

Something
To Think
About!

Benny B. Bristow

100 SPIRITUAL LESSONS FOR:

Family Devotionals - 5 Minute Radio Sermons

Hospitals - Sermon Starters

Personal Work - Group Devotionals

Something To
Think About

By Benny B. Bristow

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to our first grandchild, Mark Anthony Lawrence, who, like our children, has brought much joy to our lives.

To: Tony, Corretta, and Mark
With Love,
- Dad -

Introduction

The one hundred spiritual lessons in this book are presented with the hope and prayer that many hearts will be reminded of God and His will.

For several years the Minden Church of Christ, Minden, La., has sponsored a daily five-minute radio program: "Something To Think About." It has been my privilege to be one of the speakers, and the material in this book was first aired on this program.

These thoughts contain illustrations and quotes from known and unknown authors. Sincere gratitude is expressed to all of these, for they have truly helped to enrich this work.

Since the world is so filled with material things, it is hoped that this book, "SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT" will be used to remind mankind of the Spiritual. Why not resolve to personally share this with your family, and give copies to your friends and neighbors. To share this with one in the hospital can often help to bring strength and renewed courage.

May these thoughts be used in every way to glorify God is my prayer.

—Benny B. Bristow

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JUST A LITTLE CONTAMINATION

One day a mother was scraping vegetables for a salad as her daughter came to ask permission to go to an adult movie. "But all the kids are going," she said, "and their folks don't think it will hurt them." As she talked, she saw her mother pick up a handful of scraps and throw them into the salad. Rather startled, she shouted, "Mother you are getting the garbage in the salad." "I know," her mother replied, "but I thought if you didn't mind garbage in your heart and in your mind that you wouldn't care about a little in your stomach."

Thoughtfully, the girl picked the peelings from the salad and then smiled at her mother. "I guess I'll just tell them I'm staying at home tonight," she said as she went through the kitchen door."

It is so important to teach our children to keep their hearts pure from evil. Jesus taught: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8) When our minds are exposed to evil constantly, our hearts become contaminated. As Christians, we are to work daily to avoid sin. Paul wrote: "Avoid every kind of evil" (I Thess. 5:22). It is easy to compromise and say that a little corruption won't harm, or again, it must not be too harmful since everyone is doing it! Remember, it takes only one drop of poison to contaminate a glass of pure milk. God does not consider any sin small, it is mankind that does this.

Solomon said: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. 23:7) We cannot expect to rise above our thoughts. Evil thoughts lead to evil deeds. Therefore, we need to turn to God and His Son for cleansing of our sins, and then keep our hearts thinking about His will daily. As someone has said: "Many flowers open to the sun, but only one follows him constantly. Heart, be thou like the sunflower, not only open to receive God's blessings, but constant in looking to him." (Richter)

There are places that we should not go and things that we should not do as Christians. We may sometimes reason that we are strong enough that no ill effects will come to us! Maybe you won't turn from God, but it may weaken you morally and spiritually. There is enough evil incidentally in the world without going out and purposely finding it. Paul writes to the Roman Christian: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom. 12:2) Work daily, then, to keep the garbage out of your heart. And that's something to think about!



LITTLE CHILDREN AND GOD

There are many responsibilities placed on our shoulders in this life, but among the greatest is leading our children to have the right attitude toward God. We hold their spiritual future in our hands. What is more beautiful than to observe the pure faith of a little child toward God. No wonder Jesus said: "Suffer little children and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). When they are properly taught about God, they have beautiful and pure thoughts toward Him.

While thumbing through an old magazine, I found a series of letters written by little children to God. Not only do they reflect sincerity, but also their experiences in Bible classes and at home. Observe a few of these letters:

"Dear God, I just feel good knowing that you are everywhere. That's all." Respectfully, Margaret.

"Dear God, I read your book and I like it. Did you write any others? I would like to write a book someday with the same kind of stories. Where do you get your ideas?" Best wishes, Mark.

"Dear God, Sometimes I am very scared in my room at night. I know you are there to protect me." Your friend, Diane.

"Dear God, A lot of people say bad things with your name in it but I never do." Helen.

"Dear God, My daddy says he would not want your job for anything in the world. He is a electric engineer. But could you make it so he doesn't work all the time? You should not work so hard either." Love, Myrna.

"Dear God, You should see our grass. Did you do it?" Lou.

"Dear God, I want to be just like you when I am your age. O.K.?" Tommy.

"Dear God, These are things I like: (1) going to movies; (2) going to see people; (3) cooking food; (4) buying things; (5) flying in jets, (6) boats, (7) drinking tea; (8) building things; (9) Christmas; (10) You." Yours truly, Spence.

"Dear God, Please make my sister prettier so she can get married." Thank you, Philip.

May we all realize our responsibility toward our children and do the best we can to give them the proper attitude toward their creator and sustainer is my prayer.



IT COSTS TO CARRY A GRUDGE

The visitor leaned on the rail fence, watching an old farmer plow. "I don't like to tell you how to run your business," the visitor finally said, "but you could save yourself a lot of work by saying 'gee' and 'haw' to that mule, instead of just pulling on the lines." The old farmer pulled a big handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow. "Reckon you're right," he agreed, "but this critter kicked me five years ago and I ain't spoke to him since."

This little illustration may bring a smile to you, but doesn't it illustrate the price that many pay when they carry a grudge! Have you ever figured up the real price of a grudge? Well, first of all, it will cost you your soul if such is carried to death without repentance. Jesus put it this way, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt. 6:15). He wanted us to continue to forgive. To Peter, Jesus said to forgive "until seventy times seven." (Matt. 18:22). Our Lord believed and taught that we should make all efforts to make things right between brethren. Again we listen to his words: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." (Matt. 5:23-24).

In the second place, a grudge will cost you your happiness. There is no room in the human heart for both love and hate — for a grudge and happiness. God's word teaches that as Christians we should rather take suffering. Just be sure you are right with God, and no person can really harm you. The Apostle Peter writes, "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye . . ." (I Pet. 3:14). Or again, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye . . ." (I Pet. 4:14). Therefore, the fastest way to become unhappy is to hate someone.

Then in the final place, a grudge will cut you off from others. You will be afraid to let go for fear that someone else will hurt your feelings. Thus you may crawl into a shell with your grudge and close all others out. Your countenance will reflect hate which will make it impossible to worship and enjoy fellowship with others. Since Jesus could look down upon a mob of murderers who were enjoying the torture they were giving him and say: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," surely we can, as His followers, refuse to hold grudges. Yes, it does cost a lot to carry a grudge! And this is something to think about.



HE SWAPPED WITH ME

Once a preacher was speaking to a congregation of English fishermen. His message was "The Old Rugged Cross." To make sure he was getting through to them, he asked the question, "now one of you tell me, in your own words, what did the Lord Jesus do at the cross?" One old fisherman, with tears in his eyes, looked up at the preacher and said, "He swapped with me!"

It would be difficult to put this great truth more simply than this, but this describes every person's situation. The human race faces the death penalty because of sin: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). But Jesus came to give His life so that those who accept him and obey His Father's will would live. One of the saddest things in life is the fact that millions turn down His offer for salvation made possible by His death, only to face death themselves. Now the death being discussed is not physical death. Jesus did not come to earth to keep us from dying physically. Paul wrote: "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." (I Cor. 15:22). He came to save us from spiritual death, the second death, and to give us a hope of being resurrected from physical death.

When the apostle John was permitted to see a picture of the end of time, he recorded these scenes in the following words: "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. 20:12-14). We cannot avoid physical death, but we can through Christ, avoid the second death. This can be avoided, however, only by Christ taking our place on the cross.

One time two brothers were playing in an old abandoned church building. They climbed high into the belfry which was several feet above a concrete floor. As they climbed, a wood timber broke and they began to fall. The older boy caught on another timber and his little brother caught him by the legs. As they hung suspended above the concrete floor, the older brother tried and tried to pull himself up as he grew weaker and weaker, but was unable to do so because of the weight of his brother. Finally the little boy looked up and said: "Could you save yourself if I were not holding you down?" The older brother answered: "Yes!" The little boy purposely turned loose and fell to his death to save his brother. This describes the sacrifice made by our Lord. He endured the agony and death of the cross so that we might live. And this is something to think about!

5

DOING GOD'S WILL

A Christian farmer, standing in his yard, observed a man of the world passing by, driving a herd of swine. "Where are you going with those hogs?" he asked politely.

"Why, I'm going to the market to sell them," was the reply. "Then, I'm going to use the money to purchase those things which I've always wanted."

"You mean, if the Lord be willing," persisted the Christian.

"That's not what I mean at all," curtly replied the man of the world. "I intend to do just what I said, and that's that."

Sometime later the Christian man was surprised to see the same man staggering back up the road, bruised, tattered, and minus his hogs. "What happened to you?" asked the farmer with concern in his voice. "I was waylaid by robbers down the road who stole my hogs, and then beat me up," was the sorrowful answer. "What do you intend to do now?" pursued the compassionate farmer. "I'm going back home, IF THE LORD BE WILLING."

James writes: "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'" (Jas. 4:13-15). What a temptation it is in this time of prosperity to feel that we can make it without God's help! But this is so wrong. At every ticking of the clock, sickness, accidents, and death enter homes across the land. In a matter of seconds, our lives can be changed forever. None of us knows what the future holds, but how important it is to know the one that holds the future! When we set our wills against the will of God, there will be defeat.

Even the Son of God who knew no sin in his life, did the will of his Father in heaven. During the sad moments of Gethsemane he prayed: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Jesus is saying here that regardless of the bitterness of this cup of death, I will drink it if it be your will.

As the apostle Paul traveled over the world preaching the Gospel, he trusted God's will to guide him. There were places he wanted to go, but God's will led him otherwise. Thus his faith led him to depend upon God's will. As you live your life upon this earth, why not be a faithful Christian allowing God's will to guide your life? And this is something to think about!

6

THE GREATEST INVESTMENT

As we travel along through life, we often place various values on the physical things of life. It may be houses, land and investments, but even though it is difficult for most to see, the greatest investment in our lives can be the Bible. When one purchases a Bible and lives his life by its principles, this is his greatest investment.

When John Wanamaker was eleven years old, he bought a Bible. In later years he said of this purchase: "I have, of course, made large purchases of property in my time, involving millions of dollars, but it was as a boy in the country, when I was eleven, that I made my greatest purchase. In the little mission Sunday school I bought a small red leather Bible for \$2.75, which I paid for in small installments. Looking back over my life, I see that that little red book was the foundation on which my life has been built, and the thing which has made possible all that has counted in my life. I know now that it was the greatest investment and the most important and far-reaching purchase I ever made."

How long has it been since you have read through the Bible? It can be the most exciting tour in the world! One author describes this tour in the following words: "Twenty-nine years ago with the Holy Spirit as my Guide, I entered at the portico of Genesis, walked down the corridor of the Old Testament art galleries, where pictures of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Isaac, Jacob, and Daniel hung on the wall. I passed into the music room of the Psalms where the Spirit sweeps the keyboard of the nature until it seems that every reed and pipe in God's great organ responds to the harp of David, the sweet-singer of Israel.

I entered into the chamber of Ecclesiastes, where the voice of the preacher is heard, and into the conservatory of Sharon and the lily of the valley where sweet spices filled and performed my life.

I entered the business office of Proverbs and on into the observatory of the prophets where I saw telescopes of various sizes pointing to far-off events, concentrating on the bright and morning star which was to rise above the moonlit hills of Judea for our salvation and redemption.

I entered the audience room of the King of Kings; catching a vision written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Thence into the correspondence room with Paul, Peter, James and John writing their epistles.

I stepped into the throne room of Revelation where tower the glittering peaks, where sits the King of Kings upon His throne of glory with the healing of the nations in His hand, and I cried out:

"All hail the power of Jesus' Name, let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all."

And this is something to think about!



OH, TO BE AN AMERICAN

Have you ever been guilty of complaining because you are not rich? Most of us have made the mistake of thinking that we have nothing — just enough to live on and no hope of becoming rich. But has it ever occurred to you that richness in gold is not the only thing that determines wealth? We are rich when we live in America, have friends, and learn to enjoy and appreciate life. My heart cries when I think of the thousands who have opportunities for happiness, but close their eyes and reject it because they are in search of greener pastures. When they consider a beautiful rose, they see the thorns and not the bloom.

A co-ed, Miss Carol Gay Powers, wrote an article which was published in the Congressional Record, wherein she defined the blessings and beauties that make up our country. Notice how she expressed it.

"Americanism includes for me the town in which I live, the places I have visited, the oceans I have seen from our shores, and the pictures and stories I have considered throughout life. It also includes the people I have known or seen. It is the spirit that collects food and clothing for a burned-out family. It is the generosity that donates time, money and effort to find two boys lost in a mine. It is the desire to help other countries through gifts of money, food, clothing and medical supplies. It is the zeal which prompts surviving missionaries to continue their work after some of their number are murdered by unfriendly tribes.

Americanism is a bundle of lovely sunsets and purple mountains sprinkled by deserts and streaked with rivers. At its center is a love and respect for all mankind, and a desire for peace on earth. Holding it firmly are the arms of God, who created this world and peopled it with creatures in His own image. It is too big and too great to describe, but so real and so personal that it dwells within the heart of every true American. This is what Americanism means to me."

It has been said that the greatest possession for which to be thankful is a thankful heart. We are surrounded by more than enough blessings to make us happy and rich, but we must accept them with an open heart. Look around you and count your riches. Can you put a price tag on the child that calls you Mom or Dad, or the house that shields you from the heat and cold, or the homecooked meals that you and your family enjoy gathered around a common table, or your bed with fresh, clean white sheets where you can relieve yourself of the tiredness and anxieties of the day, or the conversations with friends and relatives that you enjoy? Count your blessings, total them up, and you will see that you are rich, regardless of your income.

And this is something to think about!



ONE OF THE HARDEST WORDS

If a survey were to be run to learn what the average person feels is the hardest word to pronounce, it is wondered what would be the results? Surely there would be all kinds of words given, but among the hardest words to pronounce is the little word "NO!" Why? Because our most difficult task in life is to control ourselves. To have self-control we must learn to say no. There were hundreds during the ministry of Jesus who refused to follow Him because they were not strong enough to deny themselves. Jesus laid down this important rule when he said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." To many of his hearers, this price was too great.

The rich young ruler that came to Jesus seeking eternal life, finally walked away sorrowfully because he lacked self-control. Even though Jesus said, "Sell what you have, give it to the poor, and come follow me," the young man's self said, "No."

When Ronald Reagan was governor of California, he was asked by an inquisitive student body as to why he vetoed a bill which would have allowed minors to obtain birth control materials without parental consent. He said that: "Birth control prior to marriage should begin with saying "NO."

I doubt seriously that this answer satisfied the student. People these days do not like the word "no." They want to do what they want to do, when they want to do it, and in the way they want to do it. Mainly though, they just do not know how to say "NO" to themselves.

When a mother who admired a great leader asked him what she could do to prepare her son to be such a leader as he was, the man replied, "Teach him to deny himself."

"NO" may be an ugly word. But nevertheless, it will always be one of the key words in the vocabulary of every person who excels in the fine art of living.

Learning to say "no" at the right time can mean the difference between heartbreak and happiness, poverty and wealth, failure and success. Even though "NO" is a little word, it's one of the hardest words in the English language to pronounce."

—Howard W. Norton

"Most powerful is he who has himself in his own power." Seneca
And this is something to think about!



TIME TO REPAIR

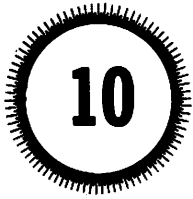
“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6).

There are many thrills in the lives of parents as children are reared toward adulthood, and among these is the confidence our children have in our ability to repair the things in their lives that are broken. Whether it be a broken insignificant toy or a cut finger, they believe that Mom and Dad can repair. In most cases we can meet their needs and send them on their way happy. But my friends, there are some things in our children’s lives that will never be repaired unless we do it now. To neglect may turn out to be forever!

Every child born into this world has a living soul that will reach the point, if he lives, where repair is necessary. Innocence will grow into accountability, and they are depending on us to direct them to the proper source of help. From birth they need to be surrounded by Spiritual teaching and Christian example. Yet, millions of parents let their children grow up without God and without the influence of Jesus.

Will Durant tells the story of his little girl who came to her mother one day with the age-old question, “Mother, what is God like?” The mother hesitated in the presence of so great a question and finally said “Dear, ask your daddy.” And he too hesitated. Later on, among her childish possessions they found a slip of paper with a bit of free verse inscribed on it. It went something like this: “I asked my mother what God was like, she didn’t know. I asked my teacher what God was like, she didn’t know. Then I asked my father, who knows more than anyone else in the whole world, what God was like. He did not know. I think if I had lived as long as my mother, or my father, I would know something about God.” (Marie Cole Powell.)

Some of you that are pondering these words do not attend all the spiritual services of the church, and you are permitting your children to follow your example of neglect! Now is the TIME TO REPAIR! Don’t wait until their lives are shaped — this will be too late. A neglected cut on your child’s finger may bring infection; a neglected soul may bring spiritual ruin. And this is something to think about.



BARKING DOESN'T DISTURB THE MOON

A judge who was on circuit at a certain town was always sure of being annoyed by some sneering remarks from a conceited lawyer. After one such occasion, someone asked the judge at dinner, why he didn't come down strong on the fellow. The judge dropped his knife and fork, placed his chin on his hands, and his elbows on the table as he gave emphasis to his story: "Up in our town there lives a widow who has a dog which, whenever the moon shines, goes out and barks and barks at it all night." Stopping short, he quietly resumed eating again. One of the company asked, "Well, Judge, what about the dog and the moon?" "Oh, the moon kept on shining," he said!

One of the hardest things for a Christian to do is to keep shining for Christ when he is being barked at by his persecutors. Many times just an insignificant thing will cause us to step down from our position as a Christian and fight that which should be ignored. In other words, the Devil can accuse us of one weakness in order that he may bring out another.

The best way to fight our enemies is to be like the moon and shine. Surely Paul had this in mind when he authorized the following: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." (Rom. 12:20-21).

We sometimes say that a lie travels faster than a truth, and I believe this to be a fact. However, let's keep in mind that a lie is light with lack of truth and if ignored will fly to its destruction. Just shine before the lie appears, when it arrives, and after it is gone and all will be well.

A feather is light and easily blown about with a tremendous speed, but for it to cast its weight against anything solid causes no more damage than a refreshing evening breeze. Falsehoods are just that harmless if we remain firm and continue to shine.

No doubt but what the enemies of Christ desired Him to answer their questions in a mean and sinful way, but they were disappointed. He was the light of the world and couldn't afford to give up this glory.



LOOK TO THE SKY

"A student visiting one of his professors said, "Why Doctor, surely this isn't the garden from which all your inspiring thoughts come!" "Oh, yes," the professor said. "But it is so small," replied the student. "Yes," said the professor, and pointing to the sky, "but see how high it is." (The Christian Herald)

Oh, my friends, how often we limit our worlds to a little circle here on earth by failing to look up! The earth is so tiny compared to the heavens above, and man is so small compared to God. One person placed with God is more mighty than all the armies that have ever marched. David must have had this thought in mind when he sang: "I lift up my eyes to the hills" — where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth" (Psalms 121:1-2).

Dr. Lyman Abbot illustrated this fact in the following way: "I pluck an acorn from the greensward and hold it to my ear; and this is what it says to me: "By and by the birds will come and nest in me. By and by I will furnish shade for the cattle. By and by I will provide warmth for the home in the pleasant fire. By and by I will be shelter from the storm to those who have gone under the roof. By and by I will be the strong ribs of the great vessel, and the tempest will beat against me in vain while I carry men across the Atlantic." "O foolish little acorn, wilt thou be all this?" I asked and the acorn answers, "Yes, God and I."

Have you ever been guilty of not looking up? Have you tried to accomplish great things and failed because you did not add the unmeasurable heights of God to your life?

The strong man Samson learned the hard way that he was so weak without God's power. God had given him special strength as He dwelt in Samson. All of this was related to the Nazarite vow in which his hair had never been cut. Samson toyed with this sacred vow and finally revealed such to Delilah. While he was asleep she had a man cut away his hair, and his strength left him. Then she called, "Samson, the Philistines are upon you!" He awoke from his sleep and thought, "I'll go out as before and shake myself free." But he did not know that the Lord had left him." (Judges 16:20). With God, he was the strongest man. So long as he looked up in faithfulness, the warring Philistines could not harm him, but the moment God left him, he was reduced to a slave at their command.

Truly, in the words of a song, "He has the whole world in his hand." What about your life, have you looked up? And this is something to think about!

12

TIMELY WORDS

“ . . . A word spoken in due season, how good is it!” (Prov. 15:23).

Words are some of the most powerful influences in our lives. They have the power to motivate, inspire, encourage, or they have the power to retard, depress, and destroy. Words can be tools for the Devil or for the Lord. The Bible is filled with admonitions to use words for righteousness. In the words of Solomon: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Proverbs 25:11). Likewise, we are warned against lying, cursing, blaspheming, gossiping, talebearing, backbiting, and swearing.

But what is meant by “a word spoken in due season?” There are times in our lives when various types of words are needed. There are times when words of warning are needed. When we see a fellow human in great physical danger, we feel the need to cry out, but are we as anxious to warn those lost in sin? Jesus spent His ministry warning people of the danger of being lost and gave His life.

Then there are times when words of sympathy are in order. When such words are spoken from a heart of love and concern, they are truly like apples of gold. After Paul had spoken of the return of the Lord and how the faithful, dead or alive, would meet the Lord in the air, he concluded by saying: “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (I Thess. 4:18). Human hearts are capable of being comforted, and words of sympathy can help.

Likewise, there are many times when words of encouragement are essential. Life is made of mountains and valleys, joys, and sorrows; successes and disappointments. A word of encouragement based on the Bible is the proper antidote when one is down.

Then there are times for words of apology. It is not easy to say I’m sorry and mean it, but how needful are these words when we are wrong. Don’t ever bury a wrong, but seek to make it right. A sincere explanation and apology can lift a heavy burden from the soul and restore friendship.

Therefore, handle your words with care because someone’s life and soul may depend on them. Be sure that we never forget to use God’s word to show our fellowman the way to heaven.

“Good words do more than hard speeches, as the sunbeams without any noise will make the traveler cast off his cloak, which all the blustering winds could not do, but only make him bind it closer to him.” (Leighton) And this is something to think about!

13

THE SIN OF DRUNKENNESS

One day I was driving down the street and saw a man lying between a parked car and the curb. He was struggling trying to get out, but each effort was in vain since he would fall back to his original position. His face was bleeding from scratches and he looked half insane. My first impulse was to drive on and let him wallow in his drunkenness and sin. Then I remembered that alcoholism is the fourth most prevalent disease in the United States. It occurred to me that this man was physically sick as well as spiritually. Therefore, I lifted him from his trap and took him to a boarding house nearby.

This is the part of drinking that Satan does not want you to see. He wants drinking to appear beautiful. "Just a nip," he says, "will make you sociable and full of fun." But this is not true! When you begin drinking, you may have begun a road of ruin and defeat. Drinking will make you everything else besides a strong person. It weakens your mind, vision, perception, and causes you to lose control of your physical body. Add to this fact that drunkenness is the basis for all other types of sins, and you have a terrible total!

Can one be a drunkard (if he refuses to repent) and go to heaven? The apostle Paul answers this: ". . . nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:10). That verse answers the question as plain and simple as it can be answered.

Solomon, the wisest mere man that ever lived, had this to say about intoxicants: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Prov. 20:1). Then he gives this advice that everyone should observe lest we are trapped by this curse: "Look not upon the wine when it is red: when it giveth his colour in the cup . . . at the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." (Prov. 23:31-32)

In the Bible and history, the trail of fallen man is paved with the sin of drunkenness. The fruits of strong drink are divorce, neglected families, financial failures, homeless children, death, murder and hell fire through all eternity. Liquor is no more than the Devil in liquid form. You may not see any harm in trying a little, but you may very well be unconsciously opening the gate to torment here on earth and in the world to come. All would be wise to see how far we can stay away from alcoholic drink in any form. Fear it as you would a coiled rattlesnake that is ready to strike.

The Japanese say: "A man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and the next drink takes the man." And this is something to think about!



IMAGINING HEAVEN

There are so many things in this life that we call beautiful, but within a few short years become defaced! That sparkling new car that brought so many compliments will soon find its way to the scrap heap. The houses that were once called mansions are eventually reduced to shacks. But all of this is not so of the beautiful place called Heaven. For there is no decay, no change; only that which is eternal.

Someone asked, "Which is the longest day?" The answer given, "That depends on the part of the world in which you live. In New York, the longest day is fifteen hours; in London, it is sixteen and a half hours; in Stockholm, Sweden, it is eighteen and a half hours; in Faroe, Finland, it is twenty-two hours; in Wardbury, Norway, the longest day lasts for two months; in Spitzbergen for three and a half months; but in the New Jerusalem (Heaven) to which all faithful Christians will go, A DAY LASTS FOREVER!" "There shall be no night there."

Here on earth there are many unfair things. The man with the purest heart may be ignored because of poverty, and the most vile may be respected because of his riches. But in heaven, there is beauty for all. Not a single soul will feel left out of joy, beauty, love and happiness — for all will live in the presence of God.

Jonathan Edwards wrote: "Every saint in heaven is as a flower in the garden of God, and holy love is the fragrance and sweet odor that they all send forth, and with which they fill the bowers of that paradise above. Every soul there is as a note in some concert of delightful music, that sweetly harmonizes with every other note, and all together blend in the most rapturous strains in praising God and the Lamb forever."

In the final words of this message, would you imagine, along with me in the words of a poem, what it would be like to go to heaven:

Just think of stepping on shore and finding it heaven! Just think of taking hold of a hand and finding it God's hand. Just think of breathing fresh air and realizing it is eternity. Just think of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality. Just think of passing from storm and tempest to an unknown calm. Just think of waking up — and finding at last you're home.



THE GOSPEL STORY IN SONG TITLES

Did you know that there are many spiritual lessons in the songs that are sung in worship? I was thinking about this one day and decided to write about the Gospel story of the New Testament based on song titles. Thus, the following contains 56 Gospel Song titles:

"IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR" during the hours of a "SILENT NIGHT" that Jesus was born in the "LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM." The babe was placed "AWAY IN A MANGER," while the angels sang to the shepherds "A NEW SONG" of "PEACE, PERFECT PEACE" that would bring "JOY TO THE WORLD." As the "SILVER STAR" guided the wise men to "JESUS MEEK AND GENTLE" they must have felt "LOVE DIVINE" and desired to "WORSHIP THE KING" and followed the principle, "GIVE OF YOUR BEST TO THE MASTER."

Now today, "CHRIST FOR THE WORLD WE SING" and "MORE ABOUT JESUS" should we learn, since He is the "ROCK OF AGES" and man's "GREAT PHYSICIAN." Personally, "I WILL SING THE WONDEROUS STORY" because "I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY!" "HOW SWEET THE NAME OF JESUS SOUNDS" — "JESUS LOVER OF MY SOUL."

"WHY DID THE SAVIOUR HEAVEN LEAVE?" "WHY DID MY SAVIOUR COME TO EARTH?" He came to be "MY REDEEMER" for truly "JESUS SAVES" and since "THE WAY OF THE CROSS LEADS HOME" "SALVATION HAS BEEN BROUGHT DOWN." Jesus was "NAILED TO THE CROSS," "THE OLD RUGGED CROSS," as "JESUS PAID IT ALL." Now, "MY HOPE IS BUILT ON NOTHING LESS" for "THERE IS POWER IN THE BLOOD" and "NOTHING BUT THE BLOOD" can ever cleanse me. Anyone that will "TRUST AND OBEY" will become "A NEW CREATURE" since "CHRIST THE LORD IS RISEN."

I will "LIVE FOR JESUS" and "TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY" for "I'M NOT ASHAMED TO OWN MY LORD," since I'm a "CHILD OF THE KING." Let me be faithful "FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH" and "I WANT TO BE A WORKER," "SOWING THE SEED OF THE KINGDOM." "I WILL PRAY," "DEAR LORD AND FATHER OF MANKIND," "GUIDE ME, O THOU GREAT JEHOVAH." And if I faithfully "HOLD TO GOD'S UNCHANGING HAND," "HE IS ABLE TO DELIVER ME" because "THERE IS A GOD — HE IS ALIVE," and "GOD IS LOVE."

Finally, if we live with that "WHISPERING HOPE," and at death "WE HAVE AN ANCHOR" for the soul, then "FACE TO FACE" we'll "COME TO JESUS." There "WE SHALL SEE THE KING" "WHERE THE GATES SWING OUTWARD EVER," and it will be "GOOD MORNING IN GLORY!" And this is something to think about!



CONCERN FOR THE ELDERLY

"With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding" (Job 12:12). "The glory of young men is their strength: and the beauty of old men is the grey head" (Prov. 20:29)

"Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in his season" (Job 5:26).

I believe that one of the important things in our lives as Christians is to be concerned about those that have reached older years. Many times, without meaning to, we neglect these brave precious souls that have so successfully fought the good fight of faith. Now it is true that they cannot be active as they have been in years gone by, but in their hearts they still feel just as deeply and even have a greater appreciation for kindness than the young.

Let us that are younger then, slow down a little — take the time to visit and show appreciation for the elderly. You can be assured that God looks down with even greater favor upon those in the sunset years that have devoted their lives to Him and His service. He doesn't see an aged, decaying body, but a renewed spirit. Paul must have had this idea in mind when he wrote, "but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (2 Cor. 4:16).

Some lady must have felt neglected when the following poem was written; I don't know the author, but please listen carefully to the words and learn a lesson::

I sit in the chimney corner, an' I hear the young folks say:
"The world is weary of her — she is old, and in the way;
And a vacant chair were better — a solitary place —
Than the palsied, wrinkled hands of hers, and the tear-wet
furrowed face!"

They do not know I am walking where their feet have never trod —
They do not know I am seeing sights on the hills of God!
They do not know that the angels are there where my footsteps roam —
In the ways of the lights celestial, when the morning stars sing, "Home!"
I nursed 'em at my bosom ere Life's sun went down the west;
I sang Love's sweetest songs to them and rocked their hearts to rest;
And now, that the sad time hastens — the closing of Life's day —
I am only a useless woman — I am old and in the way!
Thank God, it will soon be over — Life's sun is sinking fast;
My feet are in the valley, and I see my home at last!
And I say, while the angels beckon: "Poor, and old, and gray,
There is room for me in heaven, where I'll not be in the way!"
And this is something to think about!



THE MOST BEAUTIFUL THING ON EARTH

Once each year on Mothers' Day, our thoughts especially turn to our mothers. There are many things that might be said about faithful mothers, but surely that which stands out and motivates so many children is a mother's love.

To illustrate this, someone imagined the following:

"God sent an angel down from heaven to find the most beautiful thing on earth and bring it back to heaven. When the angel saw the flowers at springtime he said, "These must be the most beautiful things on earth"; and he gathered them up to take with him back to heaven. Then he met a child of wondrous beauty and golden hair and a lovely smile. When he saw the child he said, "This must be the most wonderful thing on earth. Nothing could be sweeter than the smile of that innocent child."

But farther along, in a remote valley, he came to a humble cottage where a mother sat in the doorway with her babe in her lap. As he watched her tender and beautiful care for the little babe, he said, "This must be the fairest thing on earth. I will take the mother's love back with me to heaven."

When he reached the portals of heaven the flowers had faded and were dead, the smile on the child's face had changed into a scowl — but the mother's love was unchanged.

A little boy who was told by his mother that it was God who makes people good, replied, "Yes, I know it is God, but mothers help a lot."

Here is a child. What is the power which can bring that child to the fulness of his possibilities? The strength of the mason and the carpenter can build a house for him to live in. The huge forces moving in a locomotive may bring to the city food by which the child is fed. The club of a policeman may keep the house he lives in from violence without. But all these things together, though they may safeguard his existence, cannot give that child his highest life. In order for the house he lives in to be his home, there must be the wonder of a woman's love. For the child's full growth in happiness, in confidence, and in serenity of soul, the gentle spirit of his mother is more powerful than all the world aside.

To the woman whose words never tire, whose advice never fails, whose love never falters, whose unselfishness never slackens, whose power never weakens, we salute mothers.

We wish for all faithful mothers a truly happy Mothers' Day! And this is something to think about!



BEWARE OF TEMPTATIONS

"An illustration for children and young people, given by Mrs. George Morrison, tells of a lark which observed during his flight a small object moving slowly along one of the green paths of earth far below him. Being curious to know what it was, he descended until he was quite low and just over the slowly moving object. To his vast surprise he discovered that it was a tiny cart with a mouse drawing it, and another mouse walking alongside waving a whip, while all the time it chanted, "Fresh worms for sale!" Much interested, the lark alighted on the path beside the little cart and asked the mouse how much the charge for the worms was. "Three worms for one feather from your wing," was the reply. The lark thought this was an excellent bargain, so he pulled out a feather from his wing and got his worms which he enjoyed greatly, then spread his wings and rose again.

Before he had soared far, the temptation to enjoy more of the delicious morsels was too strong to be resisted, and alighting again, he bartered away two more precious feathers, then once again rose into the sunlit air. Balance and wing power were lost, however, and soon the lark was found dead in the lovely garden where temptation had met him and had been too strong for him."

My friends, temptation is a powerful thing in our lives, and when we continue to yield, such can destroy. The Devil realized the power of temptation when he met Jesus in the wilderness and tempted Him. But he failed because Jesus, one by one, rejected the temptations. It is true that none of us is as strong as the son of God, but this does not give us an excuse to purposely yield. When we become Christians, we get out of the business of sinning. We spend each day striving to overcome temptations to sin. Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2). Even when we are trying to overcome, it is easy to stumble, but such is not purposely planned. With a penitent heart, we confess our sins and ask God to forgive.

God's word also promises that God will help Christians to overcome temptation: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Cor. 10:13).

Each temptation in which we yield, will weaken us for the next, but each temptation over which a victory is won, will help us win another.

"Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them we shall find a nest of honey within them." (Bunyan) And this is something to think about!



19

ATTACK IS ALL I KNOW

During one of the battles at Shiloh of the Civil War, a young boy, who was serving as the drummer for a Northern regiment, was ordered to beat "attack." Responding to his sharp summons, the troops stormed up a hill, but met fierce enemy fire and came to a halt. The captain called to the boy to beat "retreat." The boy drummed, but again he beat "attack." "I said 'retreat,' " the officer shouted. Tears came to the boy's eyes. "Captain," he answered, " 'attack' is all I know. They never taught me to beat 'retreat.' " Hearing the familiar signal, the men resumed their onslaught, and to their own surprise captured the hill.

When one becomes a true Christian, his only orders are to go forward serving God and fighting sin. He must face the worst enemy mankind has ever known, the Devil. Peter describes this enemy and warns: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (I Peter 5:8, NIV.) Paul teaches: "Neither give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27), and "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11). There is no turning back! When the going gets rough, it is a temptation to retreat, but the Lord wants us to continue our attack and never retreat.

Jesus had the apostle John, to write to one of the seven churches of Asia: "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Rev. 2:10, NIV). Paul wrote to the church at Corinth: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). To the Galatians he wrote: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9 NIV).

There are enough people who were once religious, but have retreated to the devil, to fill our buildings. They heard the sound of the Devil's "retreat" instead of the Lord's call to "attack" and press onward. Unless these repent and return to God, someday when the Lord returns they will find the meaning of being lost eternally. Peter says of these: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." (II Peter 2:21). And this is something to think about!



THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY

A young man was walking along a country road. Along came a farmer driving a wagon. Without asking permission, the young man jumped upon the wagon and said: "Hayseed, I'm going to ride along with you to Louisville."

The farmer just looked at him and said nothing. They rode for ten miles. The young man began to feel uneasy. He turned to the farmer and said, "I say, old pop, how much further is it to Louisville?"

The farmer replied, "If you keep in the direction you are going, it is about 25,000 miles, but if you want to get off and walk back the other way, it is about sixteen miles — six miles from where you jumped on."

Many start off supposedly toward heaven without really checking the Bible to see if they are following the right way. Although mankind has often thought otherwise, the Bible presents only one way to heaven. In the words of the Son of God: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). Notice that Christ did not say that I am one of many ways, but simply: "I am the way." In the sermon on the mount, Jesus taught further of this one way when he said: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is 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). This is very simple. Jesus is teaching that we are either on the narrow way or the broad way and only the narrow way leads to life. My friends, we might search in heaven and earth to find another way to life other than through Christ, but we would totally fail! Again Jesus taught: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-29). Jesus is the only one that can lift burdens and give rest to the soul. To seek a way anywhere else is futile.

Some try to get to heaven on their own virtue and goodness. But this is impossible. God's word declares that all are guilty of sin. Paul wrote; "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Since there can be no sin in heaven, and since it is impossible to be forgiven of a single sin without the blood of Christ, those who seek heaven on their own goodness will fail.

Others seek salvation by the teachings of men rather than God's will. This is also in vain, because Jesus taught: "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matt. 15:13).

It is so important that we all make sure we are on this one way! And this is something to think about!



. . . TODAY, OR TOO LATE

One of the important subjects in the Bible deals with training our children in the Lord, but do you feel we put enough importance on this? Solomon advises young people to: "Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Eccles. 12:1). Again I ask, have we realized the force of this truth?

Why is it so important to train youth for the Lord?

1. Youth is a time for important choices.

The choices our young people make will have an effect on them the rest of their lives. They must decide on education, marriage, occupation, where to live, and even the extent of their commitment to the Lord. They need our guidance in these choices!

2. It is far better to start life right than to correct it when older. Millions have learned this truth the hard way. Thus young people need our help based on the principles of the word. Too many parents wait until the tree is inclined, before attempting to bend it! This is too late. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

3. No youth has complete assurance of adulthood.

To decide for Christ in youth is to be fair with Him, and to be fair with self. All youth hope to have years to serve Him, but the young die too! Therefore, we need to point them to salvation when they are very young. The theme of the New Testament to all that are old enough to obey is — "Now is the accepted time" — "today is the day of salvation!"

You can search the world over and you will not find anyone that regrets serving the Lord when facing death, but only our God in heaven knows the millions that die with fear and neglect because of not serving Him.

As young people, think seriously about giving your best to the Lord! As adults and parents, may we realize more the importance of training our youth for a spiritual life in the Lord. Please remember, if we neglect this today, we will face the sad words tomorrow — Too late! And this is something to think about!



SWEET PEAS IN PSALMS 23

For many centuries, millions have found comfort in reading and studying the 23rd Psalm, and who can deny its greatness! Please notice some of the "sweet Peas" in this Psalm:

1. **P-ossession** — "The Lord is my Shepherd." Of all the things one may possess, this is the greatest of all. If you cannot say that the Lord belongs to you since you have accepted Him in obedience, your soul faces eternal dangers daily. When health is good or bad, when the sun is shining or clouds dark, or when we must give in to death, to have the Lord is our greatest possession.

2. **P-rovision** — "I shall not want." When one becomes a Christian, he has every need of a Spiritual nature filled. We need light — Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world!" We need truth, Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth!" We need Spiritual food, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life!" We need consideration and Jesus says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

3. **P-osition** — "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." There is contentment in Christ. Paul looked death in the face daily and suffered persecutions continually, and yet, he could say that he was content.

4. **P-rogress** — "He leadeth me beside the still waters." We are Pilgrims moving through this life toward eternity, and Jesus leads us in the right way. In the midst of a rushing, sinful world, He offers the tranquillity of still waters.

5. **P-ersonal** — "He restoreth my soul." Jesus is concerned on an individual basis.

6. **P-urpose** — "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." How powerful is the name of Jesus. He has a name above all other names. He has a name of authority, therefore, I should do all in the name of the Lord!

7. **P-arting** — "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death." Even in the most difficult time of our lives, our Lord will walk with us. For this great and last enemy will not stop our Lord. Since the bars of death could not hold him, we have the promise that they will not hold us. We will be resurrected to eternal life. Would you add these "Sweet Peas" to your Spiritual diet? And this is something to think about!



THE GREATEST TRAGEDY

One of the greatest tragedies in man's life is to forget God. This is true whether or not we are speaking of an individual or a nation. But for some reason man has often been blind to this great fact! In the Old Testament, both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah learned this lesson the hard way — they were both carried away into captivity! The Bible is literally filled with examples of blessings for those that remember and serve God, but punishment for those that forget Him.

But my friends, how can we forget God! Considering the fact that He is everywhere — always before our eyes. As Clovis Chappell wrote in his book, "The Village Tragedy," "I listen to the song of the mockingbird and the canary. Where did those birds go to school? Who taught them music? Ah, you know. Those little birds sing the songs that their Master taught them, notes caught from the Choir Invisible. Who made the calendar for the swallow? How does it know when the snows are coming? Who made his geography? Who drew the map of that faraway country where the roses bloom all the year and where spring never takes a vacation? Ah, you know — God!

God has millions of trains flying through the trackless distances of space, but not one of them has ever been late by a fraction of a second in all the centuries. Now, if God plans the flowers and birds and stars, I believe He also plans your life and mine. For when the last flower is withered and the last bird song dead and the last star has closed its silvery eye, you and I shall be yet in our infancy in the great Nursery of Eternity." How true are these words!

If we can ever imagine God sad, it is when His people have forgotten Him! God spoke through Isaiah and said, "I have nourished and brought up children and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. (Isa. 1:2-3).

What about the church today? Is God number one in our lives? Do we really care — do we consider? Please think seriously about God and the place He holds in your life. If you have forgotten Him in any way, return to Him today! If you have never been born again — born of water and of the spirit, obey Him while you have time and opportunity. And this is something to think about!



BRIDLE THAT TONGUE

The story is told of a man that had started a false rumor on his neighbor. As it usually happens, the rumor grew and grew as it was passed from person to person across the community. In fact, it became distorted and additional lies were added. The talebearer became sorry for what he had done, and decided to correct the wrong, but did not know where to begin. Therefore, he asked the advice of his older minister. After relating his problem to the minister, this wise man of God told him that he had something that he wanted him to do before advising him. The man was told to get a pillow case filled with feathers, open it up and go around to all his neighbors and leave a handful of feathers in each yard. Since the man was desperate, he obeyed. The wind was blowing, but he managed to get the job done. The next day he anxiously returned to the minister.

"Now," said the minister, "I want you to go around and gather up all those feathers." The man responded by saying, "that is impossible." Then the lesson was taught. "Yes, you're right, and so is it impossible to gather up gossip in the neighborhood once it has been spread." Then the minister advised him to ask God and the wronged person to forgive him, and to learn to bridle his tongue.

James reminds us that we can never completely tame our tongues: "For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:7-8). But we must try as Christians to keep it under control, and one of the ways to do this is to realize how it can destroy. We detest the thought of an assassin that destroys the life of another, but how do we feel about a reputation assassin? Shouldn't he be condemned also for his crime?

Jesus taught: "In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12 NIV). We do not want others to use their tongues of lying, slandering, and talebearing against us! Therefore, we should give them the same consideration.

May each of us learn to think before we speak. In the words of the poet: "Just think, before you take the floor: The whale, without a doubt, would never feel the harpoon's steel — If he didn't come up to spout!" And this is something to think about!



WORDS THAT OFFEND

A godly minister was approached by one of his church members who wanted to repeat to him some of the wrongdoings of others. The preacher said, "Does anybody else know this but you?" "No, sir." "Have you told it to anybody else?" "No."

"Then," said the good man, "go home and hide it away at the feet of Jesus, and never speak of it again unless God leads you to speak to the man himself. If the Lord wants to bring scandal upon His church, let Him do it; but don't you be the instrument to cause it."

James writes in James 3:2, "For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body."

Have you ever visited your doctor and heard him say: "Let me look at your tongue?" He was perhaps looking for something to indicate your illness. The tongue may give a clue as to your problem. James is saying that the tongue is a barometer which determines our spiritual lives. If our tongues are right, the whole body is under control; if not, then all is wrong.

It has been said: "When we advance a little into life, we find that the tongue of man creates nearly all the mischief of the world." (Paxton Hood) When the apostle Paul quoted from the Book of Psalms to describe those that are wicked, he wrote: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness" (Rom. 3:13-14).

A Japanese proverb states: "The tongue is but three inches long, yet it can kill a man six feet high." Just think of the many ways we sin with the improper use of the tongue: lying, slander, gossip, profanity, and talebearing. When the tongue is not controlled, it destroys everything in its path. This is why James advised: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Just think of the times we have told something against someone and later learned it was not true! Is there any real good that comes from gossiping about others? Are we ever made stronger as a Christian or is Christ's church ever strengthened by it? "Gossiping, (sometimes called hoof and mouth disease) hoofing it over to the neighbors and mouthing, has never built a church, but it has torn many of them asunder." (Source unknown)

Remember: "The tongue is, at the same time, the best part of man, and his worst: with good government, none is more useful; without it, none is more mischievous." (Anarcharis) And this is something to think about!



THE TONGUE IS A FIRE

The most beautiful forest that has ever been grown can be destroyed in minutes by a single spark of fire. James wrote: "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell" (James 3:5-6 NIV). Of course, James is referring to an uncontrolled tongue. It is one of the most dangerous weapons we have, because its wounds are most difficult to heal. "A wound from a tongue is worse than a wound from a sword; for the latter affects only the body, the former the spirit." (Pythagoras)

The apostle Paul warned the Galatians: "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15). When our tongues become a destructive fire, we not only destroy, but while we are destroying, we are failing to do good. It is a true saying that: "When a bee is stinging it is not making honey," and when we are using our tongues improperly, we are failing to do good.

But the destructibility of the tongue is not always planned! You may unintentionally destroy a life. Thus, how important it is that we weigh our words — especially against another — and then speak. The poet has advised that we make a tale about another pass through three gates of gold: "If you are tempted to reveal — A tale someone to you has told — About another, make it pass — Before you speak, three gates of gold, Three narrow gates: First, "Is it true?" Then, "Is it kind?" In your mind give truthful answer, and then next — is last and narrowest, "Is it necessary?" And if to reach your lips at last, It passes through these gateways three, Then you may tell, nor ever fear — What the result of speech may be.

I wonder how many lives have been destroyed because of unkind words. Many times such words were spoken during a time of great anger, and yet the deep wound was made. Do you also wonder how many have been driven from Christ and His great way of life because of a burning tongue.

Sometimes we may try to minimize the harm of the fiery tongue burning out of control by saying: "People will just have to understand that I don't mean all that I say!" But this does not change what really happens. "Only a word of anger, but it wounded one sensitive heart; Only a word of sharp reproach, but it made the teardrops start; Only a hasty, thoughtless word, sarcastic and unkind; But it darkened the day before so bright and left a sting behind. Only a word of kindness, but it lightened one heart of its grief; Only a word of sympathy, but it brought one soul relief; Only a word of gentle cheer, but it flooded with radiant light. The pathway that seemed so dark before, and made the day more bright."



A LITTLE TONGUE BOASTS OF GREAT THINGS

A preacher was in the habit of standing at the church door after the services and saying, "Fine, glad you did, hurry back." One man decided to upset his apple cart and as he came out the door, instead of complimenting the sermon, he said, "I killed my wife last night." To which the preacher replied, "Fine, glad you did, hurry back."

This illustrates the fact that our tongues are capable of saying anything if they are not controlled. "Nothing is more often opened by mistake than the mouth." One of the mistakes made with the tongue is boasting. James wrote: "Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" (James 3:5) To illustrate this, James refers to the bits which are put into the horses' mouths. They are so small, yet they are capable of turning about their whole body. Next, he refers to the great ships which are turned about by a small rudder. These ships weighed tons and were driven by fierce winds, and yet the captains could move them with small rudders.

The tongue is so small compared to the rest of our bodies, and yet, James says it boasteth of great things.

How do you feel about one that goes around boasting? Do you feel that he or she is all that great? It has been said that: "Usually the greatest boasters are the smallest workers. The deep rivers pay a larger tribute to the sea than shallow brooks, and yet empty themselves with less noise." (W. Secker)

Solomon gave some good advice when he wrote: "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of gifts he does not give." (Prov. 25:14 NIV) He continues in verse 27: "It is not good to eat too much honey. Nor is it honorable to seek one's own honor." He later tells how praise should be done: "Let another praise you, and not your own mouth." (Prov. 27:2 NIV).

Now the question may be asked, "How do we avoid boasting? Let me answer this question in the words of a plaque which was displayed in the agriculture building where I attended high school: "DON'T BOAST OF YOUR ABILITIES, DEMONSTRATE!"

The following poem sums it all up:

"Two brothers once lived down this way, and one was Do and the other Say. If streets were dirty, taxes high, Or schools wee crowded, Say would cry: 'My what a town!' but brother Do would set to work and make things new, And while Do worked, Say still would cry: 'He does it wrong, I know that I could do it right.' So, all the day — Was heard the clank of the brother Say, But this one fact from none was hid. Say would always talk, Do always did." And that's something to think about.



THE TONGUE CAN BE A BLESSING

"Only a word of kindness, But it lightened one heart of its grief; Only a word of sympathy, But it brought one soul relief; Only a word of gentle cheer, But it flooded with radiant light — The pathway that seemed so dark before, And made the day more bright."

After learning all of the evil that can be done by the improper use of the tongue, we might get the idea that it is all evil, but this is not true. The tongue can also be used to promote a blessing. In fact, it is through the proper use of the tongue that God chose to inform the lost and dying world of the saving grace of His son: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15-16).

Solomon wrote: "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life . . . In the lips of him that hath understanding wisdom is found" (Prov. 10:11,13). Again: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (Prov. 25:11) "The tongue of the just is like as choice silver. (Prov. 10:20). "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." (Prov. 15:4) Therefore, we see that the tongue can be a blessing that may be used to please God and to help others, but to do this you must: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6). The apostle Paul wrote: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (Eph. 4:29 NIV)

How do you employ your tongue daily? Is it used to build or to destroy — to curse or to bless? In this regard, we need to take the advice of the little poem: "A good thing to remember, A better thing to do: work on the construction gang, and not the wrecking crew."

Have you ever spoken kind words to someone — maybe they were words of appreciation, and heard them say: "What you just said has made my day." Or, have you ever visited someone ill and depressed and before leaving, heard them say: "Talking to you has really helped me. I believe that I can make it now." If you have, then you experienced the power and blessing that can come from the tongue! Life is filled with so many problems that all of us need the blessings that can come from the proper use of the tongue.

Emily Dickinson must have had this kind of help in mind when she wrote: "If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain; If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one pain, or help one fainting robin unto his nest again, I shall not live in vain." And that's something to think about!



STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

"The greatest danger confronting the children today is the example set by adults." Do you agree with this statement? How could we possibly deny it when we stop and realize that young people are what we make them. This leads me to wonder if we as parents are directing enough attention toward our children. Oh, yes, I know we are feeding them well and making sure they have the proper clothing to wear, but are we really giving the attention in the right way?

In years gone by our way of living was very near reversed from today. Children were trained to work, not every time because the parents felt the need of child training, but because of necessity. Money was difficult to obtain, and providing the bare essentials was an accomplishment. Nevertheless, children were given responsibility and made to feel important. They did things with their parents as they prepared for adulthood. But what about today? In so many cases Dad works from 8 to 10 hours away from home, some mothers are also employed away from home, and the children come home from school with time on their hands. Even though much of their time is spent doing homework, they are robbed of many practical experiences, especially those performed with parents. Now we must admit that in many cases our society has driven us to this way of life and that we can't turn time back to yesteryears. However, this does not mean that we are helpless to the problem.

May I suggest that you come out of your shell. How often do you fathers take your boys fishing? How long has it been since you took them for a stroll in the woods? How long has it been since you took time, as a mother to teach your girls to sew and cook? Yes, they make a mess, but Mothers, it will not be long before they will grow up and be working in their own kitchens. It won't be long and you would give worlds for your daughters to desire to be with you working together in the kitchen. Don't wait until it is too late to mold their lives. Have you ever observed a blacksmith shaping iron? He heats it to a glowing white and with the greatest of speed rushes it to the anvil. For the first few seconds this heavy hard material yields to the blows of the hammer. But all at once the metal is cold and the hammer bounces uselessly! This describes child training with one exception. The blacksmith can cast the iron back into the fire for a repeat performance, but often we have only one chance, with our children. Therefore, will you strike while the iron is hot? And this is something to think about!



FRIENDSHIP

"A man in adversity is like a ship which has been driven on the shore and wrecked. The ship needs extensive overhauling and repair before it will be ready for sea again. So is it with the friend who has met with troubles and disaster. He needs the ministry of his friends. There is a beautiful example of this in the Old Testament. When David's fortunes were at the lowest ebb when he was pursued day and night by the relentless hatred and jealousy of Saul, and when, apparently, his own hope was sinking and his faith in God declining then that faithful friend Jonathan, whose love to him David said was, "wonderful, passing the love of women," went to him at night in the woods of Ziph and strengthened his hand in God." (Macartney's I11.)

Friendship — a word that is often misused, for there are many people in this world that are happy to be your friend if it be gain to them. This was the kind of friends that the Prodigal Son had. When his money ran out, so did his friends! But true friendship is with you whether rich or poor, sick or well. Robert Stephens once said: "when a man makes any kind of success, however small, he finds that his friends resolve themselves into three classes: The first class turn sullen and show their envy in many mean ways. The second class wax more friendly than ever and come showering their attentions. The third class show a reasonable pleasure at your success and remain just as they were before. God bless the last kind, God mend the second, and God pity the first."

A true friend is one that accepts you as you are. He is aware that you are not perfect and will try to help you improve, but these weaknesses do not drive him away. As one man put it, "your friend is the man who knows all about you, and still likes you." (Elbert Hubbard)

What is the value of friendship? It should be valued far greater than gold. Some feel badly about not being able to repay their friends with gold. But this is wrong! It is a great gift when we give friendship — when we are worthy of our friends. Frank Sherman wrote: "It is my joy in life to find at every turning of the road, the strong arm of a comrade kind, to help me onward with my load. And since I have no gold to give, and love alone must make amends, my only prayer is, while I live — God make me worthy of my friends."

How does one make friends? There are many suggestions that might be made, but they are all summed up in the words of Solomon: "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov. 18:24) And this is something to think about!



GOD IS REAL

As we travel along the pathway of life, we will be exposed often to those who try to ignore God. There are those who have made "knowledge" their god and are willing to cut off from their lives anyone or anything that threatens their little world. Now please understand that this is not always the case. No, there are thousands of scientists, researchers, and highly educated men and women, that get closer to God the more they learn of His creation. Thank God for such great Giants among us. But on the other hand, there are the disbelievers who play the part of the fool which the Psalmist had in mind when he wrote: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalms 14:1)

"The herbs of the valley, the cedars of the mountain, bless him, the insect sports in his beam; the bird sings Him in the foliage; the thunder proclaims Him in the heavens; the ocean declares His immensity; man alone has said, "There is no God" (Royal Pathway).

Those who feel that they have so much wisdom that they have no need for God are classified by the Bible as having small earthly ways. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8-9). As the apostle Paul expressed it in the New Testament, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." (Rom. 1:22). Such men get so wrapped up in the fascination of creation that they forget their creator. The very materials that they use has God written on them, but they are lost to Him.

Have you ever noticed how real God is to a little child? This is true because their minds have not been filled with skepticism nor their eyes blinded to the beauties of creation that only a supreme being as God could create. The following quote illustrates this: "A cold front sweeping down from the north into a warm front in a midwestern state gave a little girl her first chance to see a storm at the full height of its fury. She rushed to the window to look out just as a long, jagged flash of lightning lit up the whole area. She stared in amazement at first; then rushed to her parents. "Daddy! Mommy! Guess what?" she exclaimed. "God just took my picture!" (Family Weekly).

"As a countenance is made beautiful by the soul's shining through it, so the world is beautified by the shining through it of God." (Jacobi). And this is something to think about!



TO GIVE A LOVELY LIGHT

"A candle's just a little thing; it starts with just a bit of string, yet dipped and dipped with patient hand — It gathers wax upon the strand, until, complete and snowy white, it gives, at last, a lovely light.

Life seems so like that bit of string; each deed we do, a simple thing, yet day by day if on life's strand — we work with patient heart and hand, it gathers joy, makes dark days bright, and gives at last a lovely light."

In the morning of time God so created the heavens and the earth that light and darkness were present. He made the sun the greater light to rule the day and the moon and stars the lesser light to rule the night. The idea of light and darkness was not limited to physical things, but became representatives of right and wrong — good and evil. God and righteousness are represented by light while the devil and sin are described with darkness.

Therefore, from a spiritual standpoint, we either walk in light or darkness. Where then, is true happiness found? Some would answer by going all out for darkness. Jesus said: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed." (John 3:19-20) The majority of the world are ignoring light. But, my friends, true and lasting happiness comes from light, and light comes from doing good while in Christ. The happiness that comes from the darkness of sin is fleshly and short lived. Sin has a harvest that brings shame, disgust, a loss of self-respect, and finally, eternal death. Paul wrote: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting. (Gal. 6:7-8).

Why does true light bring happiness? The light of our lives is shared with others which brings happiness to their hearts. When we see happiness as the fruit of our labor, we in turn are happy. The very basis of Christianity is giving light to others. When Jesus came to earth, he found darkness because of sin. He came as the light of the world. His greatest effort to give light came when He gave all at the cross. This became the master switch to turn on all spiritual light. Life ever has its conflicts, but victory was won when nineteen hundred years ago God gave His only son.

Take just a moment to survey your life. Are you a light for Jesus every day? Are you dipping the strand of your candle in deeds of kindness daily as you reflect the light of Jesus? Remember, when Jesus announced himself to be the light of the world he promised: "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) And this is something to think about!



THE GREATEST CHEERLEADER

Every year, cheerleaders come alive across the country. In fact, it can be said that they add a big spark of enthusiasm to many sports. They not only get excited over the game, but cause the crowd to come alive. Thus, they have a very important part in the game.

All of us have thought of Jesus in many ways, but have you ever thought of Him as a great cheerleader? Let me call your attention to three cheers given to us by our Lord which should affect our lives:

1. The Cheer of Forgiveness:

To the man sick of the palsy, Jesus said: "Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Matt. 9:2. Of all the things that bring cheer, it should be the forgiveness of our sins through the cleansing blood of our Lord. Were it not for his forgiveness, all of us would carry every single sin into eternity. Mankind's greatest need is to be made white and clean from sin. Isaiah pictured this dream of whiteness in these words: "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. 1:18)

2. The Cheer of Companionship:

Perhaps the most frightening moments in the lives of the apostles came when they were caught in a destructive storm in the midst of the Sea of Galilee. But much of their fears subsided when these words came from the Lord walking to them on the water: "Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid." (Matt. 14:27)

When we are caught in a severe storm, it is far easier to bear it, if we are with those that we love. They may not be able to protect us from the lightning and wind, but it helps just to have companionship.

Be assured that the storms of life are going to rage around us, but all will be well if we have Jesus to cheer us onward! By faith we can sing with David: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalms 23:1) Or again: "Take my hand precious Lord, and lead me on."

3. The Cheer of Victory

As Jesus prepared His apostles for their work in a world of turmoil and sin, he assured them that in this world they would not find peace, but rather tribulation. Then he cheered them onward, though, by saying: "but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Isn't it wonderful to know that even though we have a dreadful enemy, the victory can still be won! The cheerleaders in sports will often cry victory when there is very little hope of victory. But this is not true with Jesus. He promises victory and the faithful will never be defeated! This is why Paul could say: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:57) And this is something to think about!



INGRATITUDE

"A tourist was watching some women in Mexico who were washing their clothes at a spot where hot and cold springs bubbled side by side. They boiled the garments in the hot springs and rinsed them in the cold. The tourist said to his guide, "I suppose the people here think Mother Nature is generous to them, do they not?" "No, Senor," was the reply, "just the opposite. There is grumbling because she does not supply soap." (Ruth Paxson)

One of the leading sins in America today is ingratitude. For many years we have sung the beautiful song: "God Bless America," and this He has done over and over, but it seems as a general rule that the more we receive, the less it is appreciated.

During the personal ministry of Christ, he met ten men that had the terrible disease of leprosy. When they saw Jesus, they lifted up their voices and cried: "Master, have mercy on us." Jesus sent them on their way to the priest, but as they journeyed, they were cleansed! Can you imagine how they felt the moment they realized that they were healed? This was perhaps the most dreaded disease of that age. It destroyed the body gradually, day by day as well as making one a social outcast. What a burden must have been lifted from these ten men! You would think that all ten of them would be so grateful that they would rush back to Jesus to thank Him. How many returned to thank Him? Was it nine, five, or two? No, only one turned back: "and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks" (Lluke 17:15-16). There must have been disappointment in Jesus' voice when He asked: "were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?" (v. 17).

God must look down on us many times today and ask: "Where are the nine?" Shakespeare wrote these lines: "Blow, blow, thou winter winds, thou are not so unkind as man's ingratitude. Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky, thou dost not bite so nigh, as benefits forgot."

One cannot be a true Christian without having thanksgiving to God for everything. David is described as a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), and he gave thanks constantly to God. It has been said: "Every furrow in the Book of Psalms is sown with the seeds of thanksgivings." (Jeremy Taylor)

Since God so desperately desires that we be grateful, we should work hard each day of our lives to remove this awful thing called ingratitude. This is something to think about!



AMAZING GRACE

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see." These words come from a song that has been sung by thousands for many years, and are true to the word of God. Paul wrote: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). Even though God has asked sinners to obey Him to receive grace, there is no purchase power involved since grace is presented as a gift. Therefore, to those that have enough faith to obey His will, this unearned favor, grace, is given.

Why is grace so important? Because without it all accountable persons are in a wretched condition. Paul declared to the Romans of himself: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). The answer to Paul's question is amazing grace! Life has many temptations along the way and the Devil uses his power to trap us, but none of these are so severe but what God's amazing grace will eventually lead us to that eternal home.

The sound of grace is even more beautiful when we recognize the fact that such is based on the many promises of God's word. Thus, hope swells within our hearts, giving us spiritual security. Some security is temporary, but not so with the grace of God. In the words of the song: "When we've been there ten thousand years, bright, shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun."

There are those that feel they can make it to heaven without this grace. How many times have you heard these say: "Oh, I'm not a Christian, but I try to be a good neighbor, pay my debts, and try to be good to my family." To become, what they think, even more convincing, they will usually say: "I think I'm better than some that claim to be a Christian!" We do not doubt their good moral principles, but would such a person say they never sin? If they say they never sin, to say such is a sin. John wrote: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Now, how many sins does it take to be lost? Paul says "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Notice, he didn't say the wages of many sins, but the wages of sin is death. Thus, without the grace of the Lord Jesus, and His saving blood, one must face death even though he is a good moral person.

Without this amazing grace we are lost and blind, but with it we are found and can see. This is true because the gift is God's son in sacrifice on the cross for our sins. Truly then, grace fills this life and all eternity with sweetness!

While thinking about the beauties of grace, I wrote the following lines:

Grace, a word that echoes loudly
From this life to endless time
Giving hope to all the races
Who obey His will divine.

And this is something to think about!



THE EFFECT OF SECRET SIN

A shepherd once saw an eagle soar out from a crag. It flew majestically up far into the sky, but by and by it became unsteady and began to waver and wobble in its flight. First one wing dropped, then the other, and at length the poor bird fell to the ground. The Shepherd sought the fallen bird and found that a little serpent had fastened itself upon the bird while it was resting on the crag. Unseen, unfelt by the eagle, the serpent crawled in through its feathers, and while the proud monarch was sweeping through the air, the reptile's fangs were thrust into its flesh, poisoning its blood, and bringing it reeling to the earth. It is the story of many a life. Some secret sin has long been eating its way into the heart, and at last the proud life lies soiled and dishonored in the dust.

The apostle Paul identifies the works of the flesh that will bring one down to destruction. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21).

Again he writes: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:7-8).

Just think of the souls that have let sin bring them down. They may know God and His son well! They may know the teachings of God's word, but they allow sin to take over. My friends, it isn't worth it! Life without preparation for eternity is not worth living, but with Him and the powerful forgiveness of Jesus, like the majestic eagle, we can soar high and learn the true meaning of this life and the life that is to come.

Have you ever tried going all the way for the Lord? Have you ever really put everything into Christianity? Why not try it today?



I'D FINISH THE GAME

A group of men were playing ball when one had a sobering thought. "What would you do," he inquired, "if you suddenly were made to know that this would be your last day on earth?"

There were several different answers to the question. Some would rush immediately to the church building and pray; some would rush to those they had wronged and make wrongs right; others would run to pay obligations that were past due. But one man thought seriously for a moment and said, "I think I would just play the rest of this ball game."

This is the attitude of a faithful Christian. Since the time of Christ's second coming is uncertain, we are instructed to be ready at all times: "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44). There are those who feel that they can make last minute preparations when the Lord comes, but the time to prepare is now. Jesus gave the parable of ten virgins to teach the importance of preparation before it is too late. Five were wise because they brought enough oil in their lamps to meet the bridegroom, while five were foolish and did not bring enough oil. Thus, when the cry was made: "Behold the bridegroom cometh," they were left out, because by the time they went to get oil the door was shut and he said: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25:1-13).

How does one prepare himself for Christ's return? First of all, one must be in Christ since all spiritual blessings are found in Him. Paul wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). We get into Christ when our faith leads to repentance, confessing Christ, and are baptized into Him. Again Paul wrote: "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27).

Secondly, one must continue faithfully in Christ and be found in Him at His coming. This was Paul's greatest desire that he might: "be found in him" (Phil. 3:9). Millions are more concerned about worldly pleasures, social standing, financial standing, and impressing others, but all these will fail when we must answer to God.

Don't wait until it is too late to think about God and the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today is the day of salvation. And this is something to think about!



GOD HAS LEFT HIS FOOTPRINT

An atheist, crossing the Great Sahara in the company of a number of other travelers, became interested in watching one of the young guides who was a Christian. The traveler noticed that the young man paused to pray before every meal. And, every sundown when the company stopped to make camp, he watched the young man slip off by himself for a quiet period of prayer. One evening he could refrain no longer, so he asked the young guide, "How do you know there is a God?" "How do I know there is a God?" repeated the young man. "How did I know a man and a camel passed our tent last night in the darkness? Was it not by the print of their feet in the sand?" He pointed to the sun, whose last rays were fading over the lonely desert — "That footprint is not of man!"

It is a fact that God is identified over and over in the Bible, but this is not the only way. Truly He has left his footprint behind on the world in which we live. He has written His name on every leaf, flower, and all the beautiful things of creation. Just think for a moment of the capabilities of human beings. The Psalmist declared: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well" (Psalms 139:14). God gave to mankind something He did not give to the rest of His creation — a living soul. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). Thus man is able to imagine God, obey His will; and plan for eternity in His presence.

God has also left His footprint on the heavenly host above. How could anyone seriously study the vastness of outer space, the exactness of the stars with their patterns, and the sun and moon without believing in an intelligent supreme being. David wrote: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard" (Psalms 19:1-3). The next time you gaze into the heavens and see the stars twinkling, be reminded that you are seeing where God has been. To believe that all of creation simply happened by accident would require far more faith than believing that: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). And remember, my friends, that all the many footprints you see about you were not made by man. And this is something to think about!



GOD'S SPIRITUAL FLOWERS

"Life is like a beautiful and winding lane, on either side bright flowers, beautiful butterflies, and tempting fruits, which we scarcely pause to admire and taste, so eager are we to hasten to an opening which we imagine will be more beautiful still. But by degrees, as we advance, the trees grow bleak, the flowers and butterflies fail, the fruits disappear, and we find we have arrived — to reach a desert waste." (G. A. Sala).

This is another way of saying that as pilgrims, we are rapidly traveling through life often unaware of its true value. Life here on earth is not forever: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment (Heb. 9:27). A pilgrim is a traveler; one who travels from a distance to visit some sacred place. Life from its beginning, is a rapid journey toward judgment with God. In the words of a hymn, as we travel: "Our path is often dim and our feet grow weary of the many hills along the way," because life requires effort due to the many problems we encounter. However, if we can only learn the meaning of life as God sees it, and learn to make spiritual things have priority, the true purpose of life can be realized. No, we cannot avoid the storms and great tempests that come our way. Even the most faithful Christian must weather such storms, but with his eyes of faith on God and eternity, these are only temporary setbacks. The greatest enemy of all, the devil, can be overcome even though, as the apostle Peter wrote: "the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Do you ever take a serious look at your life? Are you rapidly traveling through life without seeing the things that have true and lasting beauty? Life without God will be only a passing shadow — no true meaning. Job summed it up in these words: "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure" (Job 14:1-2 NIV). Our chances of spiritual survival would be nil without the Lord as our defender. But through His precious blood, we can be forgiven and become victorious over our adversary. Therefore, as you travel through life, pause and partake of the beautiful spiritual flowers that God has provided.

I was thinking such thoughts when I wrote the following poem:

Footsteps of time — what an awesome sound
Never broken by passing time
Millions have marched before us
And great multitudes behind
This marching human procession
Most all too blind to see
Months passing into years
Each step closer to eternity.

And this is something to think about!



HOW TO KEEP FROM GROWING OLD

"But it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." (Zech. 14:7)

This statement was made by Zechariah the Prophet concerning Judah and Jerusalem, but won't you agree that it describes the way we want our lives to be in later years! In fact, down through the centuries many have tried to avoid growing old. But the "fountain of youth" has not been found in a physical sense. However, there is a sense in which we can stay young as we physically grow old. Observe some ways that will help.

1. Keep On Learning.

A common expression that is often made is that I just can't remember as I used to. Or, I can't remember what I read. These statements are probably true, but would you say that you can't remember anything? If your memory and comprehension have been cut in half, read twice as much. Giving up is the fastest way I know to get old. But someone says, "my body is weaker and sickly!" This can be said of any age. There are people in their youth that can't see, can't walk, and some are confined to bed for life. Use what you have and stop worrying over what you don't have. Remember, the Lord asks us to use only what we have. Therefore, as much as you can, keep on learning.

2. Keep On Praying.

The passing of years should make us realize more than ever before the power in prayer. After the Lord has brought you through many trying years while millions of the world died at your feet, shouldn't you begin to trust Him more earnestly? Don't just pray to say that you have prayed, but pray sincerely from the heart. Put love and trust into your prayers. James meant it when he wrote, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16) If truly Christians, we do not stop praying, but we put more and more faith in prayer.

3. Keep On Playing.

That is right, keep on PLAYING! But you thought playing was for children! No, children don't have the exclusive rights to this great therapy. Choose games that will exercise your body, your mind, your laughter, and your heart. Don't sit on the sidelines and dry up like a prune! Choose a game you can play and enjoy yourself.

Someone has said, "we do not stop playing because we get old, we get old because we stop playing."

4. Keep On Serving.

So you think you have gotten too old to work for the Lord. No, my friends — only if you are dead. As long as there is life, there is opportunity to serve. Look around for something you can do for the Lord, because it will not only help you stay young, but it will help you please God and go to heaven.

As you go about serving, make friends. Yes, many of our friends have passed on, but why not make new ones. If you are busy living for God, it would be hard not to make new friends. Follow these principles and your body may wear out, but you will die young!

For at evening time there shall be light!

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SAY IT WITH LIFE

Out of all the many things that Jesus taught during His ministry, there is one that stands near the top of the list. It can be summed up in only four words: "Say it with life!" In Jesus' words: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). He is teaching us to live what we teach — to put actions with our words. Be assured that on Christ's scales, one's speech and life must balance.

Now may I pose a question, "How does the Lord want us to say it with life?" May we note two ways:

Pray

First of all, when we pray. Although many feel that prayer is no more than a spiritual exercise, those with faith believe in prayer. Those who accept the Bible teaching on prayer know that God is concerned about His children and providentially guides their lives. Paul lived on a daily diet of prayer and used every opportunity to encourage others to do the same. In I Timothy 2:8 — "I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands . . ." "Pray without ceasing." "Brethren, pray for us." (I Thess. 5:17,25; ". . . But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4:6). Paul says we should pray with "the spirit and understanding" (I Cor. 14:15), and the Spirit will help us in our prayers, (Rom. 8:26).

Obey

Secondly, we say it with life when we obey! There are those that become offended when we speak of obedience. They want a "faith only," "do nothing" type of religion, but this type of religion pleases only man and not God. James was guided by the Holy Spirit when he wrote: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24). Then in verse 26, "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Paul thanked God that the Romans had "obeyed from their hearts that form of doctrine" (Rom. 6:17), and told the Thessalonians that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." (2 Thess. 1:7-8). Jesus classified any man a foolish builder that would hear His sayings only without doing them! (Matt. 7:26) It's not enough to say, "Lord, Lord!" Again Jesus taught, "Not everyone that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21). And this is something to think about!



WHAT IS A HELPLESS INFANT?

Have you ever looked down upon a helpless infant who just presently was born and exclaimed, "this is one of God's greatest miracles"? If so, you were probably more right than you realized. This statement is often made due to the physical appearance correlated with the breathing and movement of life. But there is truly more to this miracle than meets the eye. For if you have ever had any qualms about the validity of "love at first sight" all doubts are removed when you are permitted to see the expression on the mother's face as she sees her little one for the first time. One cannot help but feel that this mother had all along a love concealed which is now radiantly blooming forth in splendor. But her joy becomes even more real when she feels her lips touch gently the soft warm skin of her long awaited prize, as she plants her first kiss. From this moment on, there is a tie that binds them together that even death cannot break. She assumes a responsibility that will sustain her through all the problems of life. "Of all the joys that lighten suffering earth, what joy is welcomed like a newborn child?"

But this miracle grows in greatness as we view this infant in, not just what it is now, but also what it can become. Did you know that when we gaze upon a newborn babe that we are looking at one of God's most helpless creatures? This little one is totally dependent on others and with all of the features that show pattern, beauty and the stroke of creative divinity; he would lie where placed until death, without the help of others. This is one of the great differences God made between man and all other living creatures. The bird builds a nest just as perfect the first time as the last, even without being taught, for this is his God given capacity. But the mother that gazes upon her little helpless infant can see by faith the time her little one can be trained and developed to do great things in this world. For our great inventors, builders of skyscrapers, preachers, physicians, nurses, and artists were one time gazed upon as helpless babies!

Therefore, shouldn't we give our full time to teaching and guiding our youth in things pertaining to God?



THE TESTING OF OUR FAITH

I read recently of a man that had as his hobby collecting all kinds of keys. Some were rusty, others bent, others of the oddest shape. Each of these had its own story. One was the key to a castle, another to a church building. Some had opened a desk, a treasure chest, a garden, or a school. They were fashioned in iron, bronze, and steel. But the most important key in man's life can be referred to as gold, because it is so precious that it unlocks mysteries of this life and the life to come. This key is faith. Faith is so important that God has required it in all generations of the human race. The Hebrew writer reaches all the way back to the early record of Genesis and says: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). If we make our way down to the New Testament age, faith is still a requirement: "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, we can say today that it is impossible to please God without faith.

There are at least three ways in which our faith is tested. First of all, we are tested to believe things that are reasonable. When we learn of certain commands from God, we can say: "that makes sense," and such commands test our faith, but this is not the strongest test.

The second test comes when we are asked to do something that may not make sense to us. Many times it will make sense if we study further, but on the surface it doesn't. For example, we read where Jesus said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16), and we might say, "I don't see how baptism has anything to do with salvation!" Thus, many have simply denied this command from Jesus because, to them it didn't make sense!

The third test, which is the strongest, was given to Abraham. It is a command that seems wrong, but Abraham's faith led him to bind his son, raise the knife to slay him when God stopped him.

A strong faith does not question God! When human reason can go no further, faith continues on and on. We don't have to see sense in a command, but if it is from God, our obligation is to obey. And if we refuse to obey, we will answer to God at judgment. And this is something to think about.



USING OUR BODIES FOR GOOD

"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).

Paul's admonition here is to use our bodies well since we must all answer to God. We are in the driver's seat when it comes to the use of our bodies. We can turn them over to Satan or God. Someone has suggested that there are several things we need to hold onto — may we notice these:

1. Hold onto your hand when you are about to do an unkind act. Think before you strike. Our minds control our hands. Train your hands for service to humanity and not unkindness.

2. Hold onto your tongue when you are just ready to speak harshly. Have you ever spoken harshly and almost immediately were sorry? Have you ever withheld words of anger and later thought, "I'm glad I didn't say a word"? In the light of James' teaching, put a bridle on your tongue.

3. Hold onto your virtue — it is above all price to you in all times and places. The world says, give in, be weak in regard to morals, don't be old fashioned. Say no to the world and retain your virtue.

4. Hold onto your heart when evil persons invite you to join their ranks. Solomon wrote: "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). When the heart goes bad, so does everything else. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

5. Hold onto your foot when you are on the point of forsaking the path of right. There are many voices beckoning us to follow the ways of sin, but it is important that we keep our feet walking in the pathway of righteousness.

6. Hold onto the truth, for it will serve you well and do you good throughout eternity. Truth may not always seem convenient, but it will pay off if we embrace it. When all is said and done, the truth will be the winner.

7. Hold onto your temper when you are excited or angry or others are angry with you. An uncontrolled temper has often done irreparable damage. Just think of the homes that have been destroyed and in some cases even murder has been committed because of a temper burning out of control!

8. Hold onto your good character, for it is, and ever will be, your best wealth. A good character goes well with both God and man. Such will do to live by and die by.

Now, how do we control the members of our bodies? We can do this only by keeping our hearts right. Set your heart on God's will — decide to be like Jesus in every step you take, and at Judgment the Lord will be pleased with the deeds of your body, because they will be good.



OUR HELP IN CROSS BEARING

Jesus said to His disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24). There are times when we feel that our crosses are too heavy to bear, but please remember that God's grace is greater. When Paul pled with God three times to remove the thorn in his flesh, God did not choose to do so, but He promised: "My grace is sufficient for you" (II Cor. 12:9). He seems to be saying to Paul that your thorn in the flesh is heavy, but my grace is sufficient to help you see it through. God had a reason for refusing Paul's request. In fact, Paul might not have reached the same great spiritual heights without this thorn in the flesh.

An explorer tells how the natives place a heavy rock upon their heads to give them footing to cross swift streams. Without these burdens they would be lost. The special crosses we are called upon to bear help us keep our footing and strengthen us for all other burdens of life. The floods of life may be swift and strong, but with God's grace such storms can become a blessing.

Sometimes we might think that once a Christian, all thorns will be removed from our path, but this is not true. Thousands of first century Christians could testify to the fact that after becoming Christians, the thorns became sharper. But they would also affirm that their thorns were not sharper than those in the crown of Jesus at Calvary! Be assured that while we bear our crosses and walk upon thorn-strewn pathways that the light of His grace and love is shining brightly on our woes.

In spite of our difficulties as Christians, it is a joy to follow Him. If ever a man has the right to ask mankind to follow Him, it is Jesus. All our suffering as Christians can never compare to His: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" (Heb. 5:8-9). Any persecution as a Christian that we might suffer is as nothing compared to the cross. In fact, there is a blessing promised to those that are persecuted for righteousness sake. (Matt. 5:10).

When our hearts are weary
From the burdens of our load
When our hearts are laden
From life's heavy load
When our hearts are crying
From thorn infested roads,
May we lift our eyes heavenward
To overcome these foes.

—Benny Bristow

And this is something to think about!



HARD ROWING

"Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land; but they could not; for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them." (Jonah 1:13).

This statement from the life of Jonah is very impressive. Jonah was attempting to run from God, but he was stopped by this great storm. Before the mariners threw him overboard, they first rowed hard, but since they were rowing against God's storm, it was impossible to succeed.

But my friends, "hard rowing" does not always fail. If our hard rowing is according to the will of God, He will help us win! Would you notice with me some of the "hard rowing" we must do as God's children?

1. Row Hard to Have a Good Influence.

It is so easy to talk of the importance of a good Christian influence, but becomes very difficult to practice. There are temptations on every hand to turn us from the true way of Christianity. But since Jesus was the "light of the world" in spite of the hardships of life, He expects us to do the same! This is the only way we can be the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world"! Yes, the rowing gets hard, but if we will hold firmly to the "Rock of Ages," nothing can shake us.

One time a sailor was in a shipwreck and was thrown upon a rock where he clung in great danger until the tide went down. Later a friend asked him, "Jim, didn't you shake with fear when you were hanging onto that rock?" "Yes, but the rock didn't," was the significant reply. If we hold onto Jesus, we can keep a good influence even though the rowing is hard.

2. Row Hard to Bring Souls to Christ.

One of the areas in which the rowing gets hard for a Christian is in soul winning. It is not easy to keep going when people show a lack of interest, think more of their creed books than the Bible, and slam the door figuratively or literally in our faces! But do you think that the rowing was easy for the early Christians? Listen to what Paul and the other Apostles went through to preach the Gospel: "Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." (I Cor. 4:11-13).

But even though the rowing is hard, beyond all the hardships is success. Being a faithful light for the Lord will truly be seen. Someone has said, "Lighthouses don't ring bells and fire guns to call attention to their light . . . they just shine." And this is something to think about!



GIVING SELF TO CHRIST

One of the greatest needs in restoring New Testament Christianity to the world is to get souls, not only to obey the Lord's commands, but to surrender themselves in service to Him. Far too many people consider Christianity an incidental thing in their lives. After they have exhausted themselves in material things, they may or may not give a little of their time for Christ. How different from the teaching of God's word. Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome: "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God" (Rom. 12:1). Thus, true Christianity requires the denying of one's self. It is a transformation of life, and involves becoming servants to Jesus Christ. From the new birth of water and of the spirit forward, we must be different — we must give self to Jesus.

An evangelist was holding a gospel meeting in what was predominately Indian territory a few years ago. As the speaker tried to impress the listeners with the great and pure love of God to all men, one Indian was impressed by the sermon. This Indian Chief walked down the aisle, while the evangelist preached, and laid his hand-woven blanket at the feet of the preacher. "Chief give a blanket to Jesus Christ," he said.

The preacher, however, said nothing, but continued his sermon on the sacrifice Jesus made for the world. As he pressed this lesson, the chief arose again and left the assembly. In a few moments he returned leading a pony that belonged to him, a very beautiful and valuable animal. "Chief give pony to Jesus Christ," he said to the evangelist. Even though the preacher knew that the Indian was offering the one possession that he prized above all others, he still paid no attention, but continued to point out that while we were only sinners, Christ gave Himself for us.

Finally, with a sudden expression of understanding, and with tears streaming down his face, the Indian arose again. This time he hurried down the aisle, with nothing in his hands. On reaching the preacher he remarked simply, "Chief give self to Jesus Christ." This time the preacher stopped, put out his hand and welcomed the red man. This was what he had been waiting for — to move people to a love for Christ that leads them to offer their lives in obedience to the Savior. And this is something to think about!



IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY

How many of us really stop and consider the importance of families? May I remind you that it was God's idea to have families in the first place. You see, after he made the first man, Adam, he saw that man was incomplete without a companion. So it was God that took a rib from man's side and made woman. It was God that made the first home as Adam and Eve were given a beautiful garden in which to live and make their home. As God set forth the first home he said, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Gen. 2:24). The home is not one of man's inventions, but from God. No wonder God's word gives instruction about the home.

Since the family is so important, we should not be surprised to learn that God has given instructions to all members of the family. In the case of parents, they are to correct their children in love, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Prov. 13:24). "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Prov. 29:15). "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." (Prov. 29:17).

Thus we can see that God instructs parents to correct children even to the point of punishment when they go wrong. But please remember that all parents must do this in the proper way. If they do this wrongly, God's word condemns them. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Eph. 6:4). "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." (Col. 3:21).

Next comes the instructions to children. Even under the Old Law of Moses the children were commanded, "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee." (Deut. 5:16). Paul states about the same in the New Testament, "Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. 6:2-3). "Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right." (Eph. 6:1). "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. (Col. 3:20). Therefore, we can all see that families come from God and have the responsibility of acting according to God's instruction. And this is something to think about!



THE SALT OF THE EARTH

Some time ago a scientist picked out several hundred men and women who have been called geniuses and studied their lives. "Whenever you hear of a man doing a great thing," he reported, as one of the conclusions of his work, "you may be sure that behind it somewhere there is a great background. This background may be a mother's training, a father's example, or a teacher's inspiration." (Edwin Way Teale)

Influence is a powerful thing in our lives. "There was a proverb current in Christ's day which said, 'Nothing is more useful than sun and salt.'" What salt and sunlight are to the material world — preventing corruption and dispelling darkness — Christ wants His disciples to be to the spiritual world. For that reason He urges us to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). What is implied in our being the salt of the earth?

When Jesus spoke these words He paid His disciples one of the highest compliments possible. When men today want to describe the best people in a community, they do it many times by stating, "They are the salt of the earth."

We use salt mainly to season our food. Without salt our food would be tasteless. Christians are as important in making the world what it should be as salt is in making our food what it should be.

We also use salt to preserve meat and other foods. Salt helps prevent decay in the products with which it comes in contact. Christians help keep a community from becoming totally putrified and corrupted. Notice that Jesus said that Christians are the salt of the earth. He did not say that they are the salt of heaven. It is the Lord's will that His people be scattered throughout the world so that their influence may be felt in all walks of life. As salt does its work by being brought into close contact with the object upon which it acts, Christians cannot influence men for good by withdrawing themselves from all contact with the world (Matt. 9:10-13).

Jesus knew the importance of this. In Matt. 9:10-13 we read: "As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with Him and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked His disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

"But if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" (Matt. 5:13). The savourless or Christless Christian is one who has lost his distinctive character by becoming a part of the world; he has not heeded the warnings and exhortations of the Lord and His apostles. Paul said, "Be not conformed to this world," and John wrote: "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world."



THE HOME'S MAGIC INGREDIENT

Oh, how often we search for a magic ingredient or a set of foolproof laws to help us have a happy and successful home. Now, truly it is good to study ways to improve our families, but my friends, all rules, regardless of their soundness, can be no stronger than the love that undergirds them. Just as the Apostle Paul states in I Cor. 13 that all the good that man might do is futile without love, so our many efforts in the home become an echo in the dark without love.

I am convinced that the majority of parents feel that love is important, but this does not mean that such exercise true love. They may believe in the importance of love to the point of saying over and over again that I love my family — my children, but their actions do not always coincide with their speech. Yes, love is difficult to define, for as one put it, "love is an inexpressible all-overness," but did you know that love has a way of defining itself? Love's true definition is expression. When it is allowed to express itself, it comes forth in radiance so beautiful that we cannot help but see it. As Clovis G. Chappell expressed it, "God cannot hide springtime in that bit of earth in the back yard, and expect it to keep it a secret. It will tell the world. It will tell through the green of the grass and through the color and perfume of the flowers. And this springtime of love, once it gets into a human heart, must also express itself. Love is restless and inventive. It will do the big thing if possible. If not, it will do the small thing grandly. It will beautify a palace if it has an opportunity. If not, it will transform a cottage."

Yes, we may fail in many avenues of home life, but if we can only have the fragrance of love abiding, these weaknesses can be easily forgotten. Our children need more than a roof over their heads, proper food and clothing, and financial security. These are important, but they serve only to meet the needs of the present. But to share love is an ingredient that will not only help now, but will linger even to eternity. "No cord or cable can draw so forcibly, or bind so fast, as love can do with a single thread." — Burton



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THINGS THAT TAKE US AWAY

There are things in this life that are not evil within themselves, but become evil because they take us away from God. Of what things do I refer? Anything that takes over our lives and leads us from God. Jesus taught that even a hand or an eye should be removed if such causes us to be offended. "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell." (Matt. 5:29-30). Therefore, our jobs as important as they are, our families, our hobbies and recreation could take us from God! You can continue the list, but surely you can see that God and His kingdom must come first. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33). Any time the various physical things become our master instead of our being master of them, we are in spiritual danger.

The following selected quote illustrates this principle: "The Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind, won great success as an operatic singer, and money poured into her purse. Yet she left the stage when singing her best and never went back to it. She must have missed the money, the fame and the applause of thousands, but she was content to live in privacy.

Once an English friend found her on the sea sands, with a Bible on her knee, looking out into the glory of a sunset. They talked and the conversation drew near to the inevitable question, "Oh, Madame Goldschmidt, how is it that you ever came to abandon the stage at the height of your success?"

"When, everyday," was the quiet answer, "it made me think less of this (laying a finger on the Bible) and nothing at all of that (pointing to the sunset), what else could I do?"

I believe Jesus' statement is appropriate here: "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37).

Is anything here on earth really worth the price of taking us away from God? When we are facing death, as all of us must do, how important will all the material be? Will these help us in eternity? Don't wait until death has come, to realize the importance of staying close to God. Serve Him while you have time and opportunity. And this is something to think about!



PLEASING GOD . . . NO. 1

One of the things we need in life as much as anything else is to please God. It is a fact that the vast majority of the world makes no effort to please Him. Yet all through history, only those that please Him have found His favor. The question might be raised, how does one please Him? Solomon laid down several basic principles which are recorded in Proverbs 3:5-10. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones. Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." During the coming days, five of these principles will be discussed.

Trust In The Lord

Trust in the Lord is the first one. This means to have confidence in God. It is to believe that all His promises will be kept. How different history would have been had Adam and Eve possessed full trust in God. If Eve had been fortified with deep trust in God, all the allurements of the serpent would have failed, but when she turned her trust to the Devil, she disobeyed God.

The psalmist David wrote: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust" (Psalms 18:2). When Job was desperate from a human standpoint he said: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15a). Why do we often doubt God's power? He takes care of His smallest creatures of creation; don't you believe He can care for you? Someone has suggested that we: "Look at that beautiful butterfly, and learn from it to trust in God. One might wonder where it could live in tempestuous nights, in the whirlwind, or in the stormy day; but I have noticed it is safe and dry under the broad leaf while rivers have been flooded, and the mountain oaks torn up from their roots." (Jeremy Taylor). "How calmly may we commit ourselves to the hands of him who bears up the world." (Richter)

Trust and obey are two words that go hand in hand when we seek to please God. He promises that if we will trust and obey Him that He will take care of our every need. The things that He promises may seem impossible, but our faith and trust will lead us to obey as one writer put it: "Trust God for great things; with your five loaves and two fishes, he will show you a way to feed thousands." (Horace Bushnell) And that's something to think about!



PLEASING GOD . . .

NO. 2

As we continue our thoughts on how to please God, we have already learned that one must trust in the Lord. Another suggestion given by Solomon is: "Lean not to thy own understanding" (Prov. 3:5).

Lean Not to Thy Own Understanding

Since mankind is made in the image of God with the ability to think and reason, it has often been a temptation for him to look to his own understanding for spiritual guidance. This has never pleased God. Man is wise in many human endeavors, but not so in regard to his soul! The prophet Jeremiah had it right when he wrote: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). This passage has certainly been proven true as we observe religions which have ignored the Bible as their guide, and the infidels and agnostics with their unreal theories. Jeremy Taylor wrote: "What can be more foolish than to think that all this rare fabric of heaven and earth could come by chance, when all the skill of art is not able to make an oyster." Truly, man's ways are not God's ways. Isaiah wrote: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

How often do you hear different people say as they discuss spiritual matters: "I think" or "in my opinion" a certain thing is true? There is nothing wrong in thinking and having an opinion so long as such are in harmony with God's word. However, far too often this is not the case, because thoughts and opinions are easily based on human thinking.

Solomon warned: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Prov. 14:12). Our will must be surrendered to that of the Lord. Jesus once said: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Jesus was the "only begotten of the Father," and He submitted to His Father's will. In the sad garden of Gethsemane he prayed: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). He taught others also the importance of doing the Father's will. In the sermon on the mount He said: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:21).

Therefore, if you want to please God you must let His word guide your understanding. When this is done along with sincere obedience, at judgment you will hear the words: "Well done thou good and faithful servant." And this is something to think about!



PLEASING GOD . . . NO. 3

In order to please God we must not only trust in Him, and lean not to our own understanding, but Solomon says that we must: "Acknowledge him in all thy ways" (Prov. 3:6). Since God created mankind he has, in all generations, desired to be worshiped by him, and has never allowed man to worship another God., When God gave Israel the ten commandments, the very first one stated: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," and the second one: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . ." (Ex. 20:3-4). Since He has always been the only true God and all others false, we can understand why he demanded full submission.

Sometimes there are those that object to God on the grounds that they can't see Him with their eyes. It seems that they are equating God with fleshly things. It is true that God is not a person of the flesh to be seen by human eyes, yet, He is so near that He is everywhere! Hallock shows this with the following illustration: "Once upon a time there was a young fish that heard other fishes talking about the sea. It searched for a long time, but could not find it. Then it met another fish, and asked, "Can you tell me where I may find the sea?" And the fish said: "No, I have often wished to see it, for I have heard much about it, but I do not know where to look." The young fish met another fish, an old and wise fish, and asked, "can you tell me where I may find the sea?" And the old fish said, "Why, this is the sea; you are swimming in the sea; you have been in it all the time." So do we look for God, thinking that He is far from us and difficult to find when "in him we live and move and have our being." God is in and near and all around us.

How many times in your life have you forgotten God's great power? In an age of plenty, it becomes a temptation to give ourselves credit instead of God. Thus, they would begin seeking after idols and all kinds of worldly lust. But God would bring them down since He worked directly in that age. Today in the Christian age where God allows it to: "rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt. 5:45b), and has placed the ultimate punishment at the end of time: "because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31), many feel that they are escaping the wrath of God.

Be assured, though, that those who refuse to acknowledge Him in all ways, are not pleasing Him and will have to give an account. And this is something to think about!



PLEASING GOD . . .

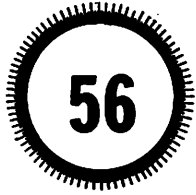
NO. 4

Among the many goals we have in life, at the top of the list should be trying to please God. Included in the things that we must do to please God, Solomon adds: "Be not wise in thine own eyes" (Prov. 3:7). He is evidently warning against the sin of pride. The one that thinks too highly of himself loses his spiritual balance and will fall: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall: (Prov. 16:18). The apostle Paul wrote to the Roman Christians: "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (Rom. 12:16). When we think too highly of ourselves, we become deceived and destroy our value in the eyes of God and our fellowmen. In Dr. Joseph Parker's famous lecture on "Clocks and Watches," he told the following story: "A little watch so delicately strung, dissatisfied with its little sphere in a lady's pocket, envied Big Ben, the great tower clock, as one day it passed with her ladyship over the Westminster Bridge. 'I wish I could be up there,' said the little watch so delicately strung. 'I could then serve the multitude.'

"'You shall have your opportunity, little watch,' said the lecturer, and he dramatically described the little watch drawn up the tower by a slender thread. When it reached the top, the lecturer said, 'Where are you, little watch? I cannot see you.' Then pausing in his dramatic style he said, 'Its elevation has become its annihilation.' " (Bryant)

One of the truly dramatic stories of the Old Testament is found in the fall of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He had a dream in which he saw a large tree with its beauty and greatness cut down. Daniel, a man of God told Nebuchadnezzar that this all applied to him. Then we read: "Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" The words were still on his lips when a voice came from heaven, "This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar: your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like cattle. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the most high is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes." (Dan. 4:29-32). All of this was fulfilled. What a fall this man took because he was wise in his own eyes!

Therefore there is no way we can please God with pride in our hearts. How can a proud man be grateful to God for his blessings? As one writer put it: "A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves." (H. W. Beecher). And this is something to think about!



PLEASING GOD . . . NO. 5

In the past four lessons, there has been presented thoughts on how to please God based on Proverbs 3:5-10. We have learned that to please Him we must: trust in the Lord, lean not to our own understanding, acknowledge Him in all our ways, and be not wise in our own eyes. The final one mentioned by Solomon is to: "honor the Lord with thy substance."

Failing to give properly to the Lord has been a real problem in all dispensations of time, because mankind has often been selfish with God. He has failed to realize that all he has belongs to God, and proper giving helps the giver. We make a mistake when we feel that God needs anything! God has made everything and it is His, but He knows that for man to love Him properly, he must learn to properly give. God has laid down a basic rule which says: "Give and it shall be given;" for example, the little lad who gave up his loaves and fishes didn't have to go without his dinner! If we hoard that which belongs to God, putting it completely in earthly treasures, then our hearts will be of the earth. Jesus taught to lay up treasures in heaven instead of on earth for two reasons. First of all, to avoid losing them and secondly, to have one's heart in heaven. (Matt. 6:19-20).

It is not enough just to give, but God wants us to give cheerfully. Paul said in II Cor. 9:7: "For God loveth a cheerful giver." The Greek word for cheerful is "hilaros," and this is where we get the word "hilarious." Truly God loves a hilarious giver, and it should be a joyful experience to give to God.

A witty person once said: "There are three kinds of givers in the world — the flint, the sponge, and the honeycomb."

To get anything out of a flint, you must hammer it, and then you get only flint and sparks. To get anything out of a sponge, you must squeeze, and the more you squeeze the sponge, the more you will get.

But the honeycomb overflows with its own sweetness. (Source unknown)

When we give as we have been prospered, not grudgingly, but cheerfully, and from a heart of love as a good steward of God, then we honor God with our substance. Be assured that scriptural giving is one of the ways to please God.

"What, giving again," I asked in dismay: "Must I keep giving and giving always?" "Oh, no," said an angel, looking me through, "Just give 'till the Master stops giving to you!"

"Giving is not just a way of raising money; it is God's way of raising men." And that's something to think about!



RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Life here on earth is measured by time. Thus, when we waste time, we waste life. We hear a lot today about all the things that Americans are wasting, and perhaps the half has not yet been told, but of all the things we waste, time is the most important. The average person lives as though he will never run out of time. The Bible is filled with warnings that time for each one is brief. In fact, the psalmist spells out even the number of years promised: "The length of our days is seventy years or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). The apostle Peter wrote: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (I Pet. 1:24-25). Job of old dramatically pictured the brevity of life in these words: "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not" (Job 14:1-2), and James describes life as: "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). No wonder then, the psalmist wrote: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

My friends, do you ever pause and think about how you are spending your time — your life? Is it all invested in material things that will pass away? Are you making plans with God for death and eternity?

Whether or not we want to admit it, we all have an appointment with death and the judgment. The Hebrew writer points this out: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: (Heb. 9:27). Death can have either a sting or a victory depending on whether or not we are faithfully in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul must have been thinking about this when he wrote: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:55-57).

Someone has observed that: "We have a bank, with its account containing not money, but time. Every morning we are given 43,200 seconds and every night that is gone and the seconds that were not used will never be put back into that account.

Every person and every living thing eventually comes to the point where he has used up all his time on this earth." (Harold Hudson) And this is something to think about!



CHRISTIANITY IN FOUR WORDS

It has been said that Christianity can be condensed into four words: Admit, submit, commit, and transmit. (Samuel Wilburforce) Let us turn to the word of God to verify these four principles:

Admit

The first word is admit. Before one can surrender his life in obedience to the Lord, there is something he must admit. He must admit, "I have sinned." When Israel, under the leadership of Joshua began to conquer Canaan, all went well until someone disobeyed God. At this point Joshua's army began to be defeated. Joshua called the people together to determine the guilty, and after much persuasion, Achan replied, "It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel" (Joshua 7:20).

Two of the kings of Israel, Saul and David reached the point in their lives where they admitted that they had sinned, and it seems that David truly felt guilty from his sins. After Judas had sold his Lord for 30 pieces of silver, he returned the money saying: "I have sinned," "I have betrayed innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4). When the prodigal son returned home, his confession to his father was: "I have sinned (Luke 15:21). When one can admit this and mean it, he has taken a giant step toward God.

Submit

But my friends, it is not enough just to admit that one has sinned, he must then submit himself to the will of God. Jesus taught that one must submit to the point of denying self (Matt. 16:24), and this is the greatest surrender possible. We need to live the words of the song: "All to thee my blessed savior, I surrender all!" This leads one to obey all of the commands of God's will without question. Nothing less than this will please the Lord.

Commit

After one has submitted and obeyed God's will, he is then a new creature in Christ Jesus. He is now ready to commit himself to the cause of Christ. Men and women of the first century were ready after conversion to go forth for the Lord. It seems that they had the same conviction of the prophet Isaiah when he said: "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa. 6:8). Persecutions which included threats, beatings, imprisonments, and even death came, but as long as they had life in their bodies, they continued to commit themselves to Christ.

Transmit

This brings us to the fourth word — transmit. For you see, they were not willing to keep the good news of the Gospel to themselves, they felt a burning desire to transmit it to others. In fact, Paul felt that it was a debt he owed. For example, he wrote to the Romans: "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome." (Rom. 1:14-15).

My friends, if you are a faithful Christian, these four words, admit, submit, commit, and transmit are truly a part of your life. And this is something to think about!



HE IS RISEN

"How do you know that Christ is risen?" someone asked an old fisherman, whose faith in Jesus seemed very simple and sure. "Do you see those cottages near the cliff?" he replied. "Well, sometimes, when I am far out at sea I know that the sun is risen by the reflection in those windows. How do I know that Christ is risen? Because I see the light reflected from the faces of some of my fellows everyday, and because I feel the light of His glory in my own life." (Record of Christian Work)

There are many words in the Bible that give man hope, but surely none greater than, "He Is Risen!" This rekindled hope in those that walked with Jesus during His ministry, and it brings hope to any that follow Him today. For isn't it logical that if our Lord did not come forth that neither will we? Therefore, our hope is based on His resurrection! In fact, Jesus is the resurrection! In John 11:25, Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life." The resurrection is the very thing that declares Him to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness. (Rom. 1:4). Man cannot obey the gospel without the resurrection. In Romans 6:5, Paul declares this by saying, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." Back in verse 4 of this chapter, Paul speaks of being buried with Him by baptism into death, and then adds, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

The resurrection was so important to Paul that he wrote the Corinthian brethren, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (I Cor. 15:14). Young Timothy is warned that those who would corrupt the teaching of the resurrection, "have erred . . . and overthrow the faith of some." (II Tim. 2:18). The Apostle Peter blessed God and the Lord Jesus for his abundant mercy, and the fact that He "hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (I Pet. 1:3). Then in the passage where Peter declares that "baptism doth also now save us," he inserts the fact that it is not the washing of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, and then continues by saying, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:21).

Thus we can surely see how important these words are and the hope that they relate. In Paul's words, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (I Cor. 15:19). And this is something to think about!



WHAT IS THE WORTH OF YOUR LIFE

Do you feel that you are unable to accomplish things you would like to do because everything seems to be against you? Perhaps it would be well for you to remember the diamond: It was no more than a piece of coal until it was hard pressed for a long time. It may be that the bad things that you are facing are but hardening you for some task no untempered person could possibly do. If so, the bad is not bad at all — only a mold to form you properly.

Have you ever gotten disheartened with the life you are living because you felt that you were not of any worth? In many cases this is a sign that we need to do more, but in cases where we are doing the best we can, the little we are doing may be of great worth. It is not always the amount we are doing that counts, but rather are we doing our best; and are we doing it with the right attitude. Success in life depends on the many small things that add up to those that are great.

Jean Ingelow tells the story of a patient woman in a fishing village whose lover's boat was wrecked one night on a rock in the channel. She did not selfishly mourn her loss, but every night thereafter she put a light in her window to keep other boats off the rock; uncomplaining and unfailing, night after night, she kept the light burning; and when the men found that they could depend on it, many a time they ventured out to sea when else they would not have dared to run the risk. She never failed them, and they never thanked her; there are some things too great and too sacred for mere thanks. Sometimes, on the way home in the morning, fishermen would drop a fish on her doorstep — that was all; and for sixty years she kept the light burning night after night, without acknowledgement and without reward. Sixty years!

This may seem at first to be a small thing, but to those many fishermen and their families, it was the most beautiful life in the village. For she was dependable, consistent, and full of desire to help her fellowmen.

What is your lot in life? Are you willing to auction it off without ever knowing its true value? Begin today to accept yourself as you are and stop spending time complaining because you are not someone else and gifted with more talents. Just do the best you can with what you have — mix Christ's influence in your life and you will become valuable to the Lord's work and to your fellowman.

"I shall pass this way but once; any good, therefore, that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

The worth of our life then depends on whether or not we have obeyed God, and the way we use it in His service. And this is something to think about!



KEEP YOUR LIGHT SHINING

Jan Melgaard and his sons had tended the beacon of their lighthouse for many years. One night they trimmed the lights as usual, checked every detail, and settled themselves for an evening of peace and quiet. Just before they retired, Jan's eldest son made the rounds again and was perplexed to see no path of light flashing from the beacon. Then it was discovered that the wind had carried in millions of tiny insects which covered the glass so thickly that the light could not shine through. The men hurriedly cleaned the glass, but not in time, for morning disclosed that a serious wreck had occurred early that evening on the rocks close to the lighthouse. (J. S. In-nerst)

The covering of our lights as Christians, even for a short time, may mean the destruction of a soul. Jesus had this in mind when He taught His disciples to be like a city set upon a hill which could be seen by all, and when He warned them against covering their lights with a bushel. To avoid this problem, he commanded them to let their lights be as a candlestick that giveth light to all that are in the house. (Matt. 5:14-16).

One of the reasons why Christianity has not spread more rapidly to the world is because far too many have failed to let their lights shine. Sin is represented in the Bible as darkness. Jesus taught: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov-ed" (John 3:19-20). Thus, man often blacks out his light because of sin. But be assured that while we have our lights covered, someone will stumble in the darkness and fall. Yet, when our lights are shining, we are able to help others avoid the rocks of destruction and radiate the same light. Longfellow wrote: "When a great man dies, for years the light he leaves behind him, lies on the paths of men." How important then to keep our lights shining.

Jesus went further and said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt 5:16). Letting our lights shine is the way we glorify God! There are so many ways in which we can cover our lights. It may be by the improper use of the tongue. Like the insects that totally covered the beacon light, our words of lying, boasting, and cursing can destroy our beam of light to the world. It may be covered by our unfaithfulness to attend true worship to God. When this is done we are saying by our actions that the things of the world are more important than worship to God. Even our attitudes can block out our lights for the Lord. We can have a Christian attitude or one that reflects evil.

Please remember that it is important to keep our lights shining bright because Jesus wants all true Christians to do this! When you cover your light you may cause yourself and others along the way to be lost forever. And this is something to think about!



HOW TO WALK, BUT NOT WHERE TO WALK

A welfare worker found a crippled boy in a poverty stricken section of the city. She took great interest in the boy and longed to see him walk and be a boy among boys.

She decided to consult a famous orthopedic surgeon, who agreed to help. Examination was made and an operation was performed. Slow and tedious days of recovery proved the operation a success. Gradually the child could walk, then run, then play. He was a boy among boys.

In telling her story, the welfare worker paused to say, "He is now a grown man. And I want you to guess where he is and what he is doing." There were several guesses: "He is now a doctor." "He is a great humanitarian." "No, he is a minister." "Is he a welfare worker?"

"No, you are all wrong. He is in San Quentin serving a life sentence for murder." Then she continued: "We spent all of our time teaching him how to walk, but failed to teach him where to walk."

This story points up one of our greater challenges in this life; that of teaching our younger people where to walk and how to build their lives. This is not done by simply supplying their physical needs, but by putting spiritual things first in their lives.

There are those who boast that America has outgrown the old ideas of purity and good morals, but what they are really saying is that millions have left the teaching of God's Word. What are the fruits that America is harvesting by putting off the moral teaching of the Bible? Prisons are filled, divorce rate is skyrocketing to an all-time high, acts of sexual impurities are practiced without guilt or shame, and crime grows daily. Don't you think it is time for us to teach our children where to walk?

There are those who evidently feel that the rule — "You reap what you sow" no longer applies! Yet to deny this is to deny God's Word. Paul wrote: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7-8).

Therefore, my friends, give your best to meet the physical needs of your children. Teach them in life as it were, how to walk, but more importantly don't ever neglect to teach them where to walk. And this is something to think about!



THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

“There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel’s veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.”

Ever since man committed sin, God has used the agency of blood for cleansing. When Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices to God, it was Abel’s blood offering that was accepted: **“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”** (Heb. 11:4). The idea of blood for sin becomes more prevalent as we follow the history of God’s chosen people — Abraham’s seed. It was the shedding of animal blood which kept them in covenant relationship with God. Yet, complete forgiveness looked toward the coming of the Messiah: **“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins”** (Heb. 10:4).

Jesus is described in the Bible as a lamb that was slain, and with His blood we are cleansed. This stream of blood must be accepted by faith. When one has the kind of faith that leads him to humble obedience, both at spiritual birth and until he dies, it can be truthfully said of him that he was redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Millions have planned their eternity without this blood, but their hopes and dreams will fail since there is cleansing only through the blood of Jesus Christ. But when one comes to Jesus in the God-given way, there is found complete forgiveness. Then it can be said in the same words that Isaiah spoke to Israel: **“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool”** (Isa. 1:18).

The apostle John gave this assurance when he wrote: **“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (I John 1:7). How foolish it is for anyone to look for salvation anywhere else! If anything else other than God’s son could have been used for man’s salvation, don’t you believe God would have chosen it? Therefore, turn your eyes to Calvary — look upon His blood. Surrender all to His will and let your life and soul be filled with His eternal love. And this is something to think about!



TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

Two young people were involved in an automobile accident. The young girl, a high school student, was badly injured and her companion was killed. Their parents found from the hospital attendants that the young couple had been drinking at the time of the accident. The girl's father flew into a rage and said, "Just let me get my hands on the person that sold them the liquor; I'll kill him!" After returning home, he went to get a drink to "quiet his nerves" but found that his bottle was missing.

My friends, influence is a powerful thing. We cannot live one way and expect our children to live another! "A father that whipped his son for swearing, and swore himself while he whipped him, did more harm by his example than good by his correction." (Fuller) A large part of their training comes from the example they see in our lives as parents. In the words of a Spanish proverb: "Live with wolves, and you will learn to howl."

Do you want your children to be honest, truthful, and pure morally? If the answer to this question is yes, then you had better show them these virtues in your life. Someone has said that there is a transcendent power in example. We reform others unconsciously, when we walk uprightly. (Mad. Swetchine).

Jesus realized the power of good example when he informed His disciples that: "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. 5:14-16). Before the world would hear of Christ, it had to see Him in the lives of Christians, and be assured. Things have not changed in this regard today.

The Apostle Paul wanted to follow Jesus' example so that others could follow him. He wrote to the church at Corinth: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1). "One watch set right will do to set many by; one that goes wrong may be the means of misleading a whole neighborhood; and the same may be said of example" (Delwin).

"You can preach a better sermon with your life than your lips" (Goldsmith). "None preaches better than the ant, and she says nothing" (Franklin).

The teaching you do is very important, but remember, it must be backed up by a good example. And this is something to think about!



THE PURE IN HEART

"It is said that at St. Margaret's Bay, in the southeast of England, there is a well which is always covered by the sea at high tide. Strangely enough, however, its water remains fresh and pure, uncontaminated by the briny waters of the sea. Fed from the hills above, it has a constant supply of fresh water pouring into it, which effectively prevents the ocean from flowing in." (Moody Monthly)

One of the beatitudes taught by Jesus, pronounces a blessing upon the pure in heart — "for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Since God is pure and holy, it is right to ask Him to help us to be pure in heart. Socrates must have had this in mind when he wrote the following short prayer: "I pray thee, O God, that I may be beautiful within." We are praying for a pure heart today when we sincerely sing: "purer in heart O God, help me to be." The pure in heart will want to devote their lives wholly to Him. Those with sinful hearts seek the ways of the Devil, but the pure in heart, the things of God. Even the most faithful Christian will be tempted to impurity, but will look to God for help to purify the heart.

One first purifies his heart when he becomes a Christian. His faith leads him to obey God's divine will. Man cannot cleanse himself of sins apart from God. It cost God so much to provide purity to those that seek it. In fact, He gave His only begotten son in a sacrificial death. When one obeys the gospel which Paul says is: "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), he becomes a new creature in Christ and is cleansed of all sin. His life and heart are kept clean from that moment forward by the same precious blood of Jesus as he "walks in the light as he is in the light (1 John 1:7). He will try hard to overcome sin and constantly pray for forgiveness when he goes wrong! Thus with God's help, purity of heart can be found.

Solomon wrote: "The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright" (Prov. 21:8). And: "He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend" (Prov. 22:11 NIV).

Jesus taught: "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45 NIV). What is the condition of your heart? And this is something to think about!



KEEPING OUR GARMENTS WHITE

We read in the book of Revelation where Jesus wrote seven letters, through John, to seven churches of Asia. One of these was the church at Sardis and Jesus said to them: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead." Then He further said: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments: and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). When we become true Christians, we are given spiritual garments of white which represent our pure morals. When we turn to the ways of the world, we defile these garments.

"I think a Christian can go anywhere," said a young woman who was defending her continued attendance at some very doubtful places of amusement.

"Certainly she can," rejoined her friend, "but I am reminded of a little incident that happened last summer when I went with a party of friends to explore a coal mine. One of the young women appeared dressed in a dainty white gown. When her friends argued with her, she appealed to the old miner who was to act as guide to the party. "Can't I wear a white dress down in this mine?" she asked.

"Yes'm," returned the old man. "There is nothin' to keep you from wearin' a white dress down in this mine, but there'll be considerable to keep you from wearin' one back."

There is nothing to prevent the Christian from wearing his white garments when he seeks the fellowship of that which is unclean, but there is a good deal to prevent him from wearing white garments afterward." — Church Newsletter

Each person must decide who will guide his life morally. Will he follow Christ and virtue, or the Devil and sensuous pleasures.

"Hercules, the strong man of Greek mythology, faced this choice when, at 18 he was the handsomest and strongest man in Greece. But it remained to be seen whether he would use his powers for good or evil. As he sat pondering, Hercules saw two tall women approach him. Idle Pleasure, seductive and arrogant rushed forward. She said, "If you choose me for your friend, I shall guide you along a path most smooth and easy. There is no pleasure you will not taste." Meanwhile, Virtue approached Hercules. She was beautiful and noble, with a modest look, and dressed in stainless white. She said, "If you choose the path I show you, you will become a master in all that is good and great. But I have no slothful joys to bribe you with . . . The immortals grant nothing to men without effort and toil . . . If you would harvest, you must sow . . . Resolve to choose this life, and yours will be a blessed lot." Hercules chose the way of virtue. Which way have you chosen?" — Reese Bryant. And this is something to think about!



CONVICTED OR REDEEMED?

A thief who broke into a house saw a picture of Christ hanging on the wall. Before stealing anything he took the picture down and turned it around so that Christ would not seem to be watching him. But his fingerprints were later found on the picture and he was caught.

And so it shall be with each life. Each soul shall someday be convicted or redeemed by Christ.

My friends, which of these two will Christ be to you? Will He convict you of sin because you refused Him as saviour, or will He redeem you because you submitted to God's will in obedience and let His blood free you from sin? Who can we blame if we are lost? Can we blame God the Father? No, because: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (Jno. 3:16). "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the saviour of the world" (1 Jno. 4:14). Can we blame God the Son? No, Jesus said: "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jno. 10:10). "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Can we blame God, the Holy Spirit for withholding the truth? No. Jesus made this promise and it was fulfilled: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come" (Jno. 16:13). "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth" (Jno. 14:16-17).

Who then can be blamed if we are lost eternally? Only ourselves for not surrendering our lives to the Lord! He has made the supreme sacrifice by death on the cross, he has become the head of his church, his spiritual body in which all the saved are added (Acts 2:47); and He has invited: "and the Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Thus, God has made all the necessary plans for our eternal salvation, but we must respond to His invitation, we must let love motivate us to obey the commands of Jesus. In the words of Jesus: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jno. 14:15); and: "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Jno. 15:14).

At the day of Judgment, will Christ convict you or redeem you? And this is something to think about!



GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

In our thoughts today, let us study God's plan for our salvation.

Have Faith

Faith means to believe in God and Christ to the point of surrendering your will to theirs. To take them at their word and obey anything they ask you to do. Be like the man that publicly stated that he would do anything the Lord commanded him to do. Someone spoke up and said, "What if God were to ask you to jump through a stone wall five feet thick?" The man replied, "I would jump and God would provide the hole!" That is Faith. Jesus said that faith is being like the girl that had a dreaded disease who believed if she could only touch Christ's garment that she would be cured. She touched and immediately was made whole.

Repent

Repentance means to make a change of mind which in turn changes your outward life. The one who says "I have repented" and yet continues the same old sinful life, has not repented. What could be more beautiful than repentance. Consider a youth engaging in things that are wrong and going with the crowd to places of sin. But, he repents and refuses this kind of life to become a new person, doing only those things that are respected by Jesus. Repentance is not just a word, but an action of heart and life.

Confess

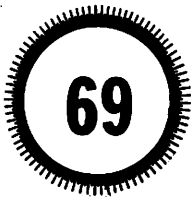
Confession is admitting with our lips that Jesus is the Christ, but it doesn't stop here. Each day that we commit our lives to Him we are saying over and over again that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Be Baptized

Baptism is the way God chose for us to imitate His Son's death, burial and resurrection. By the time we have believed, repented and confessed, we have decided to die to sin. Then by being buried under the water we are raised with Jesus as he came from the grave. (Rom. 6:1-7) If these steps have been done from the heart (Rom. 6-17), then we are new creatures, Christians, children of God and ready to live faithfully for Him.

Are You Totally Committed?

Have you done what God has asked you to do for salvation from sins? Be assured that God has not let you down and we should never fail Him. Being committed is the only way I could recommend Christianity to you. For Jesus doesn't want a lukewarm Christian and will spew such out of His mouth. (Rev. 3:16) When you accept Christ in obedience, go all the way for Him. Yes, it will mean giving up many things that you like to do, but in the long run you will be happy. We must learn to think of more than just now, today! The future is before us either for years upon this earth or eternity. Decide today to obey Christ and live faithfully for Him. This will be your most important decision is life! And this is something to think about!



GO TEAM GO!

As we think of all the many ball teams across the land desiring to win, I am reminded of the greatest one of all — the Lord's team! To win on His team is the greatest reward, but to lose is the severest defeat.

Would you consider the following questions seriously, as you honestly answer them in regard to your life?

1. Are You on the Team?

Now the question is not: am I going to sit in on worship — or am I going to have my name in the church directory, but are you on the team. The Bible teaches that the work of the church is a team effort. In I Cor. 12, Paul compares workers to members of the human body — all doing their part to aid the great Spiritual body. Therefore, if you consider yourself a ONE, TWO, or FIVE talent person, give what you have and **BE ON THE TEAM!** Don't be a bench warmer for the Lord! His team has room for you to be on the First String, if you will give your all.

2. Are You Working to Win?

Deadwood on a team hinders, but those that get in the game and fight to win truly help! The victory we seek in the church is to save our souls and the souls of others. Share Christ with others as they did in Acts 8:4. "Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word." Teach as they did in New Testament times. "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (Acts 5:42).

3. Are You Helping Team Spirit?

Not only do we have a responsibility to be working faithfully on the team, but also need to encourage team spirit. Be an optimist in your outlook for Christ. It won't break your arm to pat others on the back for their success! We break our arm when we try to pat ourselves on the back. Help yourself and others by having the "Go Team, Go" spirit!

4. Are You Abiding By the Rules?

Down through the years many have been active in the spiritual game, but all efforts were futile because they played by their own rules and not God's! The Apostle Paul writes, "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. 2:5).

Don't ever forget that God has only one rule book. It is rather easy to obtain a Creed Book written by man which lays down laws and rules for various religions of the land. But only one will please God — the Bible! Only one has been based on what "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Pet. 1:21).

Therefore, let us all work then to make each season the best for the work of the Lord. Therefore, are you on the Lord's team? Are you working hard to win? Are you helping team spirit? And finally, are you abiding by the rules? And this is something to think about!



LIFE'S TRUE MEANING

"Life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not our goal. Dust thou art, and to dust returnest, was not spoken of thy soul." There have been thousands of definitions given to the word life, but many are very shallow. To some, life is no more than simply breathing air, but the real meaning of life goes far deeper. When God made man, we are told that he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. Thus, we can see that life for mankind reflects eternal proportions. In the process of giving man life, God did so in His own image. Life, then, apart from God is not real life.

Sin represents a way of life, but in no way reflects life's true meaning. Sin turns man's life into simple existence, severed from God. It was a disturbing thing when God saw what sin had done to man. God saw that true life had been taken away. Therefore, the words of love were stirred within God to react in man's behalf. Such love motivated God to give His son in sacrificial death. This why Jesus could say of Himself: "I have come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly." He represented life to the point that He could say: "I am the way the truth and the life. (John 14:6).

When Jesus spoke with the woman at Jacob's well, he spoke to her of living water: "The water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:14). To seek God through His son, then, brings life in its fullest meaning. This kind of life looks beyond the weak arm of flesh to eternity. To seek this real and lasting life, one must plan a purpose. To plan one's life around Christ and eternity is the greatest sign of maturity.

"In nothing is childhood more strongly distinguished from manhood than in this, that the child has no purpose, no plan of life, no will by which his energies are directed. He lives, in a great measure, to enjoy the passing scene, and to find his happiness which from hour to hour come to him by chance. If his life is governed by a plan, a purpose, it is the purpose of another — not his own. The sorrowful experience of multitudes in this respect is that they are never men, but children all their days." (Royal Pathway)

Our Lord points us to life in its fullest meaning. He leads us in the path which improves our lives here, and then lifts us to the higher planes of eternal bliss. He exalts life beyond mere existence. As one writer put it: "We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths; in feelings, not in figures on the dial; we should count time by heartthrobs. He most lives who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best." (Bailey. Have you found the true meaning of life in Christ Jesus? And this is something to think about!



THREE IMPORTANT LOOKS

As a true Christian journeys along the pathway of life, there are three directions in which he should look, and all three of these are important to his spiritual welfare. First of all, he must look back. Not in the sense of worrying over the past. Not in the sense of living in the past, instead of the present, but in the sense of realizing that he is a sinner saved by the grace of God. This type of look can be very profitable. First of all, to make us appreciate what God has done for us. The Apostle Paul must have looked back for this purpose, when he wrote: "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst." (I Tim. 1:15). Paul is saying, since God saved me, the worst of sinners, don't you think he will save you? In the following verses of this reference, Paul said all this happened so that: "Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life" (v. 16).

It helps also to look back to remind ourselves of the awful state we were in and this should encourage us to stay close to the way of life. When Israel looked back to the bondage of Egypt, they were reminded of the blessings they had received by deliverance. However, in their weaker moments they forgot and longed for the "flesh pots of Egypt."

In the second place, the true Christian should look at the present. This look will help him to appreciate and enjoy what God has done and what He continues to do for him. He will find a peaceful mind because of the forgiveness of sins. What a joy it will be to remember that: "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

As he looks at the present, it will be comforting to know that since he is in Christ, "he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17). By comparing the present to the past there will be a great contrast, as spiritual growth in all areas will be obvious. When one looks at the present and finds himself faithful in Christ, it is encouraging to know that the light of Christ is being reflected through his life.

Then finally, it is important to look ahead. All true Christians will look forward with hope. The writers of the New Testament wrote with the hope of being like Christ while spending eternity in heaven. John lifted the eyes of his readers forward as he wrote: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:2).

What about you, my friends, are you able to look in these three directions with hope and joy? And this is something to think about!

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GOOD ADVICE

One of my favorite scriptures is found in James 1:19, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Just think of how our lives would be changed if we possessed these outstanding traits! Would you review with me briefly these traits along with their meaning, as we seek to apply them to our lives?

In the first place: **Be swift to hear.** This means to be teachable and have your mind receptive to the truth. Just as it is difficult to be a good speaker, it is also difficult to be a good listener. Jesus said: "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). There is a responsibility on the part of the one hearing. We often pray in our public prayers, "let us be attentive to the preaching of the word!" How important this is to grow strong in faith. When Paul wrote, "faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), he surely had in mind hearing attentively.

Secondly, **Be slow to speak.** How many times have you gotten in trouble because you spoke and then thought? Wouldn't it be better to think and then speak? "It is a great misfortune, not to have sense enough to speak well, and judgment enough to speak little." This seems to be what James is teaching. An old proverb says: "Lend to every man thine ear but few thy tongue." Each of us should be on guard duty around the clock with our tongues. "Don't throw your tongue into high gear before you get your brains going."

We should especially be slow to speak when angry or else our anger will become sin. "Be ye angry and sin not" (Eph. 4:26) can be obeyed only if we are in control of our tongues. As you guard your speech, please remember that "the most ferocious monster alive has his den just behind the teeth."

In the third place, **Be slow to wrath.** Do you carry a chip on your shoulder ready for wrath at any moment? Are you easily peeved? One of the ugliest pictures I can visualize in my mind is a person out of control and wrathful! Our tempers are valuable assets when controlled. Our tempers can drive us and move us to speak and act in the proper way, but only when we are in control. One man wrote: "All anger is not sinful, because some degree of it, and on some occasions, is inevitable. But it becomes sinful and contradicts the rule of Scripture when it is conceived upon slight and inadequate provocation, and when it continues long." (Paley) Thus, temper is a valuable possession, don't lose it.

Jesus could be stirred to anger, but never to the point of sin! It is our duty then, as followers, to follow His example. Therefore, be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath. And this is something to think about!



A TOUR THROUGH THE BIBLE

A mechanic was called to work on an expensive telescope. While he was working, he took out his Bible and was reading when one of the big scientists walked up and said, "Why are you reading that? You know it is outdated." The mechanic asked, "In your work, do you ever use the multiplication table? The scientist said, "Yes," then the scientist said, "You don't even know who wrote the Bible." The mechanic said, "Do you know who wrote the multiplication table?" The mechanic asked, "Why do you use it if you don't know who wrote it?" The scientist said, "I use it because it works." The mechanic said, "That is why I use the Bible, because it works."

The Bible has power for our lives only when we use it properly. The word of God is seed and must be properly planted in the human heart. When this is accomplished a new life is brought forth.

A chaplain was kneeling beside a wounded soldier and asked if he wanted him to read something from the Bible. The dying boy said, "I'd rather have a drink of water, I'm thirsty." The chaplain got the water. Then the young soldier said, "I'm cold." The chaplain took off his own coat and wrapped it around the dying boy. The soldier looked at him for a moment and then said, "If there is something in that book that makes you do these things, please read it to me."

Maybe more people would be willing to listen to God's word if they thought we had! How important is the Bible in your life? Do you use its power to help? An author unknown has given the following prescription for our ills:

If you are impatient, sit down quietly and talk with Job.

If you are just strong-headed, go and see Moses.

If you are getting weak-kneed, take a good look at Elijah.

If there is no song in your heart, listen to David.

If you are a policy man, read Daniel.

If you are getting sordid, spend awhile with Isaiah.

If you are chilly, get the beloved disciple to put his arms around you.

If your faith is below par, read Paul.

If you are getting lazy, watch James.

If you are losing sight of the future, climb up the stairs of Revelation and get a glimpse of the promised land.

And this is something to think about!



LEARNING TO CARRY OUR OWN CROSS

Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free, no, there's a cross for everyone, and there's a cross for me!

I wonder how many hours each of us spends during a lifetime complaining about the cross we have to carry? It is so easy to feel that the world is framing up on us and only the extreme cases of the world have it more difficult! It is true that burdens or crosses vary in weight and number, but in too many cases we are merely seeking a life without a cross. But please remember, when we give up the burdens, we give up following our Lord. It is impossible to follow Christ without carrying the weight of our cross. Jesus put it this way: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24).

Surely we must all agree that it takes energy to carry our burdens and at times we feel that we cannot possibly go any further down the road. But nevertheless, if we could learn that complaining and becoming dissatisfied requires energy, and give all our strength to cross bearing, our burdens would become easier.

In the "Great Texts of the Bible," the author sums up a poem — "The Changed Cross" in these words: "It represents a weary one who thought that her cross was surely heavier than those of others whom she saw about her, and wished that she might choose another instead of her own. She slept, and in her dream she was led to a place where many crosses lay, crosses beautiful to behold, set in jewels and gold. 'Ah, this I can wear with comfort,' she said. So she took it up, but her weak form shook beneath it. The jewels and the gold were beautiful, but they were far too heavy for her. Next she saw a lovely cross with fair flowers entwined around its sculptured form. Surely that was the one for her. She lifted it, but beneath the flowers were piercing thorns which tore her flesh. At last, as she went on, she came to a plain cross, without jewels, without carving, with only a few words of love inscribed upon it. This she took up, and it proved the best of all, the easiest to be borne. And as she looked upon it, bathed in the radiance that fell from heaven, she recognized her own old cross. She had found it again, and it was the best of all and lightest for her."

May God help us to learn to carry our own cross! And this is something to think about!



WHERE THE ROSES NEVER FADE

There is a song that you have probably heard sung at many funerals. It begins: "I am going to a city where the streets with gold are laid, where the tree of life is blooming, and the roses never fade."

This first stanza describes the hope of every faithful Christian. The city referred to is the beautiful heaven John saw as recorded in the book of Revelation. Life on earth is plagued constantly with death and decay. It is a true fact that while we live, we are also dying, and each day lived brings us 24 hours closer to the grave. Job speaks of man's life as: "them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in dust, which are crushed before the moth" (Job 4:19). However, the city described in this song contains the tree of life in full bloom, and even the roses there never fade.

Adam and Eve had this tree in the Garden of Eden, but lost it because of sin. Today, through the saving blood of Christ, it can be gained for eternity. When John saw the new Jerusalem, he saw: "the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:1-2 NIV).

Next, this song speaks of our troubles in this life, and especially Satan's snares. We must constantly watch for Satan's traps as he tempts us to do evil, but: "we'll be free from all temptations where the roses never fade." What a joyous blessing to be where the Devil will not be seeking to devour, and where the saved will be forever with Jesus.

When David lost his little boy in death, he said: "can I bring him back again?" I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (II Sam. 12:23 NIV). This has been a sustaining hope for thousands throughout the centuries.

The chorus reminds us that roses here on earth bloom but for a season, and even though they are beautiful, they soon decay. But in the city where the saved are going — the roses never fade. It was the inspiration of this song that led me to write this poem:

Hold a rosebud with your fingers
See its diamond dewdrops rare
Know that it will fade and wither
Within a few short hours.
Let your eyes of faith view heaven
With its precious stones arrayed
See the tree of life there blooming
Where its blossoms never fade.

And this is something to think about!



GETTING IN THE WHEELBARROW

A circus performer stood before an audience of people as he prepared to walk on a tightwire. "How many of you believe I can walk this wire?" he inquired. A few hands were raised. With ease he walked across. Then he asked: "How many of you believe I can run across the wire?" Twice as many hands were raised, and the man ran rapidly across the wire. "Now, how many believe I can roll a wheelbarrow across the wire?" This time, the majority raised their hands. After successfully accomplishing this, the performer asked: "How many believe I can roll this wheelbarrow across with someone in it?" To his surprise all hands were raised. Then he further asked: "which one of you will ride in the wheelbarrow?" And all hands went down!

The Bible teaches that there are varying degrees of faith and that one's faith may be either weak or strong. Even the apostles of Jesus, although in His presence daily, had to fight the battle against weak faith. Matthew, chapter 14, tells of the time the apostles were out at sea without Jesus. During the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the water, during turbulent winds. When Peter was assured that it was Jesus, he said: "Bid me come unto thee on the water. And He said, Come." (vs. 28-29). Peter obeyed; "But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (vs. 30-31). Peter's faith was not strong enough to overcome his doubts. Jesus gave him the command, come, but Peter failed to obey because his faith was weak.

It is wondered just how many people are not obeying the Christ because their faith is weak. Like the people we observed watching the man on the tight wire — their faith went just so far and then stopped. Millions will say they believe that Jesus lived on this earth, that He performed miracles, that he died a sacrificial death, was raised from the dead, and ascended to heaven, but when they are called upon to obey Him and surrender their lives to His commands, they stop. Their faith will not allow them to fully trust Jesus. This is sad because Jesus said: "for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). To believe that He is the Christ involves loving Him and obeying His commands. In Jesus' own words: "If you love me, keep my commandments." And this is something to think about!



FALSE PROPHETS

William Barclay tells the story of an old man who, when facing death, was very troubled. When asked what it was that was disturbing him he replied, "One day when I was young I was playing with some other boys at a crossroad. We reversed a signpost so that its arms were pointing in the wrong direction, and I've never ceased to wonder how many people were sent in the wrong direction by what we did."

We can appreciate this man's concern about the wrong he did while young, but even more serious would be those that do wrong in leading souls away from God. In all ages there have been false prophets — those who claim to speak God's truth, but are speaking lies. Jesus referred to false teachers as blind guides and said: "Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man lead a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Matt. 15:14).

There are two major responsibilities placed upon all in regard to teaching and preaching the word. First of all, a great responsibility is placed upon a speaker. This is why James wrote: "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1). Only God's word in its purity leads souls to Christ for salvation, thus false teaching leads one away from Christ. Jesus said of Himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Thus, those who stand before you to teach or preach, have an obligation to speak the truth. Paul felt this responsibility to the point that he said: "For if I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (I Cor. 9:16). To the Galatians He warned: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel other than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). Therefore, it is plain to see that God places a great burden upon those that proclaim His word.

However, let me remind you that the responsibility does not begin and end with the speaker. God places a responsibility upon the hearer! Jesus taught: "Take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). As Paul and company traveled on the second missionary journey, Luke praised the Bereans in the following way: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We must not accept everything that is said in religion without study. Since our eternal souls are at stake, shouldn't we accept the truth from God's word? And this is something to think about!



DO YOU HAVE TIME TO PREPARE?

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel" was given to God's people in the long ago. (Amos 4:12). But, some are too busy to prepare. A little boy asked his mother one day if she thought his father would be in heaven. "Hope so," the mother replied, "but why do you ask such a question?" To this the little boy replied, "Because I was afraid he wouldn't have time to leave the store." How true this is of the many who were one time faithful in the Lord's church — now they are too busy! They have the "get-rich-and-then" spirit. But, my friends, suppose you die before the "then" comes? Your good intention will blow up before you some day. Better take time now! "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." (Matt. 6:33). "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven," (Matt. 6:20). "Set your mind on the things that are above." (Col. 3:1-4),

Some are too busy to pray. A Christian can no more live right and not pray than he can fly. Secret prayer is very vital and necessary to one's spiritual development. In this we miss the mark so often when we give instructions to young converts. If we do not talk to God, we will speak to the Devil. How would we feel toward our child if he were to speak to us about one time a week, and that very casual? How can we expect to have God's approval and only speak to Him on this order? "Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." (I Thess. 5:17,18).

Some are too busy to study the Bible. Christians cannot live without spiritual food. We get this from God's word. How can we live on "whey?" We need milk — the sincere milk of the word (I Pet. 2:1,2), and meat. If those who feed us are not interested enough to study their lesson to have something worthwhile to listen to, how can we expect anything short of spiritual malnutrition? The student will hardly rise above the teacher. The man who is too busy to prepare himself to teach God's word on Sunday should be honest enough to give up the class to someone who will "study to shew thyself approved unto God." (2 Tim. 2:15).

Some are too busy to die. "It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. 9:27). This is one appointment he will not be too busy to keep! God grant that he will see this before it is too late. The brevity of life is written on the pages of God's word. If we did not have the Bible we could know that the life we have here on earth is but a few days. Like the blossoming flower, our glory is soon gone and we go the way of all the earth. Like a vapor or blade of grass, we soon vanish away. When the cold, icy hand of death is laid upon us, we will take time. Why not take time for God now? Alien sinner, why not take time to believe, repent and be baptized and then live a faithful life unto God the rest of your life? And this is something to think about!



A TRIBUTE TO MOTHER

In our thoughts today, I would like to especially address the young people of all ages. I'd like to remind you of the precious jewel most of you have by having your mother. Although mothers are not perfect, as a general rule they have your best interest at heart. It is hoped that all through the year you honor and respect her, but especially on Mother's Day. To help you remember what good mothers are like, I'd like to quote a tribute to mother by Irene Steigerwald.

Mothers can begin being mothers when they are — around sixteen, and they sometimes keep it up until they are past eighty, which must make it about the longest career on record.

They come in all sizes, shapes, and colors, but don't be fooled; the tiny ones can pack a powerful punch, and the big ones can faint at the sight of a spider.

When vandals besieged Rome, it was a stately mother who, when the despoilers demanded her jewels, placed an arm around her children and proclaimed: *Hic sunt ornamentis!* ("These are my jewels!")

A mother will scold quite hard when you pout for a party dress that costs fifty dollars. Then, just when you have resigned yourself to wearing the old blue tulle, she will dig down under the newspaper lining the top bureau drawer, and come up with five old ten-dollar bills, which she presses into your hand.

A mother will scream like a banshee at dirty dishes left in the sink, and then stay up until 1 a.m. baking the three cherry pies which you promised for the bake sale.

In a recent newspaper account, a pretty young mother offered one of her eyes for an operation for her son, who was losing his sight. Said the hard-spoken old surgeon: "In the face of love like this, I stand speechless."

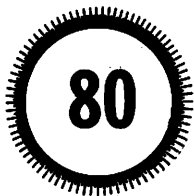
One mother whose little runaway boy was brought home by the police, got on her knees and hugged him tightly, and then got up and gave him the worst licking he ever had!

Mothers can remember the birthdays and anniversaries of all the aunts and cousins, but they forget who called you from the malt shop right after school.

Your mother will take a folded newspaper and give the dog a spanking for getting up on your bedspread. Then, when he gets a piece of glass in his paw, she drives him to the vet, ten miles away and holds him on her lap while the vet fixes him.

You take one day a year to think especially about your mother; she takes the other three hundred and sixty-five to think about you.

But that's the way she wants it! And this is something to think about.



FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

The Apostle Paul built for himself quite a reputation as he traveled across land and sea with the saving Gospel. Yet, he never let his audience or readers forget that the source of his success came from Christ. He could have been the object of worship, for in Acts 14:13-15, false priests of Lystra "brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people" but when Paul and Barnabas learned of this they "rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you." Such refusal brought Paul a stoning, but rising from what the men of Lystra thought was his death, he surely rejoiced that he had given God the glory. Without doubt, he had great strength, but he always recognized such as coming from above . . . "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13).

The following illustration from the life of Chappell describes this principle: "On the farm where I spent my boyhood, under the deep shade of beech and oak trees there is a great flat rock. Upon the face of this rock, hands that have doubtless been dust for centuries once chiseled a basin. In spite of the fact that this basin is as lifeless as death, it sings and prattles with one of the most luxurious springs that a thirsty man ever kissed upon the lips. Go to this spring in the dead of winter or in the noontide hush of midsummer, and you will find it prattling and laughing like a happy child. How is it that this basin offers its life-giving cup to every passer-by through all the changing years? In answer to this question, the basin can only point to the majestic hill that towers in the background, and say, "Of its fullness have I received." It is such receiving that makes the finest of giving possible for ourselves. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

When we let God's word and power live through our lives we can do marvelous things in His kingdom. When we remind ourselves each hour that alone we can do nothing, then haughtiness and destructive pride will never eat away at our souls. May God help us to never forget the one in which "we live, and move, and have our being." (Acts 17:28). And this is something to think about!



VOICES OF EVIL

As we travel along the pathway of life there are many voices of evil calling us to go astray. These voices are very appealing because they are deceitful. Have you ever noticed how easy it is to believe a lie? It is wondered, though, how many men and women are behind bars today because they yielded to such voices or how many people that are supposedly free, are enslaved to sin? Solomon wrote in the book of Proverbs: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul; let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot with us, and we will share a common purse" — My son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood. How useless to spread a net in full view of all the birds! These men lie in wait for their own blood; they waylay only themselves! Such is the end of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the lives of those who get it" (Prov. 1:10-19).

Paul wrote, "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), and "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Gal. 6:7-8). The writer, South, put it this way: "The wages that sin bargains for with the sinner, are life, pleasure, and profit: but the wages it pays him are death, torment, and destruction. To understand the falsehood and deceit of sin, we must compare its promises and payments together."

Thus, to answer the call of sin is to answer the call of spiritual death unless such is forgiven through the blood of Christ. As one writer put it: "Sin is never at a stay; if we do not retreat from it, we shall advance in it; and the further on we go, the more we have to come back." (Barrow) "Sin may open bright as the morning, but it will end dark as night." (Talmadge).

The next time you hear a voice calling you and luring you to sin, turn away because it is the call of destruction. And this is something to think about!



SENTENCED TO DEATH

Among many other things, Jesus is described in the New Testament as a great physician. He is great because He is the only one that can cure the terminal disease of sin. Those ill need only to come to Him in humble submission and obedience to His Father's will.

"John Collier has a picture which brings this home to us with pitiful realism. Within a consulting room a doctor sits at his desk, and beside him is a young man, to the unpracticed eye in the prime of health. But the doctor has just examined him, and is now telling him in grave tones that he has but a short time to live, that for his malady science knows no cure. There he sits in his chair, this youth, faultlessly dressed, so young, so full of promise, with life just opening up to him, and over the picture the artist has inscribed those terrible words: "SENTENCED TO DEATH"! The words come to us with a stab. Dr. Horton says of the picture: 'As I looked into the young man's face, how I longed, though only a picture, to tell him that if he believed in Jesus he had everlasting life — that he need not be afraid, he need not be cast down. As I looked into the picture I so longed to tell him, that I turned my face away.' " (The Speakers Bible v. 14, pg. 116).

Yes, it is a fact that Jesus alone can offer the water of life to all that will drink. To be able to offer this to dying humanity, it was necessary for Him to leave heaven and to become poor upon this earth. Physicians of the body today are required to make many sacrifices in preparing themselves to serve, but this is so small compared to the sacrifice made by Jesus. The pressures of His enemies, the rejections, and the total suffering of the cross relate the story. Yet, this was necessary so that He could invite lost and dying humanity to follow Him and receive eternal life.

But my friends, as much as Jesus loved, and even though salvation is offered as a gift to the spiritually ill, there is something for the patient to do. First of all, the sinner must desire to be cleansed. Those who are not convicted of sin and do not feel that they are diseased even to the point of death, will not receive anything of the Lord.

Then the sinner must trust the great physician to cure. It would be considered foolish today to spend time and money on a physician in which we did not trust. In such a case, one would not cooperate and obey his wishes. The same is true with Jesus, we must trust and obey.

Remember, if you have never come to Jesus for cleansing of your sins through His blood, God sees in your life the words: SENTENCED TO DEATH! And this is something to think about!



FOOTSTEPS OF TIME

As we live upon this earth, there are two ideas that are constantly before us. The flesh says that we have plenty of time on earth, therefore be fleshly, and the Spiritual says that life is fleeting, therefore prepare for eternity. Just let your mind think soberly for a few moments and you will see that the flesh idea is false and the Spiritual is true! Such words in the Bible as, "watch," "take heed," "prepare," "life is a vapor," and "today is the day of salvation," should be taken seriously. While thinking about this fact, I wrote the following words:

Footsteps of time — what an awesome sound
Never broken by passing time
Millions have marched before us
And great multitudes behind,
This marching human procession —
Most all too blind to see
Months passing into years
Each step closer to eternity.

It is easy to get our lives so filled with material things that we forget good and ignore the fact that we are all marching toward eternity. Even those that claim to be Christians often fail to talk to others about their eternal souls! They seem to feel that to speak of being saved through Christ is out of place.

A minister in Washington D.C., relates the story of an elderly man who left his farm to visit his famous son, a popular senator, while Congress was in session. The old man, a zealous Christian, was then introduced to the Ambassador of Belgium one evening.

Hardly had they exchanged greetings before the senator's father asked earnestly — "Sir, are you a Christian?" But the answer never came, for the senator, much embarrassed, interrupted and hurried away his father.

Not long after, the old man became ill and died. Among the flowers were roses from the ambassador. A note attached brought tears to the eyes of the senator. It read: "He was the only man in America who asked me if I was a Christian!"

As we make our footprints in life, there are two things we need to do. First of all, we need to follow in Jesus' footsteps. When the apostle Peter mentioned Jesus' suffering he wrote: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). Then in the second place, we need to encourage others to do the same. Remember the greatest favor any human being can do for another is to point him to Jesus the way of life. And this is something to think about!



PARDON MUST BE ACCEPTED

As one studies through the Bible, it becomes obvious that such words as redemption, forgiveness, and pardon are important words. The prophet Isaiah sums it up in these words: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isa. 55:7). There can be no doubt that the Lord offers to all pardon, but the problem is that millions refuse it. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and said that he would have gathered her children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. (Matt. 23:37). Remember, pardon will not be made by the Lord for those that refuse it.

In 1829, Wilson and Porter were convicted of robbing the U. S. Mail and were sentenced to death by hanging. Three weeks before the time set for Wilson's execution, he was pardoned by President Jackson. Strangely enough, Wilson refused the pardon. The case went to the Supreme Court and the court finally handed down the decision: "A pardon is a deed, to the validity of which delivery is not complete without acceptance. It may be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered; and if rejected, we have discovered no power in this court to force it upon him."

Most people will agree that Wilson acted foolishly by refusing to accept the pardon. Yet many of these same people daily reject the pardon which God has provided for everyone condemned to hell for their sins. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die . . ." (Ezek. 18:20). "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:23). Yet, God has tendered unto all men a pardon from this death sentence — if they will accept it. "Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins . . ." (Acts 2:38). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16).

Unless you accept this pardon from God, you remain condemned. Wilson's is a strange case, but is it not also strange that men will not accept God's pardon now?" And this is something to think about!



PERSONALLY KNOWING GOD

A small girl was overhead praying: "God bless daddy, God bless mommie, God bless me; and dear God, take good care of Yourself, for if anything should happen to You, what would become of the rest of us?"

Ever since God brought man into existence, this created creature has been seeking after God. Many times man through sin has lost God, but he kept on searching by erecting images of wood, metal and stone. For you see, God placed within man the desire to worship a supreme being. This accounts for the worship of the sun, moon, dead ancestors, heroes of the past and the many gods of ancient mythology.

The greatest illustration of this is found in Acts 17 when Paul entered Athens, Greece on his second missionary journey. He could see false gods on every hand. Statues were made into the buildings and temples were erected in honor of false gods. It has been said that Athens contained more idols than all the rest of Greece. One writer said it was easier to find a false god than a man. Even one god carried the inscription "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."

Paul knew that the true God in heaven was unknown to them and he began at this point and declared Him to them!

Did you know that even today in this great land of Bibles, the true God in heaven is unknown to many? Oh, I don't mean that they have not heard about Him, but rather He is to them a character out of a book — far, far away! They retain God in their minds only as knowledge, but are personally as far away from Him as is the east from the west.

A man once asked the judge to excuse him from jury duty upon the grounds that he was an atheist. The judge first responded by giving several different evidences of God. But then he added: "I am excusing you from jury duty not because you are an atheist, but because as an atheist you are one who is incapable of weighing the evidence."

Paul said they are without excuse who do not believe in God. (Rom. 1:20). The psalmist truly said, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Ps. 14:1).

How about you? Do you personally know God? Can you say in the words of the song, "My God and I," and feel close to Him? If you cannot feel close to Him, it is hoped that the thoughts today will help you. Everyone needs to be closer to God! We need to know Him personally. "For in him we live, and move, and have our being . . ." (Acts 17:28). And this is something to think about!



IS THE CHURCH STILL ALIVE?

In Matt. 16:16, Peter made the great confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Jesus referred to this confession as being a rock and said: "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Then when we turn to Acts chapter 2, we find Jesus keeping His promise. The church He promised became a reality and spread throughout the known world. IS the church still alive?

This is a question that should be applied often to every congregation of the Lord's church! A living Christian — a living church is the only thing the Lord will accept. The apostle Peter wrote: "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house . . ." (I Peter 2:5).

How may we know whether or not a church is alive? There are pulse beats that can be checked and if all are functioning . . . there is real life:

1. **Check the heart.** If a congregation is cold, formal and ritualistic in all worship services, there is sign of death. But if all acts of worship are spiritual and come, not from the surface, but from the heart, then life is present. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).

2. **Check the vision.** Do you find blindness to the opportunities that are present? How about vision for the world? When Jesus said in Mark 16:15-16, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned," was this great commission only a beautiful command to be used in sermons and Bible classes, or is it to be obeyed? Does the community where the church is located feel its presence by door knocking evangelism and benevolence?

3. **Check the fruitage:** Does the church produce spiritual offsprings? Are souls being converted, or on the other hand, is the church just getting fat from the work of other congregations? It is wonderful to have Christian families move to a congregation, but the test of real growth comes from personally converting souls! The more baptisms a church has, the less the need will be for members to be restored! The more fruitful we become — the more faithful we will be!

God's order for production is first the work and then the harvest. First the travailing and then the birth. "For as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." (Isaiah 66:8).

Remember, the church can be no more alive than its members! Then check on the pulse beats just mentioned in your own life. Are you and the church still alive? And this is something to think about!



WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH JESUS?

In the long ago when Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate, this Roman governor made every effort to learn about Jesus and why the Jews were so set against Him. But it seems that the more he questioned Jesus, the more confused he became as he declared: "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). Yet the Jews insisted that he give them Jesus. Thus, it seems in desperation Pilate asked: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:22).

Every person must decide this all important question. You may decide to ignore Him, give Him an occasional thought, or surrender your life to Him in obedience. It must be our decision, but Jesus is hoping that all will receive Him. In the words of a famous poem:

If Christ should seek my door today —
Hands bleeding — voice broken pleading —
Would I pursue my little round
Of work and play, unheeding?
No, I would thrust aside each plan
Of pleasure, and I would treasure
Each moment in His company
As gems no man could measure.
Yet He is knocking . . . Heart, will you
Thus grieve Him? Self-crowned, leave Him
Still waiting at the door? Then, haste
And open to receive Him.

—M. Burton

Perhaps it will help us decide what to do with Jesus by observing what others have done in the past:

Judas Iscariot, how do you feel about Jesus? "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

Centurion, what is your testimony concerning this one? "Truly this was the Son of God."

Demons, what is your word? "This was the Son of God."

John the Baptist, what is your opinion? "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

How about you, John, as an apostle? "He is the bright and morning star."

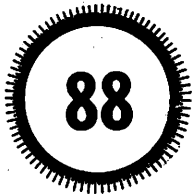
Peter, let's hear your feelings: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Thomas, what is your testimony? "My Lord and my God."

Paul, what do you think of Christ? "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Angels in heaven, what is your testimony?" "Unto you is born a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

Now let us ask our Father in heaven how He feels about Jesus His Son: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." How about you? What think you of Christ?



THE SON OF GOD

A man and boy were walking together, shortly after World War I. They passed homes where service banners hung in the windows.

"What are those?" asked the boy. "Well, each star in the banner means a son went from that home to the war," said the man. "And why are some of the stars gold?" asked the boy. "That means the son did not come back. He was killed in the war." As they walked, the sky grew dark and night began to settle around. A star began to twinkle. The boy pointed to it and asked, "Did God send a son to war too?" "Yes, God sent the only Son he had to fight in the greatest war ever fought — the war against sin — and it cost him his life." (Source Unknown)

There are those who misunderstand the purpose of Christ's coming to earth. They seem to think that He came simply on a teaching and miracle performing mission, got in trouble, and was put to death. This is not true! God sent His son to earth to die. Shortly before His birth, it was announced that Mary would: "bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Jesus later gave the purpose of His mission: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10). How did He give salvation to the lost? By giving His life in sacrifice for the sins of the world. It was necessary that He be lifted upon the cross in death: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14,15). The next verse states that: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." The word "gave" here means that God gave him in death or allowed him to be lifted up.

Even the prophet, Isaiah, of the Old Testament spoke often of his sacrificial death: "yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own ways; and the Lord had laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:4-6).

It is true that Jesus was the best teacher to ever live, and the greatest in performing miracles, but these complemented His main purpose — to die for sin! All of His teaching and miracles would have failed without His sacrificial death for sin. The human race would be lost forever without His death on the cross. But since He died, those that will surrender their lives to Him in obedience, and who will die faithfully in Him, will have eternal life. Those who refuse His cleansing blood, will spend eternity lost from God. And this is something to think about!



WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Have you ever asked yourself this all important question, who is a Christian? When this question is asked, there are almost as many different answers as the number of people asked. Yet, in God's word, the answer is factual and to the point. Therefore, let the Bible answer this all important question: Who is a Christian?

One that is born again.

Jesus taught that the only way into His kingdom is by birth: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Peter described this birth further when he wrote: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:23). Therefore, when the Holy Spirit, through the word, guides one to be baptized as a penitent believer, he experiences this new birth.

One with a new name.

Since this one has confessed Christ to be the son of God, been baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, obeyed that form of doctrine of His death, burial, and resurrection, he wears the name Christian: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26c),

One that eats the proper food.

His appetite and desire will focus on spiritual food: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Physical food will be important, but only up to a point: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

One that grows spiritually.

The true Christian realizes that growth is absolutely essential for fruit production, and daily he endeavors to: "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). He begins growth from spiritual birth: "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." (I Peter 2:2).

One that dresses properly.

His life will reflect the light of the Lord Jesus. Others will see His spiritual garments of righteousness: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14).

One that has the proper character.

The true Christian will reflect in his character the beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-11). The world will see in him the proper spirit, mournfulness, meekness, righteousness, mercifulness, pureness in heart, and one able to suffer for Christ.

This may not be the world's idea of a Christian, but it represents the way God feels! Then, ask yourself whether or not you measure up to these standards. If you do not, begin now and change since the Lord loves true Christians.



THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S CHURCH

As we study the ministry of Jesus, there are many things which He accomplished, and among these is the establishing of His church. In Matt. 16:18, Jesus promised His apostles that He would build His church, and the New Testament reveals that He fulfilled this promise. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit came down with great power and from this event forward the church is spoken of, not as something in the future, but as a reality. This chapter closes with the words: "and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The months following brought heavy persecutions led by a man named Saul of Tarsus. This man was later converted and looked back on those days by saying: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Cor. 15:9). Thus, the church was in existence or else Paul could not have persecuted it. To the Galatians he said that he: "persecuted the church of God and wasted it" (Gal. 1:13).

Over the years there have been many wars among men, and rebellions against God and His word, but that great church for which Jesus died, never passed from existence. This is true because the kingdom is kept alive by seed that never loses its germ of life. Jesus defines the seed of the kingdom as the word of God (Luke 8:11). Since His word will not pass away — it's eternal — the passing of centuries and the devil himself can't destroy His church or kingdom. Down through the centuries, man has departed from the faith, turned Christ's Church into an ecclesiastical order, written and followed human creed books, filled with doctrines and commandments of men, but Christ's Church remained unchanged since the seed remained pure. When the pure seed (the word) is sowed today in a human heart and that heart obeys it, God still saves that soul from sin and adds such to Christ's church. This one should then be known simply as a Christian and a member of Christ's church.

Obedying Christ and being added to His church is mankind's greatest need today. We have many needs in this life, but they will fade away with the passing of years. But the need to be saved by the blood of Christ through obedience to the gospel, and being added to His church, will determine where one spends eternity. And this is something to think about!



THE SWINGING OF THE PENDULUM

All of you are familiar with a grandfather clock. No doubt you have heard its tick and watched the graceful swinging of the pendulum. But do you know what would happen if you were to remove its pendulum? It would take off with a rapid pace with all cogs and wheels spinning and would soon run down, having no real value! This describes those today that are without Christ and Christianity in their lives. Such lives are spent rapidly, without order, and are existing without genuine purpose. But when Christianity is added, like a well balanced clock, lives take on real meaning. Here are some comparisons to think about:

Order — The clock with a pendulum is an example of perfect order. Every tick, every swing of the pendulum is just right. In fact, you can count by its beat, keep perfect time in music, and this order can be counted on day after day.

Christianity brings true order to our lives. Such words as faithful, steadfast, and trust become a part of our lives. Our steps will be in proper order. As Paul admonished the Ephesians, "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:15-16).

Great Force — The pendulum can perform its work because of the great law of gravitation. By this law giving it weight, it can gracefully swing back and forth giving the movements of the clock order.

How important it is that we have the great force of Christ in our lives. Truly, man cannot direct his own steps, but be assured that with the all powerful Christ in his life, he can become totally changed!

Paul believed this, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4:13). As the clock would run wild without the gravitational weight and the swinging of the pendulum, so our lives are helpless without Christ.

Purpose — But my friends, the clock is not going through these graceful motions just to make a pleasant sound or to suggest peace! No, while doing all of this, there is a purpose! This great instrument measures time. Hour after hour man is furnished with accurate time, making it possible to meet his many appointments of life.

Does God want us to just exist and put in our time? Certainly not! God wants us to have meaning and purpose in our lives! I am persuaded that this can be done only with the help of the Lord. Remove the pendulum from the clock and you destroy its real purpose — remove Christ from a man's life and he has left only a few years of human existence on earth without true purpose.

With Christianity, we can spend our time glorifying God and preparing for eternity. Can you think of a greater purpose for Man?

As you think on these words, is your life like a clock without a pendulum or have you let Jesus and the great influence of Christianity bring order to your life? If the answer is yes, then you can say with the Apostle Paul: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (Phil. 1:21).



THERE IS BOUND TO BE A STORM

Have you ever tried to deceive God? Many in the past have learned the hard way that this cannot be done. Paul had it right when he wrote: "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal. 6:7).

The prophet Jonah thought he could pull a fast one over God, therefore he defied a God given command to preach to the people of Nineveh, and took a ship bound for Tarshish! But, you know the outcome — God sent a storm and prepared a great fish to bring him to his senses! Robinson, in his book, "Minor Prophets," sums it up in these words: "When one sets out to baffle God there is bound to be a storm!"

The word of God reveals how to become a Christian, how to live the Christian life, and how important it is to be faithful until death. But alas! Many do not feel that all of this is necessary. Therefore, they drop in for one hour of worship occasionally, put other things before worship, and spend both time and money on self — thinking all along that they have fooled God. Like Jonah, though, sooner or later God's hand will be raised and the storm will come.

How important is it to keep the commandments of God? Does He insist that we do things His way, or does he leave it to man to decide? When you observe the many religions in America with their often opposing teachings, millions evidently feel that mankind can make his own religious laws to please himself. But my friends, to believe this is to be deceived. We can no more successfully run from the command of God than could Jonah. Solomon warned: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death" (Prov. 14:12). The prophet Jeremiah wrote: "I know, O Lord, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

How many of you ever investigate the religion you hold in the light of the scriptures? As Paul traveled from Thessalonica to Berea, Luke says he found a more noble people in Berea, than in Thessalonica. Then he tells why: "For they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures everyday to see if what Paul said was true" (Acts 17:11). Can you find the name you are wearing in religion in the Bible? What about the various acts of worship and the way of salvation? Do you find a thus saith the Lord for these without any additions or subtractions?"

Remember, if you run from God's commands, there is bound to be a storm. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). And this is something to think about!



WOE UNTO THEM THAT FOLLOW STRONG DRINK

A professor was asked to determine scientifically whether or not alcohol was injurious to the body. He tried it on a kitten. The instinct of the little animal rebelled against the experiment. The professor poured a little of the liquor mixed with milk down the kitten's throat each day. After ten days the kitten stopped playing, it stopped growing, it took no interest in keeping its fur clean like the other kittens, it lost all energy in getting after mice, it showed no dislike for dogs. It could neither work nor play, all energy and enterprise were lost. It was just a little dirty, drunken animal. I wonder why the learned professor made the experiment; he could have seen the same thing hanging around the saloon. Why degrade a perfectly good kitten?

There are two major reasons why drunkenness is wrong. First of all, it is wrong because such is condemned in the Bible. In fact, the New Testament definitely states that drunkenness is one of the sins that will cause one to be lost eternally since such cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Paul pointed this out to the Galatian brethren when he enumerated the works of the flesh which included adultery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, envyings, murder, and then added DRUNKENNESS! Then he warned that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21). But someone might ask, isn't alcoholism in its severest form a disease? Yes, a disease that has been caused by the sin of drunkenness.

It is a fact that we are living in a society that accepts drinking as a way of life. Many do not even feel that drunkenness is wrong if one does not harm others. However, this does not change how God feels about it. If every person in the human race should decide that drunkenness is acceptable, this would not change God's feelings and teaching. The prophet Isaiah spoke God's feelings when he wrote: "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them." "Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink" (Isa. 5:11,22).

The second major reason why drunkenness is wrong is because of what it destroys. Many who drink have never completely counted the cost. It has been said that a large percent of human misery and suffering in our nation comes from drunkenness. Alcohol does not stop with destroying its user, but like falling dominoes, it sets up a reaction that harms others. It becomes the spawning ground for other sins. "Alcohol is a factor in more than half of all the crimes committed in the United States, according to the president's report." Dr. Andrew Ivy reported back in 1970 that more than 500,000 Americans are becoming alcoholics each year!

Solomon asked: "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. (Prov. 23:29-32). And this is something to think about!



THE VALUE OF TRUTH

A factory closed because of a mechanical trouble. A specialist was called in who found and corrected the trouble in a few minutes. He left a bill for \$500. He was asked to itemize the charge. He wrote:

\$ 1.00 for hitting the bolt

499.00 for knowing which bolt to hit.

My friends, knowledge based on truth is extremely valuable in every walk of life, but it seems that in the spiritual realm it is even more so. This is true because man's eternal soul is at stake. As Paul preached to the Athenians on Mars Hill on the subject of the unknown God, he perceived that they were very religious since they had many objects of worship including one with an inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. This reminded Paul of the fact that the true God of heaven and earth was unknown to them. They had the mistaken idea that their gods should live in manmade temples and have their needs met by human hands. They had accumulated much knowledge, but it was false. In fact, Paul declared that the opposite is true: "he gives all men life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:25). He further emphasizes the power of God by saying: "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). True knowledge makes all the difference.

There is a false concept which states that it doesn't matter what a man believes in religion just so long as he is honest and sincere, but this idea is false in the light of God's word. The Bible sets forth truth and condemns error. Jesus said once to the Jews: "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). He did not promise that they would be His disciples without holding to His teaching — He did not promise them freedom short of the truth. It does make a difference what one believes! Even the preacher is in trouble with God if he preaches error. Paul declared: "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (I Cor. 9:16). Again: "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned" (Gal. 1:8). The apostle John put it this way: "anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whosoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

Can one read these passages and still honestly say that it doesn't make any difference what we believe? But someone might be ready to ask, "how does one know what is truth and what is error?" The answer — study the word of God! Don't turn to human creed books or to writings of men, turn to the words of the Bible which were written by men inspired of God. If you want to find God's truth, follow Paul's spiritual formula to Timothy: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). This is the only way to be approved of God. And this is something to think about!



BEWARE OF ENVY

"Two ancient Greeks were striving diligently for the privilege of representing their city in the Olympic Games. Naturally, one of the boys had to lose — the other not only represented his city, but he won the crown. A monument was erected in his honor. The young man that lost was so envious that he would slip out at night and chisel away the base of the monument. He finally did enough damage that the monument fell. However, he was unable to jump back quickly enough and it crushed him.

Envy is a monster of such frightful means that it eventually destroys its victim." (Ira North)

Envy is defined as: "Discontent because of the possession or good fortune of another; covetousness." (Webster) Envy is also closely related to jealousy, hatred, and anger. It seems that all of these were present very early in the human race. When Cain and Abel brought their offerings to God, Cain became angry and envious of his brother Abel, when Cain was rejected and Abel accepted. This led to the first murder to be committed on the earth. My friends, envy will eat away at your heart and will eventually destroy!

One writer put it this way: "As a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consume a man." (Chrysostom). "The envious man grows lean at the success of his neighbor." (Horace).

In the words of Job: "For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one" (Job 5:2). Solomon knew the great damage envy does when he wrote: "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14:30). He further compares envy to wrath and anger: "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" (Prov. 27:4).

Envy is truly one of the favorite sins of the Devil, because when one has envy, he is susceptible to all other sins. This is why Paul wrote: "Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal. 5:26). Peter commanded: "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:1-2).

Now that we have learned that envy is sinful and destructive, how does one put it away? It is not enough just to admit that it is wrong, but one must overcome by learning to love. Love is the antidote for envy! When the apostle Paul defined love in I Cor. 13, he wrote: "Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not . . ." (v. 4). There is not enough room in the human heart for love and envy at the same time. And this is something to think about.



SPIRITUAL INSURANCE

One of the large corporations of our country is the insurance business. If you can pay the premiums, you can just about insure anything physically that you possess! But did you know that the Bible offers all types of coverage in the Spiritual realm? Perhaps it would be of value for us to look into what God offers:

1. **Fireproof:** Most of you are familiar with the incident that happened to three Hebrew children in Daniel 3. These three, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to bow down before the king's golden image and were cast into a fiery furnace. But later when they were removed, it was observed that the fire had no power on their bodies, nor was a hair of their head singed.

Now the same God that protected them from that fire has promised to save us from the everlasting fires of hell! This fireproof insurance could be provided only by the death of the Son of God. (John 3:16; I Cor. 15:57).

2. **Waterproof:** We do not read far into our Bibles until learning of the great tragedy of the flood. (Gen. 7 and 8). But why was the whole human race (with the exception of eight) drowned in the flood? It was because they refused the Spiritual insurance offered by the God above! Yes, they were told of God, they were warned of the flood, but "they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:27).

Now, Jesus goes further and says that this describes the way it will be at His coming. (Matt. 24:37). Just as these were drowned because of the wrath of God, so those that are not right with God at His coming will suffer His wrath! But to Noah and his family, the water saved them instead of harming, because they obeyed God. (I Pet. 3:20).

3. **Burglar Proof:** Jesus offers a Burglar Proof insurance. This is offered to those that are willing to lay up treasures in heaven. (Matt. 6:20). Jesus guarantees that no thieves will break through, no moths nor rust will corrupt. Where are you putting your treasures? Are you a faithful Christian? Jesus says that we lay up treasures or receive wages when we reap the harvest of souls. (John 4:35-36).

4. **Death Proof:** To those that are faithful Christians, life does not end at physical death. Jesus has made it possible for us to live happily throughout eternity. In John 11:26, He promises: "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Paul makes it plain in I Cor. 15, that the saints will be raised from corruptible to incorruptible — from death to life when the Lord appears. Truly at this time, "death will be swallowed up in victory!"

Therefore, do you have this Spiritual coverage? All the insurance in America cannot insure your soul — but the Spiritual insurance offered by our Lord CAN!!



LITTLE TALENTS IMPORTANT

As the story goes, men had built a new church building. People came from near and far to see it. They admired the beauty of the windows, the frescoing of the walls, and the carpet on the floor. The preachers were carried away with the handsome Bible.

Up on the roof a little two-penny nail held down a shingle. This little nail heard the people praising everything but itself. No one seemed conscious that it existed. The little nail became very angry and said, "If I am that insignificant, nobody will miss me if I quit."

So the little nail released the shingle, slid down the roof, and fell to the soft soil below. That night a big rain came and the little nail was buried in the mud. The shingle blew away, causing a leak in the roof, and the rain went through it, streaking the walls, causing the plaster to fall in the beautiful auditorium, and staining the nice carpet. Even the pages of the Bible were ruined. All this because one little nail in a fit of envy failed to stay on the job.

But what of the nail? While holding the shingle down it was obscure but useful! Buried in the mud, it was just as obscure, but useless, and would be eaten up with rust.

The work of God teaches that not all members of the church — the spiritual body of Jesus — have the same abilities. Paul wrote: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office" (Rom. 12:4). God has given each Christian different talents to be used, and He expects us to use our abilities whether large or small.

Jesus told of: "A man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability" (Matt. 25:14-15). After he returned from the journey he praised the one with five because he had gained five others. The man with two was praised because he had gained two, but the man with one had "dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money (v. 18). The verdict to him was: "you wicked, lazy servant: take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten." Why was this man condemned? Was it because he had only one talent? No, it was because he failed to use what he had. Like the story of the little nail, he did not do his part.

Are you using your God-given ability regardless of how large or small in the work of the Lord? Have you ever neglected good works because you felt too small and insignificant? The human body can function as a unit because all members large and small perform. Christ's spiritual body, the church, can function when all members, with large and small abilities, do their part. And this is something to think about!



LOOKING FOR THE GOOD

From the first day that sin was introduced into the world, evil things have been present. We live in a world today where both good and bad are present. It must be admitted that there is more bad than good, but does this give us the right to seek only the bad? Just think of the good which has been overlooked while searching out the bad. The buzzard will fly over acres of beautiful meadows and flowers to seek out one dead, decaying animal. Are we like this in life? Why not try looking for the good?

An elderly man was once robbed of his purse. According to the story he wrote the following words in his diary:

"Let me be thankful: first, because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse, they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

In adversity all of us have much more to be thankful for than we sometimes think. The old song holds good, "Count Your Blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

The bad things in life may outnumber the good, but they don't outweigh them in value. The way of righteousness is narrow compared to the broad way of sin, but its destination is life. Thus, the good is worth seeking. Daniel Webster once wrote: "Real goodness does not attach itself merely to this life — it points to another world. Political or professional reputation cannot last forever, but a conscience void of offence before God and man is an inheritance for eternity."

Sometimes we do not readily see the good because it is hidden beneath the burdens of life. Jesus was able to look beyond the crudeness, boastfulness, and impetuous nature of Peter, to the bedrock of goodness. He could see what he was — even the denial, but he could also see the good faithful worker he would become.

The Lord also saw in Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, the good qualities which later made him the peerless apostle Paul.

Therefore, when bad things come to our lives, don't let such overshadow the good. When we see weaknesses in others, don't let these blind us from seeing the good. And, my friends, please keep in mind that: "Nothing is more rare than real goodness." (Rochefoucauld). And this is something to think about!



WHERE IS HAPPINESS?

There is a question that the average person is asking and researching every day of his life. A question that needs to be answered correctly. The question: "Where Is Happiness?" The pursuit of happiness is not unique to our generation, but all kinds of writings, paintings and archaeological findings, testify to the fact that all generations of history have been involved. It seems that the first problem that God encountered with man was his loneliness which no doubt brought unhappiness. In fact God said that it is not good that man should be alone. (Gen. 2:18).

Man's pursuit of happiness is emphasized more strongly by Solomon than by any other writer. He devotes the majority of his writings to answer the question: "Where Is Happiness?" All kinds of experiments were used which included riches, wisdom, knowledge, wine and love, but he concludes, even before his final summation, that all is: "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." (Eccl. 1:2 NIV).

But my friends, Solomon is not the only one that has sought for happiness in the wrong places. Let us call the roll of some who sought happiness in the wrong places only to be disappointed.

Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He spent his life speaking and writing against the existence of God, but this did not bring him happiness. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Lord Byron spent his life seeking happiness in pleasure, but later wrote: "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone."

Jay Gould was an American millionaire and sought happiness from money. Yet when dying he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Lord Beaconsfield must have thought that happiness could be found in position and fame, because he sought and obtained more than his share. We know that position and fame failed him because he wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age, a regret."

Alexander the Great evidently thought that happiness could be found in military glory. With great fervor he was able to conquer the known world of his day. Was he happy after such success? History records that he wept in his tent, because, he said: "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where then, is happiness found? Solomon finally discovered that the only thing that counts is: "Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). The New Testament declares that only those who have found faith, obedience, forgiveness, love, and hope in Christ will find the true happiness. And this is something to think about!



NO REASON TO EVER LEAVE CHRIST

Our text today takes us to the desert where Jesus preached His great message of hope to a large multitude. Afterwards the multitude became hungry and weary and were ready to depart to the cities for food. But Jesus said, "they need not depart."

These words still ring out in the ears of disciples today, for there is never an occasion to leave Jesus. Man often lets the many circumstances of life affect his attitude and closeness to his Lord, but this should never be. No man becomes so poor but what he needs his Lord. Poverty can be turned into the proper necessities with faithful adherence to the Christian life. When one gives his way to Christ's way of life, he becomes a better employee and becomes more determined to provide for his family while working contentedly. Christ worked and expects His followers to do likewise.

Dear friend, you do not have to leave Jesus because of your riches. True, the Bible says that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God, but Jesus also says in the following verse: "but with God all things are possible." It is a fact that many eyes are blinded from the sparkle and glitter of gold, but this does not have to be! You can bring that wealth to God's work. Your wealth will canker only if you hoard it. Just think of the lives that can be sweetened by doing good in the name of the Lord. "As the bee flies to many flowers and gathers honey from each one, so may we out of forms of services extract a sweet conformity to him who was ever about his Father's business."

—Spurgeon

Finally, we need not leave Jesus because we feel that He is tired of us, for as long as we serve Him we remain a very pleasant figure in His sight. The mother who loves the precious infant, has times when she wants those shining eyes to close in sleep from her sight. The guest is often welcome, but if he stays too long, things become changed. Again I repeat, it is different with Christ! We need never depart. The same thing that was said about God in the Old Testament can be said of Jesus in the New: "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast" (Psalms 139:7-10).

So anchor your soul on the Rock of Ages and even though the winds of temptation blow, we need never to depart, and He will never leave us. And this is something to think about!