him to sleep and then awoke him to eat. Then he went unto Horeb, the mount of God. As he stood on the mount a great strong wind rent the mountains, but God was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but God was not in the earthquake. Then after the earthquake there was the fire, but God was not in the fire. And after the fire a sound of gentle stillness. God spoke to him out of the stillness. In his sacred solitude, Elijah learned that there were others standing with him, and he received strength necessary to march on to victory.

We need to be alone with God much more than we are. If we spent more time alone with God we would get to know Him better. We need to know Him better than we do. If we knew Him well we would understand many things about Him and about ourselves that would help us much to be the kind of people He wants us to be and get from life much more pleasure than any of us have ever known. Companionship with God is the real purpose of our existence. Anything other than that is our second best. The key to all real happiness is acquaintance with God. For this we need to spend more time alone with Him.

## Fear Of Failure

No doubt most of us have known what it is to be unable to do something as well as the other fellow. Perhaps in our childhood some friends laughed at us because we failed. Or it may be that some unthoughtful parent tried to make us better by enlarging our failures. Whatever the reason, of this one thing we are sure: most people are afraid to fail. Hence many people never begin.

The Lord related a parable that dealt with this fear. He told of a certain man who called unto him three of his servants. He gave one of them five talents, another two and another one. After this he went on a journey and was away from home for some time. When he returned he called these servants to him and asked for an accounting of their talents. One of these men said, "I was afraid and hid thy talent." He was afraid he would fail. Rather than fail he did nothing. He could only give back to his master what had been given him. The master was not pleased. He had no sympathy at all for his fears. He took the one talent away from him and had him thrown out. Surely we should get a lesson from this story that could help us in overcoming this fear.

In the first place we should have no fears of the outcome of a work the Lord wants us to do. Actually, we are being unfair with the Lord and are accusing Him of being unfair. When we read the record of God's dealings with man we find them undertaking many difficult works. Sometimes that which they were called upon to do separated them from the people they loved. Some had to leave their own land and spend their lives in a far country. Some had to do without pleasures they might have enjoyed had they refused to try. Some of them were given tasks that would seem to us impossible, but none of them failed if they continued to trust in the Lord who was leading them. It may be that I cannot do as much as some people, but it also

may be that the Lord does not expect me to do as much. Of this I can be certain, I can do what the Lord wants me to do because He does not require more of me than I am capable of doing. Hence I have no reason to fear that I will fail.

In the second place, consider the evil to which our fears lead. No doubt there have been people die without any knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ just because some follower of Christ was afraid to speak to him about the salvation of his soul. No doubt there have been many important works left undone because someone was afraid to undertake it for fear of making a mistake. How could one plead in the judgment when he witnesses someone being lost when all he has to offer are his fears? What would it mean to Christ if we say, "Lord, I was afraid my neighbor would not take it in the right way. I was afraid I would offend him. I let him die and be lost forever just because I was afraid of losing his friendship"? I do not believe we think such an argument would mean much to the Christ who died to save him.

Somewhere I read this statement: "It is a far greater disgrace to be afraid to begin, than to fail." I believe there is much truth in this statement. I think we can learn much from it in our individual relationships with people. I also believe it can tell us much in the growth and development of a congregation of the Lord's people. The person who is afraid to begin will never allow an important work to be done if he has his way. It is not because he is mean, but because he is a coward. But if our Lord is with us, as He said He would be, and if the future belongs to Him, as we say we believe it does, why should we be afraid to undertake any worthy work we feel ourselves capable by the help of God of doing? It takes more courage to do right than to do wrong. It takes more courage to do the Lord's work than to do any work. But there is nothing in which we are more assured of success. I like a statement in the Bible that says some of the Lord's disciples, after suffering some bitter persecution, "thanked God and took courage." That was the answer to their success, and it can also be the answer to the success of the Lord's work in our day.

## The Dust Of Butterfly Wings

On the western prairies in the old frontier days fleetness of foot was a highly prized skill among the native Indians. Not only did swift running win honors in tribal games, but it was a proven asset in the Indian way of life.

Young boys eager to attain speed and endurance asked the older men of the tribe how best to achieve their goal. The old Sioux told the youngsters to go out every summer and cover their hearts with the colorful dust of butterfly wings. Yes, it was that simple—but the one thing the elders would not do was to supply the wings. Each boy had to catch his own butterflies.

Any person who spent part of his boyhood on the farm where he, too, chased butterflies across the fields knows what that meant. One became an excellent runner who caught butterflies summer after summer.

We are told in our service to God to “run patiently the race that is set before us.” Several times the Christian life is referred to as a race. Paul said those who win must strive lawfully. There are certain rules that must be followed. The running requires great effort. It is necessary to “buffet” the body in order to stay in the race.

It takes effort to live the Christian life. First, there is the effort required to keep our lives separate from sin. This is no easy task. It has always been difficult to live in such a way as not to be overcome by sin. We feel the pressure of the environment of which we are part. We feel the influence of those with whom we associate in our daily work. The weight of the age of which we are a part has a way of pressing down upon us. The call of the herd arouses the herd instinct within us. They think it strange when we run not with them to riot. The former life never ceases to call us back. The pleasures that come from sinning never cease to be attractive. We must struggle to keep from being overcome.

Then there is the effort required in order to get the Lord's work done. There is nothing easy about doing the Lord's work. It may be easier on some occasions and in some places than others, but at its best effort is required. Our lives are so filled with what we call necessities that it is easy to get our sense of values all mixed up. It is discouraging when we try to persuade others to live as they should, only to be insulted for our kindness. It takes effort to leave our own pleasures and serve others who do not know how to appreciate the service we render. But it is our responsibility to help them, whether they learn to appreciate our help or not.

The most winsome and beautiful people on earth are those who are winning the race for God. When we have the privilege of knowing such a winner, we are reminded of the fact that success has come because of much effort. Back of the beautiful life are many days and years of service to God and mankind. Along the paths they have taken have been many disappointments, much discouragement, and long hours of toil. But, having overcome these obstacles, they not only make a life for themselves, but light up the way for those who will come after.

Their hearts are covered with the dust of butterfly wings, but they caught their own butterflies.

## Our Shield

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him" (Prov. 30:5).

That God is the protector of His people is a well established fact throughout the Bible. David said, "For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favor and wilt thou compass him as with a shield" (Psa. 5:12). God said to Abraham, "Fear not, Abraham: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward."

In telling Christians how to live as they should and be protected against the devil, Paul said, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph. 6:16). Thus God has provided for the protection of His children. When we read the history of God's dealings with His people, either in the Old Testament or the New Testament, we see His protecting care. God takes care of His people.

There is a side of this story, however, that belongs to man. It is stated both by Solomon and by Paul. Solomon said God is the shield of them that put their trust in Him. Paul said we must take the shield of faith. So a man must trust God. He must believe in God.

We recognize the fact that it is not always easy to believe in God, for God demands actions that we do not understand. But here is where the test comes. Abraham could not understand the necessity of leaving his own country and journeying to a country he knew not of. When he took his journey he did not know where he was going. All he had was the word of God which said, "I will show thee." Throughout that journey Abraham walked by faith. His example is held up to us in the New Testament as an example of walking by faith. Knowing not where he was going and having only the command to go and the promise that he would be shown, he went out. God blessed him for it, and became his shield. We see him in strange lands

and among strange people. But God was with him and blessed him. He prospered and won the victory because he believed in God.

We look back on the life of Abraham with a little amazement because of what he did not know. But when we turn our attention to what God demands today we see a test of faith equally as great. God still demands that we place our hand in His and walk out into the unseen. Man does this when he becomes a child of God. He enters the water with the promise of Jesus Christ that, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." After becoming a child of God he meets regularly with an unseen Lord, but with the promise that the Lord is there. He eats bread and drinks the fruits of the vine with the promise that to him this is the body and blood of Christ. He gives liberally to God with a promise that God will bless him for it. It is all walking by faith.

When we look at the lives of those who are willing to have the kind of faith that will cause them to "go out, not knowing where they go," but trusting God to guide them because He has said go that way, we see lives God wraps Himself around and blesses indeed. On the one hand we see Abraham gaining a land on the earth as a result of his faithfulness and God protecting him from the strength of the enemy. But in our case we see God dwelling within us and protecting us from the enemy that can destroy both soul and body. We see God pointing to a land that is above the earth and that is everlasting.

Yes, God is the shield of those who will put their trust in Him. Those who put their trust in Him believe what He says and are willing to do it. They do not ask to understand, but only for the command. Their attitude is, "speak, Lord, thy servant heareth." With this kind of trust man can expect God to shield him from anything that might destroy his soul.

Isn't it great to serve a God who is always near to protect us?



## Happiness Is For Everybody

Years ago a London newspaper offered prizes for the best answers to this question: "Who are the happiest persons on earth?" Here are the answers judged best:

"A craftsman or artist whistling over a job that is well done."

"A little child building sand castles."

"A mother, after a busy day, bathing her baby."

"A doctor who has finished a difficult and dangerous operation, and saved a human life."

Notice these answers do not include millionaires. They do not include any idol of stage or screen. They include no kings, queens or other people of distinction. The decision proves that happiness is for everybody. If only one group could be happy others would have a complaint, but happiness is not limited to only one group, or any position. Happiness is for everybody.

This question, and these answers, did not take into consideration the most important thing in life. No doubt they assumed that the real basis of living would be included. But it is possible that it could not have been considered at all. The happiness God intended for one to have cannot be had without a right relationship with God.

Could there be real happiness in saving a person's life but allowing his soul to be lost? "What is a man profited if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what would he give in exchange for his soul?" What lasting happiness can come to the child building sand castles if no provision is made for him to live in a mansion when life is over? Can there be lasting happiness for the mother who sees her child grow up to live a life separated from God, and then go into eternity without having served his eternal judge? The answer to these questions is on the surface for all who have known the Lord. They realize that unless He is the mastering sentiment in their lives that

nothing else really matters. All of the answers given make sense. We can understand how happiness comes to these people. But happiness that lasts must be built upon something that is able to sustain us beyond these minor things.

In the language of the Lord, the person is happy who serves God, thus developing into what God wants him to be. One of the first lessons He taught His disciples was, "Happy are the poor in spirit . . . they that mourn . . . the meek . . . they who hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . the merciful . . . the pure in heart . . . the peacemakers . . . those persecuted for the sake of righteousness." He said such people had a reason for rejoicing.

Thus happiness is within the reach of all people. It does not depend on environment or the degree of success we may reach in things of the world. It depends on proper service to God. When one has done what he knows God wants him to do, and has become what he knows God wants him to become, he has something that time and circumstances cannot erase. Then, whatever he does can be pleasant because he is doing right. No one can enjoy lasting happiness who neglects God.

## **“I” Is Miserable**

The most miserable people I have ever known are those who use “I,” “my,” and “mine” constantly in their conversation. Usually they are neither aware of their misery nor the use of those terms. If someone should point out their difficulty they would be unable to see it. In fact they would think there was something wrong with the person who tried to help them. A self-centered person is one of the most difficult to help, and yet he needs help more than anyone. It is impossible to help anyone who cannot be made to see his weakness, and who is going to admit such a fault?

A mind that points inward can never enjoy much beyond self. Such a person might be very free in helping others, but only because of the joy of knowing “I have done it.” One might even give up something but such giving would not be because of a desire to help another. There is much selfish giving. Also there is much selfish serving. That is why it is much easier to get people to do big things than little things. When a person whose mind is turned inward does something for another, unless proper credit is received, he will stop serving. He will accuse the other person of not appreciating what he is doing for him. He will call attention to the service he has rendered.

The Bible teaches that the eye is never satisfied with seeing and the ear is never satisfied with hearing. Neither is the person whose favorite letter is “I” satisfied with attention. There is no way to satisfy such a thirst. That is why such a one is destined to be miserable all of his life.

Of course no one is going to suggest that it is easy to have others fail to appreciate the things we do for them. But if that is the reason we do them they are not worth doing. Christ was the most unappreciated person who ever lived, and yet He did more for people than anybody. He was always doing something for those who did not appreciate Him. Their lack of apprecia-

tion did not stop Him from rendering service. He tried to get this lesson over to His disciples. It is the only cure for the "I" misery that makes havoc of so many lives. He did not come to be appreciated. He came to serve. No doubt it was much more pleasant when people were thankful for what He did, but whether they were or not, He continued in His service. That is our business as children of God.

We are here to help people and not hurt them. We are here to minister and not to be ministered to. We did not become followers of Christ in order to have people flock around and praise us for every act of kindness and every lesson taught. We obey a much higher order than that. Our business is pleasing God and not man. And our pleasure should be received from the fact God is pleased with our service, and not because some person has recognized it.

Christ, who is our example, was able to do big things. In His first miracle He turned water to wine. He was able to raise the dead, and cause people to marvel at His teaching. Yet, He had time to stoop down and pick up a little child in His arms and bless him. His disciples tried to call Him away from this humble service but He refused to leave. His business was doing good for all men. A few were thankful but most of those He served were not even aware of the service He rendered. As a result the life of Christ was filled with joy. He spent no time discussing Himself or His welfare. He was more interested in teaching a sinful woman than taking a drink when He was thirsty. He could forget His hunger in order to be filled with "the meat" which He said was doing His Father's will. He was never miserable. Neither will we be if we will take more lives into our own and lose ourselves in the lives of those whose business it is ours to share.

## A Table In The Wilderness

No field of grain was swaying to the rhythm of the wind. No farmer was ploughing in the fields. No harvester was reaping his grain, and no mill was grinding out the finished products. The Israelites were in a wilderness where grain was not growing and where no provision was made for the growing.

Thousands of them could look back over a great body of water that had closed in behind them, and forward to nothing but a wilderness. They knew a little about God. They knew He had redeemed them from bondage by providing a leader to come and lead them out. They saw the waters roll back to allow them to cross over on dry land. They witnessed the death of the Egyptians who tried to follow them, when the waters closed in again. In their happiness they made the woods ring with their song of deliverance.

But now they stand face to face with disaster. Although they had witnessed God's power in many ways, they hardly believed that He could do more in providing for them. "Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" (Psa. 78:19). Soon, however, their question was answered. They came to realize that in bringing them here God had done very little as compared to what He could and would do. So the table was prepared. Food was there like dew in the morning and their meat came in on wings at the close of day. God had prepared a table for them.

God is like that. He is forever doing what is to man the impossible. But He has not promised to do what man can do. He only does what we are unable to do. Hence we are constantly being surprised by His provisions for us, and His ability to make all things work out for the benefit of His children.

One person has experienced quite a calamity in the business world. He has either failed to make a go of this business called making a living, or else he has received quite a shock in

the loss of what he had. He finds disaster staring him in the face. His heart almost sinks within him. To him there is no way out. But somehow an unseen hand seems to take hold of his hand and say, "Come, I'll show you the way," and he goes right on living and enjoying the necessities of life. He may soon learn that he is much better off without what he had anyway. He has more time for God now and finds a much deeper joy in his service to God than he did in what the world could offer. He thought he was sitting at a full table, but soon finds it is empty, compared to the one God has now provided.

Another experiences calamity in another way. Life has suddenly become bitter because through death, or the demands of the government, or still other reasons, it has become necessary to be separated from one we love. Life has lost its meaning. We had centered all our thinking and affection in that person. For a moment we are staggered with the force of our loss. Then the unseed hand is there again. A voice seems to say, "This is the way out," and through our grief we find that life has more meaning than we knew. We have more reason to live, and more reason to work. We come to depend on God more. The more we learn to depend on Him the more we can see that He has done for us. We find our table well prepared and sit down to dine.

This thought is worth keeping in our hearts at all times. There has never been a wilderness where God could not grow grain. There has never been a desert where God could not bring water. There has never been a sea that God could not cross. And there has never been a heart that God could not make happy, or a brow that He could not soothe. Then always believe that the God you serve will have a table waiting for you in your wilderness. He has never failed those who were faithful to Him.

## On Purpose

A dour Scot was a believer in the economy of words. He had been sent to darkest Africa in charge of a party of oil prospectors. Several weeks later the head office received a cable from him which read: "Send six men to replace those eaten by lions yesterday." In great alarm the office cabled a request for details of the accident. Came the Scot's reply: "No accident. Lions did it on purpose."

The gospel of Jesus Christ was given by God's eternal purpose. It was no accident. The church of Jesus was in God's eternal purpose. Let's read three verses from the third chapter of Ephesians: "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith in him." Whatever God did He planned to do and did it just as He had planned.

God intended that our lives should be lives of purpose. There is no place for doing anything in the Lord's work by accident. We are even taught to purpose our giving. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). Thus God expects us to plan our giving as we plan everything else. To give without purpose is as bad as living without purpose. If we could settle our hearts concerning to whom we belong it would not be difficult for us to live a life of purpose. The Holy Spirit through Paul taught us that we are not our own, but that we belong to God. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are

bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Now, if I belong to God I should expect to live for Him.

We should purpose our time. We have no right to use our energies for other things until we are exhausted and then give God a little of what is left. When a person comes to worship and is too tired, or for some other cause is unable to worship as he should, you can be sure he has not planned for the worship. If one spends most of Saturday night having a good time and comes to worship too tired to stay awake, he demonstrates the fact that worship with him is a matter of accident. Do I have the right to so exhaust myself that I do not have the desire or energy to worship properly? If I belong to God I cannot think of doing such a thing. The same is true regarding time for engaging in the work of encouraging and converting others. If a person uses all of his time in making a living or satisfying his desire for entertainment and has no time to visit the sick or talk with those who need to learn of Christ, he has taken that which belongs to God and used it for his own pleasure. God will not tolerate such thievery. We cannot steal what belongs to God and expect it to go unnoticed when He calls on us for an account of our lives. Jesus taught this in many ways, especially in several of His parables. The one talent man who had nothing to offer his lord except that which was given him was relieved of what he had and cast into outer darkness. Christ intended for us to understand the lesson in this parable. God expects something from that which He has invested in us. He will be disappointed even to the point of rejecting us if we fail to bring forth fruit.

We should plan everything we do in the Lord's service. Every day should find some time planned to give directly for His cause. Everything we have and everything we are belongs to Him; therefore, we should purpose for His service the amount that will please Him.



## What Do You Want From Life?

I can assure you that you can have what you want. I know that sounds strange, especially coming from one that possesses little to give in the way of earthly things. Yet, you can have what you want, and I believe a little serious thinking will prove it. But you must remember that there is a price to pay. Nothing comes without a price. There will be a pay day some day. So sit down and figure out what you want, and I can show you how to get it. What do people want most in life? Let us notice a few things and see if we can find them.

One person says, "I want security." I am sure God is not going to condemn one for desiring to be secure, but do we know what real security is? Is one secure who has a lot of money laid up? Many people have had money laid up without ever enjoying security. In the first place, there is always the possibility it will be taken away. In the second place, where did man ever get the idea that security was to be found in laying money aside? Most people who have a lot of money have less security than anyone. They are the people who worry most. You would think, from what people say, that they would worry least, but they worry most. They are the people who spend more time thinking about hard times ahead than anybody else. They are the people who worry more over how they are going to hold on to what they have than anyone else. Actually they never feel secure. The rise and fall of the stock market marks the rise and fall of their blood pressure. The rapid chug chug of the motor, pulling wealth from the earth, marks the rapidity with which the heart pounds away in the breast. The restless conditions of national affairs brings more misery to an already feverish brow. He has no security who possesses *things*. There is no security in things of this world, and the person who has most of this world has less security. Real security comes from within and not from without. It is a matter of trusting God. No

reader of these lines needs to have me point him to the verses in the Bible that reveal this fact. We all know they are there.

Another says, "I want contentment." Yes, the world has been seeking contentment through many sources. The cry of the age is "peace of mind," and many volumes have been written trying to point the way. But the volume that has been pointing the way throughout the years has been there all the time, but we have not appreciated it. You know what Paul's recipe was? He said, "With food and raiment let us be therewith content." He said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). When you speak of matters of this kind, people are prone to say, "but if one is contented in the manner you mention, they will be worth little." The truth of the matter is they will be worth more. Who can do a better piece of work than the person who is contented with what he has? I do not mean that he is not pressing toward higher things. But contentment is a great asset to him as he climbs to higher heights.

Perhaps all things can be summed up in the desire of the multitude who are crying, "We want happiness." But what we say about one we say about all. Happiness is where you find it and you can find it anywhere you can find God. You can find God most anywhere if you look for Him, but there is no use to look for Him without being loyal to Him. Hence, loyalty to God, trusting in God, and faith in God, will help bring us security, contentment, happiness, or any other good thing that we desire. God is our source of supply and His blessings are not capable of being exhausted.

## Death And Life In The Tongue

Solomon said, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof" (Prov. 18:21). Many people have lived to know the meaning of this statement. Many may not learn the power of it until the day of judgment.

There are several good thoughts locked up in this proverb. Take the matter of death in the power of the tongue, for instance. Many ways this is demonstrated. People have brought on their own death by talking too much. People who were one time honored and respected lost that honor by talking too much. What we say has a way of getting to the person we are talking about. It may take much time for things to get around, but they usually get there. The talker may have talked so much, since he said what he did about another, that he has forgotten that he said it, but those he talked with have not forgotten. Hence the one talked about learns that one he once thought a friend was, while announcing was friendship, laying a foundation with his words for the destruction of the other. When things like that are learned respect is lost. Friendships are destroyed. And it does not matter how many overtures of friendliness such a person may make, until he has confessed his sins and, by actions, shown genuine repentance, those who know about him cannot have any confidence in him. It is an easy matter to believe, and safe as well, that one who once talks about another will do it again when circumstances demand it. Of course, when one repents and changes his life he may rebuild some things he has torn down. But he cannot create confidence while he continues to talk, or if he talks about others, and just ceases to talk about this one for the time being.

A burned child is afraid of the fire. Once offended, it is natural for an offended party to be careful where the offender

is concerned. You see what great results can come from the tongue unwisely used.

Then there is the possibility that men may actually be destroyed, or their usefulness killed, by the words of another. Unless a person is well known, men naturally believe what their friends say about them. If the time does not come when by association men can learn the truth, they may go to their graves believing evil about another. What a crime has been committed. Confidence destroyed in the heart of a friend, and his facing God to give account for actions that were based on the false words of a false friend! Propaganda (modern lying) has destroyed the usefulness of many good people. The outside enemies of the Cause of Christ are not the only guilty parties.

Just as sure as there is power for death, there is power for life. Nothing helps a person more than something good said about him. Nothing helps more than telling the truth about another if he is living as he should. Nothing can be done for one that will be of more worth than teaching him right from wrong. Many discouraged people have been raised up in life by the power of the tongue. Perhaps it was done in a sermon, or it may have been done in private discussion. It does not matter whether private or public, just so the man was lifted up and life restored. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11).

Nothing gives one away more completely than what he says. For, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." May we always be careful about what we say concerning all things.

## Casting Shadows

Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The only way the world can know our Father is through His children. By searching we cannot find out God. The heavens declare His glory, but they do not reveal Him to men. God is seen through the good works of His children. Men have many ways of glorifying each other, but there is only one way we can glorify God. If our works do not glorify Him He will not be glorified. Because of this we cannot hide good works. We do not work in order for men to see us, and that alone. Such a selfish spirit would render no service. But if through our works others are led to Christ, it is as He would have it.

Much of the work God's children do gives Him no glory because we are constantly getting in the way and thus casting shadows. Light needs freedom to shine. If I stand between my light and the other fellow he will not see enough to glorify God. Many who have done good work for God often destroy the good effect of their work by living in such a way that men can see no lasting good was done. It is of no value to be sound in teaching if we are not sound in living. It is a tragedy to find one who is sound in teaching the Lord's word, yet unsound in his own life. In that way he destroys the good his teaching would do. Men learn that Christ's teaching has no good effect on the individual who is doing the instructing. It is difficult to believe that good food can come out of a dirty container. The doctrine that says, "Don't do as I do, but do as I say," is of no value. But Paul's advice to "follow me as I follow Christ" is of eternal value. So if our lights are to shine in such a way as to glorify God we cannot afford to cast a shadow by refusing to follow the Lord's instructions.

We often cast shadows by our own selfishness. We have no intention of becoming morally or doctrinally unsound, but our own desires often overshadow our good judgment. Because of this many good works have been destroyed. We have our own ideas about how things should be done, and our ideas are always the best ideas. Many have this attitude without realizing this. This attitude has filled the church with customs that have become law. It is as dangerous to allow custom to become law today as it was in the day when the church first started drifting toward the complete falling away. No good can come from making laws where Christ has not made them. Much evil will be the result. Congregations have been divided by preachers who should have known enough to move on. But they have also been divided by others who should have reformed. In each case it is a matter of selfishness. It may be no more than a desire to show someone I can have my own way. Men do strange things. They often pursue a course that they know will come to no good end for them, except the satisfaction of showing someone who is running things. Or it may be that we do not desire others to have what we cannot have. Destroying the work will in no wise help this person, except in the fact that he sees to it that no one else enjoys it. In that way we allow ourselves to stand in the way of the Lord's good work. People become confused and turn away from the Lord. There is nothing wrong with the light, except we just allowed ourselves to get in the way.

This lesson is without end. So long as there are peculiar things about human beings, applications can be made. Each person will need to adapt it to his own knowledge and experience. But let us all be sure that we never cast a shadow where our lights should shine. People will glorify God if our lives reveal Him in us.

## Light Your Own Lamp

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:14-17).

For the child of God every day is lamp-lighting time. No clearer illustration of what the Lord expects of us is given than this one regarding letting our lights shine. Since we are the light of the world, and the only light of the world, unless we light our lamps the whole world will be in darkness.

“That they may see your good works and glorify the Father” is the real purpose of letting our lights shine. Jesus condemned the idea of doing things for personal glory. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, *to be seen of them*: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 6:1). Many times this verse has been used to teach a lesson the Lord did not teach. We have often used it in this way: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men.” Jesus did not stop there. He did not condemn people for allowing others to see their good works. He rather encouraged them to show their good works by letting their lights shine. What He condemned was doing them for the purpose of obtaining personal glory. The doing was that others might see and not because it was right. Any time we are moved by such motives we are wrong. But Jesus intended that others should see the good works of those who are faithful to the Lord. By what they see they are moved to do right themselves. “*They seeing your good works*” will glorify God. If the works that I do call attention to myself I can be sure that I am wrong. If I am constantly calling attention to what I have done, you may be sure the motive behind the work is wrong. But if the works that I do direct at-

tention to God when that which God desires has been accomplished, the work is good. How do people see by you? Is your loyalty to God such as would lead men to glorify God? Can they see any difference in the Christianity you claim to have and that which others claim to have? Would your life lead others to Christ?

People are often prone to say, "My feeble light is of little value." In this you are mistaken. It is true that one life might not shine very far but it must shine as far as it can. Alone we are weak, but together we are invincible. Perhaps you have read this story:

One night at a religious service in a large western stadium, 90,000 people were assembled. Suddenly the lights were turned out. Jet darkness settled over the stadium and the crowd sat quietly for several moments. Then, over the loud speaker, the voice of the leader cut through the inky blackness. "Please look this way," he said, "I am going to light a match."

All eyes were fixed toward the center. In the front rows the audience saw the faint gleam of the tiny yellow flame. Toward the rear of the stadium it was almost invisible.

Again the leader spoke: "Now will each of you please light a match."

Here and there a small feeble flame flared up . . . more flames . . . still more until the great stadium was aglow with brightness and light . . . light from the tiny glistening flames of thousands of matches.

It all started from one match.

If all who love the Lord and His church will each light his own lamp, the dazzling brilliance of their combined flames will light the paths of those who today walk in darkness.

Please, will you light your own lamp?



## My Price

“And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord” (Zech. 11:12-13).

These are the words which Matthew said were fulfilled when they bargained with Judas to sell his Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

Matthew says the price was the value they placed on the Lord. They considered thirty pieces of silver the value of Christ. Thirty pieces of silver in that day represented the price of a common slave. Hence Judas sold his Lord for the amount he could have expected to receive for any other healthy man who might be sold at public auction. The enemies had no idea of making a slave out of Him, but they bought the right to kill Him. A slave, when bought, belonged to them to do with as they would, and though in the real sense this was not represented, yet in the price we can easily see it.

What price do you place on the Lord? Of what value is He to you? When you answer this question you will answer the next one: What value do you place on the church of our Lord? We cannot place a value on Christ without placing the same value on the church, for they cannot be separated. Paul declared that the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23) and He is the head of the body. You cannot separate Christ from His body. So when we value Him we must value His church. When we place a value on His church we do so by the manner in which we conduct ourselves toward it. If we are covetous in our gifts or service we show how little we value the Lord. If we are not interested in the various services of the

church, we reveal a very low value that we have placed on it, and hence a low value on Christ.

Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Many of God's people are selling their divine birthright for no more than that. When a person deliberately chooses some other place to the house of God when time comes to worship, he has placed more value on the other and sold his divine right to God's approval. When one will deliberately invest money in worldly enterprises that should be invested in the work of the church, he is thereby placing a greater value on things of the world and is selling his right to the blessings that one receives in the church of our Lord.

It is of no value for one to say, "I would gladly die for the church," when he has done nothing for it. The Lord knows what is in the heart. The person who has such an attitude can find plenty to do that will show that he will place that value on the church. There is no use for one to wait to demonstrate his price. We have opportunities every day. But we do not consider the importance of using the opportunities that come our way. We are waiting for someone to come with a sword. That will not likely happen to us. We are fortunate in that we still have freedom of worship in America. But we do not have to wait for a sword. We have many opportunities around us. People need to be saved. Programs need to be completed. The gospel needs to be preached. The value we place on the church will determine how seriously we work in that which is before us.

What is your price? What value are you placing on the Lord?

## The Christ Of Today

I am afraid too many of us are serving the Christ of history. We think of Him as having lived about two thousand years ago and hundreds of miles from where we live. We read of what He did in those years and in that far off country and become so absorbed with the history of His having lived that we forget that He is the Christ of today.

Christ is either alive and present today or He never has been. He told His disciples when He sent them everywhere preaching the gospel that He would be with them. He said, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." In addition He promised that where people gather in His name that He would be in the midst of them. If that promise is not true then none of His promises are true. If it is true then you and I should act like it.

People cannot be in all places and at all times. We can be in only one place at a time. But Christ can be in all places where we can go without His knowing where we are and what we are doing. Because we believe this we pray in His name as readily when we are far from home as we do at home. We feel as free to call upon Him in a hospital room as we do in a church building. It becomes as easy to speak to Him during the rush of the business day as it does in the quietness of the home. He hears us when we cry from the closet or when we speak out under the clear blue heavens. We say we believe all this, but often find ourselves not acting like it. Especially is this true when we desire to do wrong.

When the Christ of history walked along the shores of Galilee He was concerned about people. He did not like to see people suffer for any reason. He demonstrated the fact that He was able to sympathize with men in whatever condition he was found. So He went about drying tears, feeding the hungry, and blessing the multitudes. The Christ of the present is no differ-

ent. He is not here in the flesh as He was in the long ago, but He is none the less really here. And He has made it possible for His followers to enjoy a power within themselves that is greater than any power in the world. This power is able to sustain us in every condition of life, when the storms blow or when the sun shines. And regardless of how black the cloud is it makes us able to see the rainbow beyond the cloud.

The early disciples believed in the Christ of the present. They lived a little closer to His fleshly life than we do but they knew He was gone. Some of them watched Him as He went away. But because they believed Him when He said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world," they did as He asked them to do when He said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." They offered the Christ to the world alive and present, capable of sustaining men in their troubles and forgiving their sins. Millions were made to believe. The lives of those who believed in and felt the presence of Christ left such a glow that others were constrained to follow in their steps.

The world needs the present Christ. Men need to know about His history. They need to hear about what He has done in order that they can see what he will do. Then they need to believe that He is here doing what He promised. That is the Christ we have the privilege of knowing and introducing to others.

## Angels' Food

David said concerning the manna in the wilderness that "Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full" (Psa. 78:25).

Manna was God's provision for the Israelites when they were otherwise without food. Moses said it was "like coriander seed white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (Exo. 16:31). We are sure there had been nothing like it on the earth. Evidence of this is found in their asking, "What is it?" Also there would never be anything like it again. For this reason God had them place some in the ark where it was kept throughout the history of the Israelites at a nation.

God gave them the best. He always does. Several times David refers to it and uses such terms as "angels' food." It was the food of the mighty. God continued to give them the best. When they were without water He gave them water from a dry rock. God does not do for us what we can do for ourselves. So any time God does anything for man it is far better than any man is capable of doing.

Though this food was from heaven and was better than anything they could have on earth, the day came when they despised it. They called it light bread and said they loathed it. "And the people spake against God, and against Moses. Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathed this light bread" (Num. 21:5). Actually they were referring to it as "worthless bread."

One weakness of human nature is made very clear in this story. Although God provides the best for man, he is not always pleased with God's provision. One reason is that he does not know what is best. God does know. When man decides that he knows more than God he is willing to turn against God's provision for His own. This always ends in disaster. Another

reason is that man does not always know how well off he is. When this is true the day will come when man shall long for what he once had but will not be able to obtain it. History is filled with the pathetic stories of those who once climbed to the heights only to plunge head-long into utter failure. Man is prone to blame others for his fall, but usually has no one to blame but self. What is true in the history of the world is true in living for God. Never has one failed who was satisfied with what God gave him. Failure comes when we try to stop outside the realm of right and then our wrong catches up with us. The apostasy of the church, both when it went into Catholicism and when the Christian Church was formed, was the result of becoming dissatisfied with what God had provided. The results anyone can see at a glance. There is nothing better than the simple worship that God has provided. There is nothing worse than the corrupted forms of worship man has invented.

The enemies of the Israelites could do them no lasting harm. They only served to strengthen them. But when they began to loath God's provisions they soon were corrupted and the enemy took over. What is true in their history is also true with us today. There is no need of a church or an individual talking about outside sources doing lasting harm. There is a power in us that is greater than the power that is in the world. Corruption comes from within and not from without. So long as we are satisfied with God's simple arrangements for us we will always be fed with angels' food. No harm can come to us. But when we come to despise what God has provided and seek satisfaction from some other, we can be sure that the protection of God will be withdrawn and utter failure shall be our end. May God help us to always appreciate what He provides.

## The Wrong Buddy

"While waiting their turns to be interviewed at the induction center, one draftee said to another, 'Buddy, do you happen to have a match?' At the same time he politely offered an opened pack of cigarettes.

"'Sure, I have a match,' replied the solicited draftee, 'but I am also sure I am not going to give you any.'

"Draftee No. 1 was startled at such blatant discourtesy. 'But why not?' he demanded.

"'Well, it is like this,' his about-to-be comrade-in-arms proceeded to explain, quite seriously. 'If I give you a match and smoke one of your cigarettes, we'll get to chinning. After the chin-music we may wind up buddies. We may be assigned to the same barracks. In action on the field of battle we may be in the same tent, the same squad. We may both volunteer for a dangerous special mission. It may be a night job and we'll have to use flashlights. Suppose our flashlights go dead while we're out in enemy territory. I sure don't intend to be stranded like that with a dumb-bunny who doesn't even carry matches!'"

Jesus did not take such around-about way of teaching a lesson, but He did tell us of the danger of being caught without a light. He told a story once about ten people. Five, He said, were wise and five foolish. The wise took oil for their lamp but the foolish took no extra oil. The time came for them to go in to the wedding, but the foolish found that their lights had gone out. They asked for oil from the other five but found that they did not have enough to spare. The doors were shut and they were not ready. They never were allowed to go in.

On another occasion Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in heaven."

The only light most people have is the light of Christian living. The only respect they have for Christianity comes from

watching the lives of those who claim to be Christians. All they know about God is wrapped up in those who claim to be sons and daughters of the Almighty. This is a sobering thought when we consider it seriously. It simply means that my conduct is going to either separate people from God in eternity or lead them to a life that will result in eternal association with God. The destiny of souls is in our hands. Can we afford to cast a shadow across their path?

In the early days of the church more people were added to it than any like period since that time. Yet people had no Bibles to read except some writings of Old Testament saints. All they had was the teaching and conduct of those who were following Christ. The lessons they taught, backed up by lives that revealed they had been made over, were so convincing that multiplied thousands rushed to become citizens of the kingdom of God. In those days we can see the power of a proper example. The lights of the saints were lighting up the world and people were anxious to follow in the rays of that light. That which was true then is true now. Of course, people have the words of the Holy Spirit to read, but to most of them what the Spirit says will be meaningless until they see those who have been influenced to follow the Lord.

It will be a sad moment for anyone in the day of judgment to hear the Lord say, "Depart from me" to anyone who may have stumbled because our light went out. This ought to cause all of us to be sure we set a proper example before those we meet, that they might not walk in darkness.



## Happiness In Another's Keeping

**"He who seeks only for applause from without, has all his happiness in another's keeping."**

The force of this statement is enough to sober anyone. What value is to be gained from the applause of others, if there is no applause from within? People applaud us for what they think we do, or for what they may gain as a result of their action. But we know what we are. A little serious thinking would keep one from investing all his happiness in what another thinks of him.

There are several statements in the Bible that should help us to realize the value of applause from within:

**"For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (Gal. 6:3-4).**

Solomon said, **"A good man shall be satisfied from himself" (Prov. 14:14).**

The man who has made a personal examination of himself and finds that his life is what it should be, has real happiness. But if we deceive others, and they applaud us for what we know we have not done, there is not any genuine happiness. That is the reason why those who depend on the applause of others must never be without that applause. When the time comes that it fails, and fail it will, the let down is too much. The person who has leaned on the applause of others is too weak to stand alone. Our happiness must come from within if it is to be of any lasting value.

**"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5).** There was a possibility these people were not even in the faith, although they were members of the church of Christ in Corinth. They could have been deceived. That is why Paul called for personal examination. If

we allow others to examine us and decide, it is possible for us to fail to receive a just reward. Some would decide concerning our faithfulness on the basis of friendship. Others would decide on the basis of kinship. Many have the idea that relationship is a more appropriate basis for decision than worthiness. Some would decide against us because of personal likes and dislikes. Hence, we could expect no just reward from others. But what is true of others is also true of ourselves if we allow ourselves to be deceived. Hence, the necessity of proving ourselves. This means putting ourselves to the test. This alone can show our true faithfulness. It is of little value to tell what we have been. Neither is there value in telling what we will be. What we are is the real thing.

When Solomon related the virtues of a good woman, he ended his statement with these words: "Let her own works praise her in the gates." This would be genuine happiness. All people who think naturally dislike to have others constantly parading their own virtues. The dislike is not in what it does to others, but what we realize it is doing to the person who thinks of himself "more highly than he ought to think." In fact, if one must always be telling others what good he does, there is some doubt that it is true. There is always the possibility that he is trying to convince himself as well as others. But if our work and our lives can stand personal and honest investigation, and we find that we have been true, then we have a right to rejoice. Satisfaction belongs to the person who will prove himself. He has his happiness in himself, and not in another.

## Following After

“Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, Whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards” (Jno. 13:36).

Peter did not understand this statement and neither did the other disciples. They had to wait many days for the answer to the many questions that filled their hearts at this last supper. Had they not been following the Lord for three years? Had they not proved themselves His friends? Why, then, would He go where they could not come? Jesus knew these questions raced through their minds, so hurried on to tell them they should not be troubled, that when He was away He would be making a place ready for them, and they soon would be with Him in a house of many mansions.

If these disciples could have had their way they would have gone right on into heaven with Jesus. I am sure if He could have had what His head yearned for He would have taken them into heaven with Him. But it was not time for them to go. They had not earned that right in the first place, and if they should be allowed to go on now the rest of the world could not be saved. They had a work to do and must remain here to do it.

There were times when Jesus no doubt would have liked to quit His task and go back to heaven. He prayed in the garden, “If it be thy will let this cup pass.” He was willing to do what God demanded of Him, but He did no wrong in wishing there was another way. However, He stayed until He had finished His work. Just before His death He prayed to His Father and, among other things, said, “I have finished the work you gave me.” His dying statement was, “It is finished.” Had He not finished His task the world could not be saved. It was as important that the disciples finish their work, also, if the world was to hear of Jesus of Nazareth. So He said you cannot come now, but you will come later.

The Lord has a plan for every one of us. I do not subscribe to the Calvinistic idea about matters of this kind, but I do believe that there is work for each one of us to do that will never be done unless we do it. It does not necessarily differ from the work of anyone else. But others will not have time to do their work and then help me. Any time it becomes necessary for one to stop his present work to help me catch up, his work will suffer. Hence, a work for God is lost. It is also true that a day lost can never be regained. There is work for me to do every day. There is enough work to keep me busy all the day. So when a day is lost it cannot be regained unless the present suffers. Realizing this the Lord warned us about "working while it is day." Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10).

I am sure there are times when we would like to give up. We would like to say, "Lord, it is enough, let us pass to heaven now." Many conditions in life would cause such thinking. But it is foolish thinking. There are more people involved than self. Paul once said he had a desire to depart and be with Christ. For him that would have been far better, but not for the brethren to whom he was writing. They would have suffered greatly had he left them.

When we are called to go, let us be sure there will be no doubt regarding our going to be with Christ. There is a way to be sure. That way is through faithfulness. If we are faithful in every way possible, we can be sure. Then let us not neglect the Lord's business so that we can go to be with Him in the place He prepares.

## Stirrups Reversed

We are told that in ancient army rituals at the burial of the noble dead his horse always stood by, waiting with the empty saddle and the stirrups reversed. This was supposed to indicate that the noble rider was not actually gone; that the stirrups were waiting the pressure of invisible feet. It suggests much to those who will think.

Stirrups reversed. Gone but not dead. A voice stilled, but still speaking. Does the Bible not say that "Abel, being dead, yet speaks?" Is there not much that comes to us through the life of the faithful father of the Jews? Do we not thrill at the life of the apostle Paul as we read of his great accomplishments through hardships? What he left with his pen directs our lives in paths of faithfulness to our Lord. These are gone but their invisible influence is still being felt. Christ died on the cross, an inconspicuous Jewish agitator, so they say. Yet, now, two thousand years have passed and a great nation carries on His message and souls are led to the cross for salvation.

This story reaches into our own generation. Many reversed stirrups direct our way. Do we not feel to the full the influence of those of our number who are gone but still speak? Surely we cannot think that we are entirely responsible for the good work of the Lord in our generation. A little thinking will prove we are not. No one wants to take away from this generation any praise for the good work being done, but we must realize that what is being done now is made possible by a great number who have their stirrups reversed. If you would like to see how much people of days gone by influence this generation read our religious papers. They are all constantly quoting from the writings of faithful men of the past. Look at any student's library and you will see that most of the volumes on which he depends for his information today were written by men who are

dead but yet speaking. This is true in every field and especially so in religious thinking.

Not only does this story reach into our generation, but it begs to reach beyond our generation into the lives of those yet unborn. This should call for some serious thinking. We know how much we depend on those already gone. We can see how much they influence our thinking and our living today. Now how about the influence we will have on generations yet to come? Will we give to them the kind of information and examples that they need to accomplish still greater things for Christ and the good of man? If our influence reached only into the lives of those who see us each day, then an evil life might not lead to so much wrong, but an evil life continues to have its power over generations for ages to come. When we realize this we cannot afford to do anything but our best.

The growth of the church tomorrow depends much on the growth of the church today. If we fail we not only fail our present generation, but we fail those who are yet unborn. Realizing this, may we care for the present in the most faithful manner, and work for the future with all of our might, so that when those yet to come look back to us for faithful instruction and loyal examples they may not be disappointed.

May our lives be such that, though we are invisible, we can still call people to faithfulness to Christ, and thus being dead can yet speak for our Master.