

The Friendly Companion



“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which
thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.”

Psalm 32.8

January 2020

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Page 4 Photo: A pitch pine (*Pinus rigida*) displaying epicormic sprouting after a simulated wildfire in the pine plains, in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. Kieran Hunt, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pitch_Pine_Epicormic_Sprouting.jpg

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

As we commence another year, you will be required to learn many lessons. There will be new lessons, and old lessons will be repeated. You will have school lessons; you will have lessons in your home about right and wrong: lessons about obedience, chores, behaviour, and about what is expected of you. You will have Bible lessons in your family worship or perhaps in Sunday School. For some of our older readers, those lessons may be in the setting of a bible study.

Then there are life lessons. These are lessons we learn from the things that happen to us or others, by steps that we take or do not take. What troubles we have sometimes brought upon ourselves by words we have spoken, by hasty decisions we have made, or by wrong spirits we have displayed. We have to learn and relearn these lessons of life.

There are also lessons from nature: lessons we learn from the behaviour of animals; lessons from the wind, the land (soil), and the sea. All of these teach us how things are continually changing.

Outside my study window is a large birch tree. Oh, the lessons I have received by observing it through the years. First, there are lessons in the branches, as they shoot off from the main trunk of the tree. In them, I have seen a representation of those who profess the Lord's name. Some branches shoot upwards at a sharp angle, as if striving to reach toward the sun. In the same way, some of the Lord's people stand out for their manifested love to the Lord Jesus. Their hearts are ascending upwards.

Other branches seem to stretch out, running parallel to the ground with just a slight upward elevation. These branches appear greater in length, but at their end, they seem to shoot straight up. As I have studied them, they remind me of many of the Lord's people who, upon their profession, go on in a quiet, steady way; but as they near their end, they bear witness

of the Lord's mercies and His faithfulness. Their hope grows stronger and brighter.

Then there are branches that grow downward toward the ground. These branches seem to speak a warning to me. How solemn to think if I should be like one of them! The believers in Galatia were reproved by the Apostle Paul for having begun in the Spirit and then thinking they could be made perfect by the flesh. Paul told them that they had started to run well but were hindered in believing the truth.

Most solemn of all are those branches, or rather twigs, that sprout off the branches but are soon dead. Two twigs have grown side by side. Yet, one is now dead, while the other is full of leaves. It is a fearful thought to be a dead branch or twig. What lessons from the branches!

The leaves have also given some lessons. In the spring, when they first open, they display a beautiful green colour. From a little bud, a tender, small, green leaf appears. Day by day, each little leaf grows larger, and soon the tree is covered with a canopy of green. However, as the summer months go by, the leaves start to fade and show signs of deterioration. The winds, storms and insects take a toll on them.

As I write this in late October, there are only a few scattered leaves on the tree. The wind is blowing hard, and the remaining leaves will soon fall off. When I look at the frail little stems that hold the leaves onto the branches, it seems a wonder that they have not blown away long before. What a lesson this has spoken to me again! Many who profess the name of the Lord Jesus are carried away by every wind of doctrine or by powerful winds of



Epicormic sprouting: Buds under the bark are activated by fire – see next page

temptation. However, if we have that little faith that so often appears like the frail little stem that holds the leaf, then we shall be kept safe. Oh, to be one of those who are kept by the grace of God through faith, while many others are falling away.

Perhaps you have also learned some lessons from nature that have spoken to your heart.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

If you have ever been near a large fire, you know that fire is a powerful force. On our front cover is a picture of a wildfire. Wildfires happen when a fire begins in a forest and burns out of control.

Wildfires can present many problems for people who live nearby. However, they have many benefits as well. They are actually considered to be very important in keeping forest ecosystems healthy. By consuming dead plant matter, fires return nutrients to the soil. They also remove thick undergrowth and canopies that prevent sunlight from reaching the forest floor.

Fires also keep forests healthy by killing diseased plants and the insects that cause those diseases. In fact, more trees die every year from insect infestation than from fires. Alien species, plants that are not native to certain forests, are often reduced during fires as well.

Some plant species actually depend on fire. They have cones that require the extreme heat of fire in order to open and release their seeds. Without fire, those plants could not survive.

The benefits of fire in nature are a good illustration of how the Lord works in the lives of His people. In the Bible, fire often symbolises the trials and temptations of the Lord's people. Peter speaks in 1 Peter 4 of "*the fiery trial which is to try you.*" By nature, it is hard to see the benefit of trials and

temptations. Just as we are naturally afraid of fire, the Lord's people often fear the trials that they must go through.

When we see pictures of wildfires, it looks as if the fire is burning everything in its path. It is hard to imagine that there will be anything left when it is done. The Lord's people often feel the same way during a trial; it seems as if everything will be consumed.

But when the fire is over, we find that the forest is still standing. The Lord's people are also enabled to withstand their trials. Nothing that is of the Lord will ever be lost in the fires of temptation. He has promised, "*When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee*" (Isaiah 43:2). Anything that is not of the Lord will be removed, just as the pests and alien species are burned up in a fire. But the good trees will remain.

In the end, forest fires bring new life to the forests they burn through. The Lord does the same thing in the lives of His people. He uses the fires of trial and temptation to bring life and blessing to their souls. When the trial is over, they will praise Him for His deliverance, and acknowledge the good that the fire has worked for them. Their trials may even open a new way for the Lord to bless them, in the same way that the heat of a natural fire may open the seeds of a plant and allow them to germinate.

Of course, when we hear about wildfires in the news, they are considered disasters. This is because they are burning out of control, threatening lives and property. The Lord's fires are not like that. They are always under His complete control, and they will always work for His people's spiritual good: "*We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28).

Contributed

“WHAT TIME IS IT?”

When I was a boy, my father taught me how to read the time on the face of the clock, and I became pretty good at this. One day, just as I was running off to play, he called me back. “Stop, Humphrey,” he said; “I have something more to tell you. I have taught you to know the time of day; I must now teach you how to think of the time of your life.” I waited patiently to hear him, although I was eager to get on with my games.

“In Psalm 90, it says, *‘The days of our years are threescore years and ten [seventy]: and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years [eighty], yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.’* Now life is very uncertain, but if you divide the eighty years of an old man’s life into twelve parts, like the dial of the clock, it will allow almost seven years for every number. When a boy is seven years old, then it is one o’clock of his life, and this is the case with you. When you arrive at fourteen years, it will be two o’clock with you; and at twenty-one years, it will be three o’clock, should it please God thus to spare your life. In this way, you may reflect on the time of your life, and looking at the clock may sometimes remind you of it.”

Never since then, have I heard the question, “What time is it?” without being reminded of my father’s words. They have given a solemnity to the face of the clock, which it never would have if he had not spoken these words. Look about you, my friends, and ask yourself the question, “What time is it with me?”

The yearly pendulum has given another swing. The youngest and strongest have but eighty such swings to come, and thousands of people have only one, two, or three. The wheels of the clock are moving; the weights of health and strength with some of us are almost down; the fingers of time are pointing to eternity. Happy are they who are united to Christ! For ’tis He who holds the key (Rev. 1.18).

From *Addresses by Old Humphrey*
Friendly Companion 1977

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**“IT IS WELL”**

The baby of the woman from Shunem was now grown into a little boy. One day at harvest time, he went out to his father by the reapers. Soon his head began to hurt, and he was carried back home to his mother. She held her little boy on her lap, but after a while he died.

The woman laid him on the bed of Elisha and shut the door. She called for a servant and a donkey, and they quickly rode to find Elisha. He saw her coming afar off and sent his servant to ask if it was well with herself, with her husband, and with the child. She answered, *“It is well.”*

Elisha followed the woman to her home and found the dead child on his bed. Elisha shut the door to be alone. Then he prayed unto the Lord that the child might be restored to life. Finally, the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha called for the woman of Shunem. She fell at his feet, took up her living son, and went out.

QUESTIONS:

1. What happened to the little boy after he was carried home? (2 words)
2. Whom did the woman go to find? (1 word)
3. What did she answer about herself, her husband, and her child? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. A man of God.
2. A little room.
3. A son.

Contributed

*“And she
answered,
It is
well.”*

2 Kings 4.26

BIBLE LESSONS

THE WRITINGS OF JOHN

What an important place the Apostle John had in the history of the New Testament church! He was one of the first followers of the Lord Jesus when John the Baptist pointed Him out as the Lamb of God. It was John who leaned on Jesus' breast at the last Passover Supper. John was also at the cross with the women, and it was John to whom Jesus committed the care of His mother.

Apart from the Apostle Paul, John wrote the most books of the New Testament. In the Gospel of John, he gives a wonderful view of the Godhead and majesty of the Lord Jesus. While he is best known for his gospel and the Revelation, John also wrote three separate epistles.

John began his first Epistle (the longest of the three), as he did his gospel, with that which was from *"the beginning."* He wanted all who read his epistle to know that he wrote of things *"which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life."* It was important to John to write only of the things he had seen and heard.

John opened his gospel by saying that Jesus was *"the light of men."* The light shone in darkness, but the darkness (mankind) could not receive it. In his epistle, he wrote that *"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."*

John added that those who walk in the light have fellowship with God, *"and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."* Not only does the blood of Jesus cleanse them, but they *"have an advocate [one who pleads for them] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."*

John exhorted the believers to keep the *"new commandment"* of the Lord Jesus to love one another. *"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light" [in Jesus].*

John warned the believers: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world."* John warned of three things that

were in the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

John had a special name for the believers he wrote to; he called them *"little children."* He told them of their great privilege, that they would be called *"the sons of God."* All those who are taught of the Holy Ghost and come to the light long to know that they are such.

Many of those who fear God are anxious to know that He loves them. There are many evil things in their hearts that cause them to wonder how the Lord could ever love them. Yet they feel within themselves a love to Him. John was given grace and wisdom to unfold this mystery when he wrote: *"We love Him, because He first loved us."* (1 John 4.19)

Perhaps you have heard your pastor or another minister say, "the One-in-Three or Three-in-One God." He was referring to the Trinity of God. What an important truth and doctrine it is! In his first Epistle, John tells us: *"For there are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word [Jesus the Son], and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One."* May the Lord teach each of you the vital necessity of and blessedness of the Trinity, one God in three persons.

John wrote to the believers that they might know that whoever believes on the Son of God has *"eternal life."* He further assured them that whatever they asked in prayer according to the will of God, He would hear. What an encouragement to all who pray to Him, asking in His name and for His glory!

John testified of Jesus: *"This is the true God, and eternal life."* As John wrote his epistle, his heart must have been filled with warmth and love as he thought of all he had heard from the lips of Jesus and seen of His mighty works.

His concluding words of warning are so needful: *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."*

QUESTIONS:

1. John wrote only of the things he had ...? (3 words)
2. What three things did John warn of that were in the world?

3. What Three did John say bear record in heaven?
4. What did John say that believers on the Son of God have? (2 words)
5. What final warning did John give? (6 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 2 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. The power of God.
2. The precious blood of Christ.
3. A chief corner stone, elect, precious.
4. Like precious faith.
5. Exceeding great and precious.

A RIGHT-HAND MAN

In the latter years of the 19th century and early years of the 20th century, Edward Carr was a well-loved preacher among our churches. At one time, he was pastor of Ebenezer Chapel, Leicester. It was a troubled time, and there was much division and strife among the people, which often brought heavy burdens upon this good man. However, there was one godly deacon, of a truly gracious spirit. His prudence and loyalty meant much to Edward. He called him his "right-hand man." Sadly for Mr. Carr, this dear man was suddenly taken to his eternal rest, leaving his pastor in a very isolated position. He felt he had lost his "right-hand man." How could he continue?

The Lord most graciously answered that question by awakening him one morning with the words of Psalm 121 verse 5: *"The LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand."* He found that, although the Lord had taken away one prop, He had given him a much better one, even the right hand of His righteousness (Isaiah 41.10). How true are the poet's words: "He never takes away our all, Himself He gives us still."

G.D. Buss

A DEBTOR TO MERCY ALONE

The Lord has His witnesses in every age and nation. Some have been in high positions in life, but the greater number have been from poor and humble circumstances. One of these was Henry Clark, who lived in the little village of West Kington in Wiltshire. He was afflicted from infancy with paralysis, so that he was never able to walk or stand. By crawling on his wrists and knees, he managed to get about his home. Henry had a violent temper and learned to swear at an early age. At times his mother covered his mouth to prevent the awful language. He lived in this way, dead in trespasses and sins, until he was twenty-three years of age, and he always remained a great cripple.

Henry's father once told a wheelwright about his boy's affliction. He was so touched with the account that he ordered one of his workers to make a rough, wheeled chair that Henry might ride in. It was made of strong wood, with four iron wheels and a handle in front to pull it, but it had no cushions or springs. Using this chair, boys from the village would take him to chapel.

On New Year's Day, 1889, God was pleased to call Henry by His grace out of nature's darkness. Mr. P. Robbins preached in the afternoon, and Henry testified to the blessing he received. So manifest was the work of grace in him, that his voice was no longer heard in angry words, but in prayer and thanksgiving. The Bible became his companion and, along with the hymnbook, formed his library.

He now told his parents that he must begin and close the day with reading and prayer. Amidst much opposition at times, he did this until his death. The Sabbath was his delight; he would stay at Mount Zion Chapel all day. Here he feasted his soul, telling the brethren what the Lord had done for him. In searching the Scriptures, Henry now saw that his dear Saviour was baptized, and he therefore desired to follow His example. He was baptized in the mill pond by Mr. Prewett of

Chippenham, in the presence of several hundreds, being carried into the water in a chair and immersed, chair and all.

Henry was favoured with a wonderful memory and knew almost every hymn; he could remember almost every text of the sermons he heard preached. However, he was not exempt from trials. His father was kicked by a horse and could not work again. This was a heavy trial, but Henry proved that there is a Brother born for adversity, and he enjoyed sweet communion with his God.

He continued to attend the means of grace until January 1894. As he closed the Sunday School that afternoon, he gave out the hymn:

See, another year is gone,
Quickly have the seasons passed;
This we enter now upon
Will to many prove their last.

He was taken with influenza the following week, which brought on rheumatic fever, in which he lay for four weeks. Henry had no desire to get better; he sent for a friend and asked that the following hymn might be sung at his funeral:

Lord I am Thine, but Thou wilt prove
My faith, my patience, and my love.

He also requested that a funeral sermon might be preached from the text: *"But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me"* (Psalm 49.15).

At times his sufferings were so great that he could not sleep; yet he sang praises, and his prayers were so earnest that they could be heard by those passing by. He would say: "What is this suffering compared to what my Saviour suffered?" He spoke in raptures of his Saviour to all who visited him, and at times would break out with the hymn: "In heaven my choicest treasure lies."

The Sabbath before he died, the Lord so blessed him that he shouted for joy and said, "Stand up my soul, shake off thy fears." From that time, he gradually sank, praising and blessing

his Saviour until his words were inaudible, and he sweetly passed away to be for ever with his Lord. A clergyman of the Church of England lived nearby, and from his garden, he had often heard the voice of Henry in prayer. As soon as it was known that Henry had died, he kindly offered to pay all the expenses of Henry's funeral. Henry was the poorest in the village in regard to natural things, but none was more respected than he. Later, this clergyman also erected a stone to the memory of Henry, bearing the text of his choice: *"He bath redeemed my soul from the power of the grave: for He shall receive me."*

Adapted from The Friendly Companion 1952

A PRAYER OF HENRY TUDOR

A few years ago, under a super-market car park in Leicestershire, the remains of Richard III were discovered near the site of the Battle of Bosworth Field in which he was killed. His body was subsequently buried with great ceremony befitting a king in Leicester Cathedral. The king who succeeded him was Henry VII, the first of the Tudor dynasty.

What is rarely mentioned is the remarkable answer to prayer which Henry received on the decisive day of the battle. His army numbered only 5,000, whereas Richard's army was at least three times that number. Not only that, his men were not so well trained as Richard's. When he reached the battlefield on that memorable day, he knelt, and kissed the ground and prayed: "Judge me, O Lord and favour my cause," words similar to those found in Psalm 43, with which it seemed he was familiar.

In a miraculous way, the Lord gave him the victory. This was a link in the chain that led to the Protestant Reformation under his father, Henry VIII, and later to the short but blessed reign of Edward VI, the British Josiah, so called for his zeal in reforming the Church of England of Romish practices and errors. Even though Mary I, a devout and fanatical Roman

Catholic, succeeded him, her successor, Elizabeth I, ensured that the throne was firmly established as Protestant. Whatever changes take place among nations, God is in control, and He always has the last word!

G.D. Buss

“EXCEPT YE BE CONVERTED”

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3

Girls and boys, no one is too young to need conversion; no one is too young to be converted. You know, the various testimonies we have heard before our church, many of them have spoken of how the Lord began to deal very solemnly, very graciously with them when very tiny children. I remember one speaking before our church of when being very small, taking a sweet and the Lord bringing that one under deep, solemn concern for stealing. I remember another one speaking about being a very small child and disobeying her mother and feeling the wickedness of it.

I wonder if you boys and girls sometimes only think of religion as being for older people. I wonder if you sometimes think that there is plenty of time. The point is this, that there is none who is too young to die. None of us knows how long we have to live. So I would put the question to each of you: If you suddenly died, would you be in heaven or hell? You say, “How do I know?” Jesus tells you, *“Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* The point is this: have you been converted or have you not?

One Thursday evening just over a year ago, I came into the pulpit. Of course, it was seven o'clock and the clock was showing seven o'clock. When the first hymn had finished being sung, the clock said five minutes to seven, not five minutes past seven. As I read the chapter, I kept glancing at the clock and realised it was going the opposite way round.

When I had finished reading the chapter, it was a quarter to seven and I wondered if there was something the matter with me. When we finished the prayer, it was half past six. We finished the service at half past five. I had been in the pulpit all those years and the clock had always been going the right way round, and suddenly it started going the opposite way.

That is just what conversion is. Your life is going one way from when you are born, and then one day there is a complete change and everything starts going round the opposite way. We need that to take place in our lives which took place with the clock. Like a person being on a journey and he is driving on and on and suddenly he realises it is the wrong direction, and he has to stop and turn round and start driving back completely opposite to the way he was once driving. Except that happens to you, Jesus says you will not get to heaven.

This complete turning round, this complete going in the opposite direction, has it happened to you or not? With some, it happens very suddenly, for instance Saul of Tarsus. With others it happens more gradually. They cannot tell you the exact spot, time or place when it happened. But the point is this: there is that complete turning round, that going in the opposite direction. And the point I am pressing on you is, has it happened to you? It either has or it has not, and really if you are honest you know it. In your innermost heart you know this, whether your life has always gone on the same or whether there has come a complete change in it.

B.A. Ramsbottom

An extract from Bethel Pulpit, number 48

LOST AND FOUND: A WEDDING RING

This little story happened about ten years ago. I had been to the chapel, tidying up the garden by doing some hedge trimming and cutting back (pruning) of some of the bushes. I spent about four or five hours doing this, after which I had to clear it all up, by putting all the cuttings into some very large

(120 litre) plastic waste sacks, seven in total. I had crammed as much as possible into the sacks by treading it down with my feet. I then put the sacks in the car and left, intending to go straight to the council rubbish dump before going home.

I was about two miles from the rubbish dump, when suddenly I noticed my wedding ring was missing from my hand. I was shocked and upset, and decided to go home before going to the dump. I told my wife what had happened and decided first to go back to the chapel and search around the garden and the driveway. The time of the year was nearing the end of October, and it would be dark in less than two hours. I looked everywhere, but sadly all to no avail. I then returned home, sad and dejected.

I said to my wife, "I think I will search through all the sacks before I take them to the dump," although the possibility of finding the ring seemed to be so very small indeed; it seemed like looking for a needle in a haystack. I put on what external lights I could and began. As I was doing this, my neighbour came home from work and enquired what I was doing, emptying out one sack of garden rubbish at a time on the drive and then picking it up piece by piece and putting it back into the sack. I explained that I had lost my wedding ring, and I thought it could possibly be in one of these sacks.

I continued emptying and searching sack by sack, and as I was doing this, I was trying to pray, saying, "Lord, Thou knowest where this ring is; please help me to find it." I was now working on the sixth sack and had almost put everything back into the sack, when I saw something glittering in the dark on the ground. It was my ring! I picked it up, went straight indoors, and told my wife that I had found my ring. We both rejoiced together and tried to thank the Lord that I had found the ring.

After a short while, I went outside again and reloaded the car with the sacks, ready to take to the dump the next morning. As I was doing this, my neighbour came out of his front door and asked, "How are you getting on?" I told him the good

news that I had found my ring. He knew that we attended a place of worship, and he asked me if I had prayed about this. I replied that I had prayed. His wife told me the next day that they had been to the local pub the previous evening, and he was telling everybody he met that evening about this neighbour of his, who had lost his wedding ring in a sack of garden rubbish and was tipping these sacks of rubbish out on the drive in search for his ring; he had prayed about it, and he had found his ring. My neighbour considered it was about a thousand to one chance of finding the ring. Well, that is how the average person in this world thinks, but some of us know that the Lord does hear and answer prayer. Blessed be His name, He always has and He always will.

One other remarkable thing is that if the Lord had not showed me that I lost my ring before I reached the council dump, this little story would never have been written, and I would never have found the ring. But now His name is to be praised.

This story may remind you about the woman in Luke 15, who lost a piece of silver, and lighted a candle, and swept the house until she found it. Jesus here teaches us that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. Are you seeking for something far more valuable than a lost ring, namely the forgiveness of your sins? Well, Jesus also tells us what to do: *"Seek, and ye shall find"* (Matthew 7.7). Those who seek the Lord Jesus will surely find Him.

Contributed

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

"Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"

There are many places in the Word of God where the Lord uses natural things to teach spiritual lessons. Amongst these, reference is often made to the fruits of plants and trees. At the very beginning, when God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden

of Eden, there were many trees that produced fruit. They could eat the fruit of all of these, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Very sadly, they disobeyed God and ate the fruit of that tree, and sin entered into the world.

The Lord Jesus, during His ministry, frequently used fruits by way of illustration. *"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down"* (Luke 13.6-9). In this parable, the Lord taught that as a gardener seeks to find fruit from those trees he plants, so the Lord God seeks fruits in the hearts and lives of His people. Anyone who owns an orchard or fruit farm would soon remove any tree or bush that does not produce fruit and replace it with one that does.

The Lord Jesus further taught and instructed His disciples, using a vine by way of illustration. *"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."* Again, He said, *"I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without [severed from] Me, ye can do nothing"* (John 15.1,2,5). It is only where there is that living union with Christ Jesus that a person can bring forth fruit. *"Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples"* (John 15.8). To illustrate this, consider a little shoot cut off from a fruitless vine and ready to die. A cut is made into the strong stem of a healthy vine, and the little shoot is placed in the cut and bound in. The sap from the root flows into the shoot, and life and health is restored so that fruit can be produced. Just as the shoot is unable to place itself into the

healthy vine, no sinner can enter into Christ except the Holy Spirit gives him faith.

In one sense, everybody produces fruit in their lives; the fruit is the effect of what they are doing. These “fruits” either glorify God or they dishonour Him. Man, in his fallen state, is completely unable to bring forth those good fruits which glorify God. As a sinner, he can only bring forth corrupt fruit. *“For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death”* (Romans 7.5). The Lord will teach His people this truth and cause them to mourn over it. However, as the Holy Spirit dwells within the hearts of the children of God, they will begin to bring forth those good fruits which glorify God.

Perhaps one of the most searching words the Lord Jesus spoke is, *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matthew 7.20). Here the Lord Jesus is warning His people of those who are deceivers, making out they are something that they are not. *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”* (Matthew 7.15-17). It is impossible for a false Christian to bring forth good fruit. They may talk religion, act religion, even profess religion; but lacking the Holy Spirit, they cannot bring forth one good fruit to glorify God.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night, the Lord made a statement which Nicodemus at first struggled to understand. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3.6,7). To be born again is to have that work of grace begun in the heart. The Apostle Paul also said concerning the change in him, *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians

2.20). From the time that he was “born again,” the Apostle Paul lived a life of faith, being led by the Spirit of God, and by God’s grace he brought forth fruits in his life that glorified God. Before this, he was living in the flesh and serving Satan.

When Adam and Eve were tempted to take the forbidden fruit, Satan told them that if they ate it, they would be as gods. The effects of this temptation were so very solemn, and to this day, sinful man is under this curse of pride. Satan destroyed man’s ability to glorify God. Before Paul knew God’s grace, he was more concerned about the praise of men and their respect than about glorifying God. If there is one thing God hates, it is religious pride; Jesus warned much in His ministry about this “leaven” of the Pharisees. May God, in mercy, cause us to examine ourselves and the motives in our hearts and help us to consider the life that we are living, whether it be in the flesh or in the Spirit. It must be one or the other; it cannot be both!

The “fruits” the Lord will have His people bring forth are called by the apostle, the fruits of the Spirit. We read of them in Galatians chapter six. As the Lord may grant His gracious help, we will endeavour to consider these fruits this year and the meaning of them.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about THE FOLLY OF DESPISING GOD. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 2 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. David “despised the commandment of the Lord” in the slaying of Uriah the Hittite. What judgment did Nathan the prophet pronounce against him? (2 Samuel 12.9-10)

2. The Lord Jesus spoke many solemn words of condemnation against the scribes and Pharisees. What was one reason that they rejected the command of God? (Mark 7.9)
3. Finish this sentence: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked..." (Galatians 6.7)
4. King Saul was commanded utterly to destroy Amalek, but disobeyed. What happened because he had "rejected the word of the Lord"? (1 Samuel 15.23)
5. What did Jesus say concerning "he that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words"? (John 12.48)
6. God says of some, "They would none of My counsel: they despised all My reproof." What does the next verse say is the result? (Proverbs 1)
7. "I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart." Why would God do this to the children of Israel? (Leviticus 26)
8. When the twelve spies returned, which Moses sent to search out the land God had promised to the children of Israel, the people murmured and rebelled. What did they have to suffer as a consequence? (Numbers 14)
9. "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." To whom was this spoken, and what was the cause of God's solemn reproof? (1 Samuel 2)
10. False prophets opposed Jeremiah, and two of them were solemnly judged because they "taught rebellion against the Lord." What were their names? (Jeremiah 28 & 29)

ANSWERS TO DECEMBER QUESTIONS

1. "I am Esau, thy firstborn," which was a lie.
2. "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." A "ram caught in a thicket" was offered.
3. Cain was angry because God did not respect his offering.
4. "I know not, am I my brother's keeper?" Cain had killed Abel.
5. Joseph was speaking to Potiphar's wife.
6. Rebekah. "I will go." (Genesis 24.58)
7. "Because the Lord thy God brought it to me." (Genesis 27.20)
8. "How old art thou?" (Genesis 47.8-9)

9. "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" which was spoken to Eve. (Genesis 3.1)
10. Judah was speaking to Joseph, because Joseph's silver cup had been found in Benjamin's sack of corn and Joseph's brothers, unaware who he was, were called to account for it. (Genesis 44.16)

COMMIT THY WAY UNTO THE LORD

I know not what this year will bring
That's granted unto me;
But grant, oh Lord, whate'er transpires
May drive me unto Thee.

Oh Lord, Thy way is in the sea,
Thy footsteps are not known;
But wilt Thou keep me near to Thee
May I not walk alone.

Thou knowest every path I've trod
For it was planned by Thee;
Ordained before the world was made,
From all eternity.

Be Thou a Husband unto me,
A Father for my seed;
And may my children also look
To Thee in every need.

May we by grace in all our ways
And circumstances yield
Our wills to Thine, and wilt Thou be
Our fortress, help, and shield.

J.R. Swets

The Friendly Companion



St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, Scotland

“Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here! And Jesus answering said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

(Mark 13.1,2)

February 2020

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Front cover photo: St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK. Carlos Delgado.
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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

When you read or hear the wonderful account of the children of Israel in their forty-year journey through the wilderness, I wonder if one thing seems to stand out to you more than anything else. What a memorable morning it was when they stood on the other side of the Red Sea and saw the Egyptian army completely destroyed! The night before, they were sure they would be destroyed by that army; but they proved that *"weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning"* (Psalm 30.5).

You might think of how many times they had to set up their tents and take them down during the forty years. Numbering over a million people, besides their flocks and herds, it must have been an impressive sight to see the orderly manner in which they went.

With what delight they hastened to drink the waters of Marah! Alas, what a great disappointment when they found those very waters with which they had hoped to satisfy their thirst so foul and bitter. Their God revealed a wonderful remedy for healing the waters by the cutting down and casting in of the tree He had appointed.

Maybe the one thing that stands out to you is the manna that fell six days a week throughout the whole forty years, with such abundance that the children of Israel never hungered.

What a memorable day it was at Mount Sinai, when their God came down in thick smoke and fire, with the sound of the trumpet causing the whole mount to quake. Moses himself was made to fear and quake. What an unforgettable sight!

On another occasion, they thirsted for water, but there were no waters of Marah to be sweetened for them; there was no water at all. Moses was commanded to take his rod, go to the rock in Horeb, and smite the rock. Soon water flowed out of the rock, so that Israel and all their flocks and herds were satisfied. Much later in their journey, in the wilderness of Zin, they thirsted exceedingly once again. This time, Moses was commanded to take his rod and to speak to the rock that the water might flow out for them. Sadly, Moses, in a moment of

weakness and anger, disobeyed and smote the rock twice, which greatly angered the Lord. For this reason, Moses was not allowed to go over Jordan into the land promised to Israel.

You might think of the time Miriam and Aaron spoke against their brother Moses, saying, "*Hath the Lord... spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?*" (Numbers 12.2). The Lord heard their words and "*came down in the pillar of the cloud.*" He called Moses, Aaron and Miriam to appear before Him. The Lord reproved Aaron and Miriam and afflicted Miriam with leprosy. Sadly, three other elders in Israel, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, failed to learn from the solemn judgment against Aaron and Miriam. They also rose up against Moses, saying that he and Aaron had taken too much authority for themselves. God's anger was kindled against them, and He caused the earth to open underneath them so that they, their families and their tents were buried alive.

When we consider the whole of those forty years, there is one thing that was constant from the beginning to the end. That was the pillar of a cloud and pillar of fire. "*And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people*" (Exodus 13.21,22). What a promise! What a faithful God! What a beautiful type (symbol or picture) of the Lord Jesus! How they needed to keep their eyes on the cloud! When they saw the cloud lifting up, they prepared to journey, and when it settled down upon the tabernacle, they abode in their tents. Beneath the cloud, the people found shelter, sustenance, and security. Even with the cloud over them, they were tempted to ask, "*Is the Lord among us or not?*" (Exodus 17.7). Many years later, when Nehemiah wanted to show to Israel the faithfulness of their God, he reminded them how even when their fathers had made the molten calf and said, "*This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt,*" God did not forsake them, for "*the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to*

shew them light, and the way wherein they should go" (Nehemiah 9.18,19).

What a wonder for us to reflect on and remember, that God never forsakes His people.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The picture on our front cover is that of St. Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland. All over Europe, there are such cathedrals, renowned for their antiquity, architecture, and for the events that took place there. Some of those events shaped the nations where they were located, and in some cases, stretched beyond their borders to other nations. Perhaps some of our readers in England and Scotland have had the privilege of visiting Edinburgh and St. Giles' Cathedral. While looking at a few pictures, we could not help but admire the skill of the craftsmen and masons who laboured in building it. What untold hours of manual labour it must have taken! Then we think of the men who designed the building. What preparations preceded the construction of the cathedral! Many things that you and I would never think of had to be planned out; the weight of the arches, spires, roof, and the large main tower had to be taken into consideration to ensure they would be fully supported. No one would be so foolish as to assert that there was not a wise designer involved. Yet, some people assert that the world itself could be formed or evolve without an all-wise Creator. Consider the perfect balance and position of the earth in the universe, its eco-systems, and the seas having just the right amount of salt to purify the atmosphere; it all tells of a supreme Designer.

Coming back to St. Giles' Cathedral; what a chequered history it has. It was likely founded in the twelfth century. Early on, it was associated with the Roman Catholic Church, but it became Protestant in 1559 under the influence of John Knox. Later, the interior was divided into sections, one of which was a prison. Another section was used by the

Parliament of Scotland for their sessions. By the nineteenth century, the walls that had partitioned the interior had been removed.

When Queen Mary came from France to reign in Scotland, it was her ambition to root out all the Protestants and to establish the rule of the Church of Rome. It was said that any Protestant leader who spent a little time in her presence was soon disarmed by her charm. Their zeal for the truth soon cooled and their watchfulness was just as soon left off.

Through God's mercy, one man, John Knox, was not deceived in this way. From the pulpit in St. Giles' Cathedral sounded the alarm against the queen, her house, and followers. For this, John Knox was summoned to appear before the queen. He was as bold as a lion before her in defending the truth of God's Word against all the writings, teachings and interpretations of men. At one point, he declared, "The Word of God is plain in itself, and if in any one place there be obscurity, the Holy Ghost, who is never contrary to Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places, so that there can remain no doubt but unto such as are obstinately ignorant." Much more hinged upon this meeting between the queen and this faithful servant of God, which time and space does not allow us to relate.

May we be very thankful for our religious freedoms that were obtained by the sacrifice and suffering of men of God, such as John Knox and many more besides.

JOHN CRAIG AND THE DOG

Long ago, when I was very little, I loved a certain picture in a big book! It was the picture of a man resting wearily by the roadside in the country, leaning on a bank with high trees above it. A little dog carrying a bag in his mouth was running up to him.

It was John Craig, and the place was in Italy. It is about four hundred years since that little dog came running up to John Craig in a friendly sort of way, laying the bag of money at his

feet. Some stories are worth being told over and over again for more than four hundred years, and this is one of them.

John Craig had left his native land, Scotland, and had been in Rome. They found that he read the Bible and was a Protestant, so they sent him to prison. They were going to put him to death, but the very day before that, the Pope of Rome died. Some of the people were so glad that they went to the prisons and set the prisoners free. John Craig was let out, and he left the city.

He thought he would walk first to the town of Bologna, Italy. He would need food and a lodging for the night. But what could he do without money? He had none. God sent him money, first by a man and then by a dog.

He was walking through the suburbs of Rome when he met a man who said to him, "O sir, do you remember me? You were so kind to me once when I was a poor, wounded soldier. Now, if you are escaping, do take this money." And he gave him enough money to take him comfortably to Bologna.

Mr. Craig was still afraid that he might be pursued, caught, and imprisoned again. He must go far away from Rome; he must go first to Milan and then, if he could, to Vienna.

He trudged on and on until one day, when he had been avoiding all the principal roads, he was completely tired out. His money was all gone, and his strength was exhausted. It was a solitary place, and he threw himself on the ground, almost thinking he would die. At that very moment, a dog came up to him and laid a bag of money at his feet.

Mr. Craig saw at once that it was God who had sent him the money. He became full of joy and praise to God and full of courage and hope. He came at last to Scotland, and in course of time, he preached in Edinburgh and was made a great blessing to the people of Scotland.

Adapted from *Childhood's Years*

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE HUNGRY ARE FILLED**

The prophet Elisha came to a place called Gilgal. There was a famine in the land, and there was little food to eat. The sons of the prophets sat before him, and they were hungry. Elisha told his servant to set a big pot on the fire and make soup for them. One man went to gather herbs in the field. He found a large number of wild gourds and added them to the pot of soup. He did not know that they were poisonous.

After a while, they poured out the soup for the men to eat. Suddenly, they began to feel sick and cried out, *"There is death in the pot."* Elisha cast some meal into the pot. Now the people were able to eat the soup, and there was no harm in it.

Another time, a man brought Elisha twenty loaves of barley bread from the first ripe grain. Elisha said to give them to the people to eat. The server told him there was not enough bread for all the people. Elisha said to set the loaves before them anyway, for the Lord said, *"They shall eat, and shall leave thereof."* The servant obeyed, and all the people were filled.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Elisha tell his servant to set on the fire?
2. What did Elisha cast in to remove the harm? (2 words)
3. A man brought Elisha twenty loaves of what?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. He died.
2. Elisha.
3. It is well.

*“and
they did
eat,
and left
thereof”*

2 Kings 4.44

BIBLE LESSONS

THE LAST THREE EPISTLES

John wrote two more very short epistles. They are the shortest books in the Bible. John called himself "*the elder*," as Peter also did, by which we may understand the office they held as ministers of the gospel.

In the second Epistle, he wrote to a lady whose name he does not give, but he tells us that she was "*elect*." The word "elect" tells us that she was chosen by God unto salvation. John includes her children and says of them: "*whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*"

John wrote of how pleased he was to learn that her children were walking in the truth. It is a great blessing when the children of God-fearing parents are likewise called by grace and walk in God's commandments.

Even though this lady was walking in the truth, John exhorted her and those with her to keep the commandment given from the beginning, "*that we love one another.*"

John warned them that many deceivers were now in the world, who denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. John's concern for this lady and her children was that they should be cautious, lest they be turned out of the way.

In his third Epistle, John wrote to a man whom he called "*the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*" John had a special wish for this friend: "*that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.*" He must have been one of those converted under John's ministry, for John spoke of him as one of his children. John commended Gaius for his great care toward the brethren and also to strangers, which was not done to receive praise from men, but out of love to God and men.

In writing this letter to Gaius, John warned him of another man in the church named Diotrephes. This man loved to have

the preeminence (highest place), and he would not receive John or other ministers sent to the church. He spoke against them with malicious (evil) words and tried to cast them out of the church. He was filled with the poison of pride. Diotrophes seemed to be the opposite of the humble Gaius. Through God's mercy, there was another man in the church who had a good report of all men. His name was Demetrius. This was the man whose example Gaius should follow.

The last epistle in the New Testament was written by Jude. Although he wrote as an apostle of the Lord, he rather called himself *"a servant of Jesus Christ."* He described those to whom he wrote as *"sanctified [chosen apart] by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called [by the Holy Ghost]."*

The Epistle of Jude warns of apostacy and its dangers. First, he wrote of how the Lord delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, yet afterward destroyed many who believed not. What a fearful thing to be brought out and then destroyed! Then he warned of the angels who had their first estate in heaven, yet were cast out of heaven through their sin and were bound with everlasting chains under darkness unto the day of judgment. Next, he warned of cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah, who rejecting God, were visited with the vengeance of eternal fire.

Jude warned the believers of going in the way of Cain, running after the error of Balaam for reward, and of the gainsaying of Korah. He was concerned that they would fall into the sins of these men: envy, covetousness, and rejecting the authority of those placed over them.

Jude finished his epistle with the wonderful blessings of God's people: to be kept from falling and presented faultless before His presence with exceeding joy.

QUESTIONS:

1. What word does John use to describe the lady to whom he wrote?

2. To whom did John write in the third epistle, and what did he say about him?
3. What did John wish for the man to whom he was writing? (13 words)
4. Who did John say loved to have the preeminence? Who had a good report?
5. What are the blessings of God's people, according to the end of Jude's epistle? (14 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. Seen and heard.
2. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.
3. The Father, the Word (Jesus the Son), and the Holy Ghost.
4. Eternal life.
5. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

"I WILL HELP THEE"

Some years ago, a gentleman said, "Dr. Newton, will you please tell me what verse of the Bible has been the greatest use and comfort to you in all the years of your Christian life?"

Without a moment's hesitation, he said in answer to this question, "Why, the four central words in the tenth verse of the forty-first chapter of Isaiah: *'I will help thee.'* These words have been the staff of my pilgrimage for more than half a century. When I have had any hard work to do, or any heavy burden to bear, I have always leaned on this staff and have been helped and strengthened by it. It has never broken, and never bent under me when I have leaned upon it, but it has been a comfort and support to me, times and ways without number."

Cheering Words 1990

THE DEAD RAVEN

Many years ago, a poor weaver lived in a little town in Germany. Although he was poor in outward circumstances, he was rich toward God. He was well known among his neighbours as one who trusted in the Lord at all times. Under any circumstance of trouble or perplexity, he would say, "The Lord helps." He would say it with assurance, even when it looked as if the Lord had forsaken him.

It appeared to be such a time, when the weaver was dismissed by his employer during a season of scarcity. Many workers had been discharged from the factory, and there was a great shortage of work. The weaver pleaded with his employer to keep him on, but without success. Finally, he said, "Well, the Lord helps," and he returned home. His wife was very distressed when she heard the bad news, but he attempted to cheer her with his usual saying, "The Lord helps."

As the days went by, nothing could shake his firm reliance on the Lord in whom he trusted, even when poverty affected them deeply. At last the day came when there was no money left. There was no bread and no fuel in the house. Starvation stared them in the face. With great sadness, the wife tidied and swept the little room on the ground floor in which they lived. The window was open, and possibly the words of the weaver were heard outside, with which he attempted to keep up their courage: "The Lord helps."

A boy on the street looked in the window with contempt. He threw a dead raven at the feet of the pious man. "There, saint! There is something for you to eat!" he cried.

The weaver picked up the dead raven. Stroking its feathers, he said compassionately, "Poor creature! You must have died of hunger." However, when he felt its crop to see whether it was empty, he noticed something hard. Wondering what had caused the bird's death, he began to examine it. Imagine his surprise when he opened the gullet and a gold necklace fell into his hands! His wife looked at it in amazement. The

weaver exclaimed, "The Lord helps." In haste, he took the chain to the nearest goldsmith and told him how he had found it. The goldsmith offered to lend him some money to help with his present needs, and he received the money with gladness.

The goldsmith soon cleaned the necklace, and he recognised it as one that he had seen before. "Shall I tell you the owner?" he asked, when the weaver came again.

"Yes," was the joyful answer, "for I would gladly give it back into the right hands." What cause he had to admire the wonderful ways of God, when the goldsmith gave the name as that of his former employer at the factory! He took the necklace and quickly brought it to him.

There was much joy in the merchant's family, too. Suspicion was removed from a servant, whom they thought had taken the necklace. However, the employer was also ashamed and touched by the honest weaver's actions. He had not forgotten the words which were spoken by the poor man when he had been dismissed. "Yes," he said thoughtfully and kindly. "'The Lord helps!' And now you shall go home richly rewarded. I will no longer leave so faithful a man without work. The Lord evidently stands by and helps you, and you shall henceforth be no more in need."

Thus, He who fed Elijah by living ravens proved Himself equally able to supply the needs of His tried servant by the same kind of bird when it was dead.

The Sword and Trowel

CHARLIE COULSON, THE DRUMMER BOY

During the American Civil War, Dr. M. Rossvally was a surgeon in the army. After the battle of Gettysburg, many hundreds of wounded soldiers were carried to a hospital nearby. Among them was a young lad who had been found on the battlefield with a mangled arm and leg. His life seemed almost gone, but then he opened his large blue eyes. It

suddenly made the doctor think that somewhere he had a mother who deeply cared about her boy. Not wanting him to die on the battlefield, the doctor had ordered him to be taken to the hospital. The boy, named Charlie Coulson, had been in the army for only three months; being too young for a soldier, he had enlisted as a drummer. His arm and leg would both need to be amputated. The assistant surgeon came to administer chloroform to the young sufferer, but he refused to receive it.* Dr. Rossvally told Charlie that the chloroform was necessary to endure the painful operation.

Charlie laid his hand on the doctor's and looked him in the face, saying, "Doctor, when I was nine and a half years old, I was brought to believe in Christ in the Sunday School. I learned to trust Him then; I have been trusting Him ever since, and I feel I can trust Him now. He is my strength, and He will support me while you operate." Charlie was then offered a little brandy, but he gave the doctor a look that he would never forget, saying, "When I was about five years old, my mother knelt by my side, with her arm around my neck, and said, 'Charlie, I am now praying to the Lord Jesus that you may never know the taste of strong drink. Your father died a drunkard, and I promised God that if it was His will for you to grow up, you would warn young men against that bitter cup.' I am now seventeen years old, but I have never tasted anything stronger than tea or coffee; and as I am in all probability about to go into the presence of God, would you send me there with brandy in my stomach?"

At that time, Dr. Rossvally, who was a Jew, hated Jesus, but he respected the boy's loyalty to his Saviour; when he saw how he loved and trusted Him, there was something that touched his heart, and he did something he had never done for any other soldier – he asked him if he wanted to see the chaplain.

* This was in the early days of anaesthesia, and there were many complications from the use of ether and chloroform. Some people greatly feared the loss of consciousness or associated the use of chloroform with opiates; thus they refused anaesthetics. Ed.

The chaplain came, and at once he knew the boy, having met him at the tent prayer meetings. Charlie asked the chaplain to send his little Bible to his mother, along with a letter to tell her that since the day he left home, he had never let a day pass without reading a portion of God's Word and praying that God would bless his dear mother. He also asked that a letter be sent to his old Sunday School teacher to tell him that his kind words, many prayers, and good advice had not been forgotten, but had followed him through all the dangers of battle; in his dying hours, he asked his Saviour to bless his dear old teacher.

Charlie then told the doctor that he was ready for the operation, promising that he would not even groan if no chloroform was given to him. He kept his promise, only putting the corner of his pillow in his mouth during the most painful part of the operation, saying, "Oh Jesus, blessed Jesus, stand by me now!"

That night, the doctor could not sleep. Those soft blue eyes and that gentle voice seemed to meet him continually. He could not help returning to the hospital in the middle of the night to enquire about the lad. He found him sweetly sleeping; one of the nurses said that the chaplain and two other friends had visited him, and as they sang, "Jesus, Lover of my soul," Charlie had joined in the sacred song. The doctor could not understand how it was possible for the boy to sing after undergoing such excruciating pain.

Five days later, Charlie felt that he was dying and sent for the doctor. He thanked him for all his kindness and begged him to remain and see him die, trusting Jesus to the last moment of his life. The doctor tried to stay, but he did not have the courage to stand by and see a Christian boy die, rejoicing in the love of that Jesus whom he had been taught to hate. So Dr. Rossvally hurriedly left the room.

Twenty minutes later, he was again called to that bed. Asking him to take his hand, Charlie said, "Doctor, I love you because you are a Jew; the best Friend I have in this world was

a Jew, Jesus Christ, to whom I want to introduce you before I die. Will you promise me, doctor, that what I am about to say, you will never forget?" The doctor promised, and the lad went on, "Five days ago, while you amputated my arm and leg, I prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to convert your soul."

The boy's words sank into the doctor's heart. How could that sufferer, in the midst of such intense pain, be thinking only of his Saviour and an unconverted soul? He could only answer, "Well, my dear boy, you will soon be all right." With these words, he left him, and a few minutes later, Charlie fell asleep in Jesus, at seventeen years of age.

Hundreds of soldiers died in that hospital during the war, but Dr. Rossvally followed only one to the grave, and that was Charlie Coulson. The boy's patience, faith and dying words had left a deep impression. Although he was rich as far as money was concerned, he would have given every penny he possessed if he could have felt towards Christ as Charlie did. However, the impression gradually wore off, and for ten more years, he remained a despiser of the Saviour. Then, in mercy, God sent another message to His wandering child.

At the close of the Civil War, Dr. Rossvally had been made an inspecting surgeon. Returning one day from an inspection tour, and on his way to Washington, he stopped at a hotel in New York. He went into a barber's shop to be shaved and found beautifully framed Scripture texts hung around the room. Immediately opposite to his chair was also a frame with this notice: "Please do not swear in this room." The barber began to speak to him of Jesus in such a loving, attractive way, that Charlie Coulson's happy death came vividly back to the doctor's mind. After he paid his bill, the barber offered to walk with him to the station. It was a bitter, cold February day, and the ice on the ground made it dangerous to walk on the streets. Therefore, the barber's kind offer was gladly accepted. When they arrived at the station, the barber said, "Stranger, perhaps you do not understand why I chose to talk to you upon a subject so dear to me. When you entered my shop, I

saw by your face that you were a Jew.” He continued to talk about his “dear Saviour” and said he felt it was his duty, whenever he came into contact with a Jew, to try and mention the One whom he felt was his best Friend, both for this world and the world to come. Tears began trickling down the barber’s cheeks, and the doctor could not understand why this man, a total stranger, should take such a deep interest in his welfare. The barber said that when he retired to rest at night over the following months, he would try to pray for the doctor by name. “And now may my Saviour follow you, trouble you, and give you no rest until you find Him – the Messiah you are looking for.”

Dr. Rossvally thanked the barber for his care and consideration, saying, “There is not much danger of my ever becoming a Christian.” He never dreamed that within the next forty-eight hours, God would, in His mercy, answer that barber’s prayer. In spite of an outward appearance of unconcern, a deep impression had been made upon his mind, which the sequel will show.

(To be continued)

Adapted from multiple sources

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

“We love Him, because He first loved us”

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians, he warned against the works of the flesh; that is, those things which are sinful and wrong. Every Christian should seek God’s help to flee from such things. He then spoke of the fruits of the Spirit, which every Christian should seek grace to possess and bring forth to God’s glory.

The very first of these fruits is love. As with all the fruits of the Spirit, we must remember that these are not natural things, but spiritual. There is a natural love which we have towards family and friends and also when one person falls in love with

another. There is a natural love for certain things in the world, such as nature, music and the like. Very solemnly, there is also a natural love of sinning and the carnal pleasures of this world. The love spoken of here, in Galatians chapter five, is a fruit of the Spirit and is seen in two ways: love to God and love to one another.

"We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4.19). The Lord God has chosen out of all the inhabitants of the world a people whom He will save with an everlasting salvation. Upon these alone, He has set His love. *"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end"* (John 13.1). *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3.16). When we read here of God loving the world, this is not to be understood that God loves every individual in the world, but only His chosen people who are in the world.

When any person truly becomes a Christian, two things will happen. First, he will no longer love the things of this world as he once did; second, he will begin to love God in a way that he did not before. That is because the Lord God has given him a new heart with new desires. *"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them"* (Ezekiel 36.26,27). He will know himself to be a sinner, and as such, he will be drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners. Only the Lord can convict people of their sins and cause them to repent. Natural conviction and natural repentance will never bring a sinner to the feet of Jesus, seeking the mercy of God and the forgiveness of sins.

When the Lord draws His people to the feet of Jesus by the Holy Spirit, He makes them to feel their great need of salvation, which is to be found in none other than the Lord

Jesus. The Holy Spirit also teaches them of the Lord Jesus Christ. One such character in the Bible is the woman who came to Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee. *"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment"* (Luke 7.37,38). All we are told about this woman is that she was a sinner. We are not told her name; and unlike so many others who came to Jesus, she did not appear to have any natural afflictions or infirmities, nor was she possessed with devils. She came to the Lord Jesus because she knew that she was a sinner and He was the Saviour. There was that need for the Lord Jesus to save her from her sins, and as such, He was so attractive to her soul. She came with a broken heart and contrite spirit, truly repenting over her sins and begging for mercy and forgiveness.

Simon the Pharisee, although he entertained the Lord Jesus in his home, showed no love to Him. This woman, in all the things that she did, showed what great love she had toward the Lord Jesus. Jesus pointed this out to Simon, but then He spoke such wonderful words concerning this distressed woman: *"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little"* (Luke 7.47). The Lord Jesus looked right into her heart and saw the truth of her desires after Him. If this woman loved Him when she came to Him, how much more so when He blessed her with the forgiveness of all her sins!

It is the same with every real Christian. There is that love to the Lord Jesus in the felt need of Him, and in coming to Him as a sinner, in hope of the mercy of God and the forgiveness of sins; but how much more so, when the Lord is pleased to favour sinners with the pardon of all their sins.

Many of the Lord's chosen people are very anxious at times to know for sure that the Lord Jesus really does love them and gave Himself for them. That is because they know something of the badness of their hearts and fear to presume taking such a tremendous favour unto themselves. They know that they are sinners and undeserving of the very least of the Lord's favours. Yet, it is because they know that they are sinners and understand that only the Lord Jesus can and must save them, that they are drawn to Him. It is a wonderful thing if we know something of being drawn to the Lord Jesus. *"Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee"* (Jeremiah 31.3).

The Word of God sets forth how true love to God must come from Him alone. Peter thought he loved the Lord Jesus so much that he would die for Him. Only the Lord Jesus knew that Peter's professed love was mixed with sin and pride, and that Peter had to be taught where true love comes from. Peter's love to self was stronger than his love to Jesus, because in the hour of temptation, he put himself first. Where was Peter's love to the Lord Jesus then? Peter had to be taught that his zeal was not the fruit of the Spirit, but of the flesh.

After Simon Peter had fallen by denying the Lord Jesus in the high priest's house, Jesus turned and looked upon him; Peter went out and wept bitterly. That look of the Lord Jesus was not one of anger or condemnation, but a look of pity and love – and it broke Peter's heart. A few weeks later, Jesus questioned Peter before all his fellow disciples: *"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these? He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee"* (John 21.15). The question was repeated two more times with increased urgency, and Peter gave the same reply with much feeling: *"Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said unto Him, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee"* (John 21.17). He had denied any knowledge of the Lord Jesus, but the Lord Jesus was very

merciful and did not cut Peter off. He mercifully restored him, because the Lord's love to His people is an everlasting love which nothing can separate them from. Peter learned the truth: that he only loved the Lord Jesus, because the Lord Jesus loved him first. This fruit of love from Peter's heart was given by the power of the Holy Spirit; so that is why Peter could really say, "*Thou knowest that I love Thee.*"

Although we may feel to be lacking in grace and the evidences of being one of the Lord's chosen people, it is a great mercy and comfort if we can feel something of what Peter experienced: "*Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.*"

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about KING JEROBOAM AND HIS FAMILY. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 26 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. King Jeroboam's wife went to a prophet to enquire about her sick son. Who was the prophet, and what was the boy's name? (1 Kings 14.1,2)
2. Jeroboam's wife pretended to be someone else, but there was another reason why she might not have been recognised. What was it? (1 Kings 14.4)
3. How did the prophet know who the disguised lady was when she came, and what to say to her? (1 Kings 14.5)
4. What did the prophet say would happen when Jeroboam's wife returned home? (1 Kings 14.12)
5. In what way was Jeroboam's son different from anyone else in the king's household? (1 Kings 14.13)
6. Why did king Jeroboam hold the prophet in such respect in the first place? (1 Kings 11)

7. Abijah, king of Judah, fought Jeroboam in a tremendous battle. Despite Jeroboam having twice as many in his army, Judah prevailed. What reason is given? (2 Chronicles 13)
8. The Bible several times mentions Jeroboam as the king “who made Israel to sin.” What was the sin with which God was so angry? (1 Kings 12)
9. God sent a prophet to denounce Jeroboam’s sin, but Jeroboam was angry. What then happened to Jeroboam, after which he asked the prophet to pray for his restoration? (1 Kings 13)
10. Which king many years later polluted Jeroboam’s idolatrous altar by burning men’s bones on it? Find the references for when this was first prophesied, and when the prophecy was fulfilled.

ANSWERS TO JANUARY QUESTIONS

1. “The sword shall never depart from thy house.”
2. The Pharisees rejected the command of God that they might keep their own tradition.
3. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”
4. God rejected Saul from being king.
5. “He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”
6. “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” (Proverbs 1.31)
7. “If ye shall despise My statutes, or if your soul abhor My judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break My covenant.” (Leviticus 26.15)
8. The children of Israel had to wander forty years in the wilderness, until everyone above twenty years old had died. (Numbers 14.26-35)
9. Eli, because his sons were wicked and provoked others to sin, and he did not restrain them, but allowed them to act as priests in the temple worship. (1 Samuel 2.12-17,22-25,27-36)
10. Hananiah (Jeremiah 28.16) and Shemaiah (Jeremiah 29.31,32).

JEHOVAH JIREH

"The Lord will provide" (Genesis 22.14).

The saints should never be dismayed,
Nor sink in hopeless fear,
For when they least expect His aid,
The Saviour will appear.

This Abraham found; he raised the knife,
God saw, and said, "Forbear!
Yon ram shall yield his meaner life,
Behold the victim there."

Once David seemed Saul's certain prey;
But hark! The foe's at hand;
Saul turns his arms another way,
To save the invaded land.

When Jonah sunk beneath the wave,
He thought to rise no more;
But God prepared a fish to save,
And bear him to the shore,

Blest proofs of power and grace divine,
That meet us in His Word!
May every deep-felt care of mine
Be trusted with the Lord.

Wait for His seasonable aid,
And though it tarry, wait;
The promise may be long delayed,
But cannot come too late.

William Cowper

The Friendly Companion



Biosphere 2 Building, Arizona, USA

“Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy
life be for his life ... And as thy servant was busy here and
there, he was gone.”
(1 Kings 20.39,40)

March 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

When we are asked to do something, our first response is often that it is just too hard. When Gideon was told that he was to deliver Israel, he reasoned thus: *"Ob my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? ... my family is poor ... and I am the least in my father's house"* (Judges 6.15). When Samuel was sent on a mission to go and anoint a new king to replace Saul, he asked, *"How can I go?"* (1 Samuel 16.2). He was sure that Saul would kill him if he found out.

The Lord has given the command to all to WATCH. This is a command that we foolishly think is not hard to do. We are prone to think that it is in our power to perform it. However, we soon find that it takes much effort, and it cannot be done without the Lord's help.

When a person has to guard something or someone, he must do so by watching. You may have been asked to watch over younger brothers or sisters so that they remained safe. Before you realised it, you stopped watching and lost sight of them. The Lord Jesus told the believers in the church at Philadelphia to hold fast that which they had been given, so that no man would take their crown. It would require diligent watching to hold fast such things (Revelation 3.11). Adam was given many wonderful things in the Garden of Eden, but he failed to watch against the thief, Satan, who came and took them away. Perhaps the Lord had Adam in mind when He said: *"And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through"* (Luke 12.39)

When the Lord Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he told Peter, James and John, *"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation"* (Matthew 26.41). When He returned to them, He found them sleeping. Peter, especially, should have been watching, because a short time before, the Lord had warned him that Satan desired to have him.

Another part of watching is to be looking out for something. You might think it would be easy to keep watching for

something if you were really longing for it with great anticipation. However, the Lord told a story of ten virgins who were waiting for the bridegroom to come. How they longed for his coming! No doubt, they were very careful in the beginning, continually to watch in the direction from which the bridegroom would come. However, as time went by and the bridegroom tarried, they grew weary and fell asleep. They did not persevere in watching!

We need the help of the Holy Ghost to watch with diligence, with perseverance, and with patience. Joseph was helped to watch against temptation, and he fled from it. Nehemiah was helped to watch against the enemies who tried to weaken his hands, and he overcame them. Moses was helped to watch against the ungodly influences in Pharaoh's house, and he forsook Egypt.

May the Lord teach us each how to really WATCH.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Our front cover picture is of a scientific research centre in Arizona, USA, called Biosphere 2. It was built to replicate our natural environment to enable the study of plant living systems. Since the Biosphere was enclosed, scientists were able to alter the environmental conditions within to see what effect the changes would have on the plants.

One of the most important and interesting discoveries was something which they had not looked for – the need for wind!

The trees they planted grew well in this enclosed environment and grew much faster than normal, but before they could fully mature, they fell over! The scientists had overlooked something in the design of their enclosed environment – wind. They discovered that wind has a vital role in the development of trees. As a tree begins to grow and is blown around by wind and storms, it puts down roots. This slows the growth upward, but the hidden growth of the root downwards is essential for stability. The wind swaying the tree also causes the structure of

the wood to alter, and “stress wood” develops within the trunk and branches. This allows the tree to grow towards light, sometimes leaning or curving over, without falling or collapsing. The wind makes trees stronger. The trees in Biosphere 2 were found to have much softer wood than those in the natural environment.

A life without trials would be like living in the storm-free Biosphere 2. It may seem attractive to us not to have trials and to live without “storms” of trouble, but that is not what God has ordered for His children. They must be brought to pray and have faith in God. If religion springs up fast and is never tested, what roots will be established? If the root of our religion is not established, how long can we stand? If faith remains untested throughout our lives, how strong will it be at our death – that final great test of faith?

Paul writes in Colossians chapter 2, verses 6 and 7: “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: **rooted** and built up in Him, and **stablished** in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*”

How vital to be planted by God and not man; to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; to be spiritually established in living and proving the promises in God’s Word.

Jesus gave a solemn warning to His disciples concerning the Pharisees who were offended at His word: “*But He answered and said, Every plant, which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up*” (Matthew 15.13). They were planted, but not by God – they had a religion, but not one given by God.

Our wisdom would remove all obstacles and difficulties from the path of life, but God’s wisdom orders them all, because they are all needed. Prayer is made earnest because of them, faith is increased by them, and may Christ Jesus be revealed to us in them!

*“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened** with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, **being rooted and grounded** in love, may be able to*

comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3.16-19).

T.J. Parish

A SCIENTIST’S TESTIMONY

By unwavering mathematical law, we can prove that our universe was designed and executed by a great engineering Intelligence. Suppose you marked ten pennies from one to ten, put them into your pocket, and gave them a good shuffle. Now try to take them out in sequence from one to ten, putting back the coins each time and shaking them all again. Mathematically, we know that your chance of first drawing coin number one is one in ten; of drawing one and two in succession, one in a thousand, and so on; your chance of drawing them all, from number one to number ten in succession, would reach the unbelievable figure of one in ten-thousand million.

By the same reasoning, so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance. The earth rotates on its axis at one thousand miles an hour; if it turned at one hundred miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now. The hot sun would then burn up our vegetation each long day, while any surviving sprout would freeze in the long night.

Again, the sun has a surface temperature of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit; our earth is just far enough away so that this “eternal fire” warms us just enough but not too much. If the sun gave off only half of its present radiation, we would freeze, and if it gave half as much more, we would roast.

The slant of the earth, tilted at an angle of 23 degrees, gives us our seasons; if it had not been so tilted, vapours from the ocean would move north and south, piling up continents of ice. If our moon was, say, only 50,000 miles away instead of its actual distance, our tides would be so enormous that twice a day all continents would be submerged; even the mountains would

soon be eroded away. If the crust of the earth had been only ten feet thicker, there would be no oxygen; animal life would die, oxygen would have been absorbed, and no vegetable life could exist. Or if our atmosphere had been thinner, some of the meteors, now burned in space by the million every day, would be striking all parts of the earth, starting fires everywhere.

Because of these and a host of other examples, there is not one chance in millions that life on our planet is an accident.

*Adapted from the writings of A. Cressy Morrison,
Former President of the New York Academy of Sciences
Friendly Companion 1964*

ANCIENT WATCHMEN

All ancient cities had watchmen who stood at the city gates, upon the city walls, or in towers at strategic points. It was their duty to keep alert to the approach of enemies, to report any irregularities, and to protect the community. At stated intervals they were required to shout if all was well or if there was any sign of danger. The watchman who slumbered at his post or was unfaithful in any way, paid with his life. His personal responsibility was very great indeed.

Cyclopedia of Bible Illustrations by P. Holdcraft

The best things of life come out of wounding. Wheat is crushed before it becomes bread. Incense must be cast upon the fire before its odours are set free. The ground must be broken with the sharp plough before it is ready to receive the seed. It is the broken heart that pleases God. The sweetest joys in life are the fruits of sorrow. Human nature seems to need suffering to fit it for being a blessing to the world.

Streams in the Desert

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**NAAMAN HEALED**

Naaman was captain of the army of Syria. He was a great man, but he had a terrible disease called leprosy. There was no cure for leprosy.

Naaman's wife had a little maid who was taken captive from the land of Israel. She told her mistress that the prophet in Israel would be able to heal Naaman. The king of Syria quickly sent Naaman to the king of Israel.

The king of Israel could not help him, but the prophet Elisha said, "*Let him come now to me.*" Naaman came with his horses and chariot and stood at the door. Elisha did not go out to see him but sent a message: "*Go and wash in Jordan seven times ... and thou shalt be clean.*"

Naaman went away angry, for he thought he should be healed another way. His servants told him that he was asked to do a very easy thing. Then Naaman was made willing to obey the command of Elisha. He washed and was made clean. His flesh became like a little child.

QUESTIONS:

1. What terrible disease did Naaman have?
2. Where was he told to wash? (2 words)
3. What did his flesh become like? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. A big pot.
2. Some meal.
3. Barley bread.

Contributed

*“Go and
wash ...
and thou
shalt be
clean.”*

2 Kings 5.10

BIBLE LESSONS**THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

The Holy Scriptures were complete when the Book of Revelation was written. The Apostle John, who wrote one of the gospels and the three epistles that bear his name, was called to write this last book. He was an old man at that time and the only apostle yet alive. Although old and feeble, he could not escape persecution from the Roman emperor. He took John as a prisoner and sent him to a small island called Patmos.

It must have been very trying for John to be taken away from the church where he was the pastor. However, in spite of his exile, the Lord still blessed him. While on Patmos, John was granted a visit from the Lord Himself. He was given a message to the churches and a revelation of things to come.

While the book is called "The Revelation of John," it is really the "*Revelation of Jesus Christ*" given to John, to show the servants of God "*things which must shortly come to pass.*" John was shown Christ's relationship in regard to time: "*from Him which is [the present], and which was [eternity past], and which is to come [eternity future].*" He was also shown Christ's relationship to the churches (Revelation 1.9 through chapter 3); to the great tribulations (chapter 4-19); and to the kingdom (chapter 20-22). Last, he had a revelation of Christ in His office as the great High Priest, the heavenly Bridegroom, and the King and Judge.

The Book of Revelation is the crowning of the Scriptures; the consummation or completion of all things. In the opening salutation, John declares, "*Grace be unto you, and peace, ... from Jesus Christ, ... the faithful Witness, ... the first begotten of the dead, ... the Prince of the kings of the earth.*" What follows this salutation is both wonderful and terrible: "*Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds [nations] of the earth shall wail because of Him.*"

The Lord spoke to John as the eternal God: "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ... the first and the last.*" What a comfort that was to John! The Roman ruler had arrested

him and put him in exile on a lonely island, but his God was still reigning.

The Lord's days must have been very trying for John when banished to the isle of Patmos. Surely, he would be thinking of the churches meeting together for the worship of God, but he was prevented from joining with them. However, while he was in Patmos, he experienced a Lord's day unlike any he had before. Of that time, John wrote: *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ... What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia."*

When John turned to see who spoke to him, he saw seven golden candlesticks, and standing in the midst was the Son of man, the Lord Jesus. He was clothed with a long garment, secured with a golden girdle. His hair was as white as snow, His eyes as a flame of fire, His feet appeared like fine brass that burned in a furnace, and His voice sounded like many waters. Out of His mouth went a sharp, two-edged sword, and the whole of His appearance was brighter than the sun in its strength. Even in the mount of transfiguration, John had never seen his Lord like this. John said that when he saw Him, he fell at His feet as dead.

QUESTIONS:

1. Where was John exiled to?
2. When Jesus comes in the clouds, who did John say would see Him? (2 words)
3. What did Jesus say of Himself to show that He was the eternal God? (15 words)
4. What did John say regarding himself and the Lord's day? (9 words)
5. What happened to John when he saw Jesus in His glory? (7 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. Elect.
 2. *"The well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth."*
 3. *"That thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."*
 4. Diotrephes. Demetrius.
 5. To be kept from falling and presented faultless before His presence with exceeding joy.
-

THERE MUST BE A GOD!

Dr. Boris P. Dotsenko was the head of the nuclear physics department at the Kiev Institute of Physics. He had been brought up in a country where it was frowned upon to believe in God. Yet, in spite of this, he began to think about the possibility of God's existence.

His thoughts centred around the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that disorder increases with the passing of time. How then could our orderly universe have come into being? And how was it maintained?

He wrote, "As I thought about all of this, it suddenly dawned on me that there must be a very powerful organising force counteracting this disorganising tendency within nature, keeping the universe controlled and in order. This force must not be material; otherwise, it too would become disordered. I concluded that this power must be both omnipotent (all-powerful) and omniscient (all-wise and all-knowing). There must be a God – one God – controlling everything!"

Later, after leaving Russia to live in Canada, Dr. Dotsenko found a Bible. He read it and came to know the God whose existence he had become convinced of through his scientific observations. He became a Christian and taught physics in schools and universities in Canada.

Cheering Words 1989-90

DAVID BRAINERD

Boys and girls, we want to tell you a story about one of God's ministers. David Brainerd was born in 1718 in the early years of American history. By the time he was fourteen years of age, he had lost both his father and his mother, but the Lord was pleased to begin to work in his heart. Over a period of seven years, the Lord brought him to know that he was a fallen creature, a sinner alienated from God, and that God was a sovereign God who could either save him or leave him to perish.

In 1739, when he was twenty-one years old, the Lord revealed Himself to David Brainerd; he was taken up with the Person of Christ and rejoiced in his Saviour. Shortly afterwards, he entered the ministry, and was later appointed missionary to the American Indians. Let us now turn to one incident in his life which illustrates the care of God for His own.

David Brainerd resolved to bring the gospel to a savage tribe of Indians in the forest. His friends thought they would never see him alive again. He carried with him a little tent, under which he slept. After weary days of travelling, he came near an Indian tribe. He slept through the night, and then he stayed in the tent for a while in the morning to pray. He pleaded with God to help him as he tried to speak to the savage Indians. He thought that no eye but God's rested upon him, but some Indians had watched as he pitched his tent. They had hurried to tell the Indian chief about the approaching white man. A council was held, and it was decided that the white man must die. A group of Indians went back to the little tent and hid in a sheltered place, waiting for the missionary to come out. Brainerd continued long in prayer. Finally, the Indians became impatient. Silently, they drew near the tent and looked inside. They saw Brainerd on his knees. Then, they noticed a great rattlesnake push its ugly head under the tent and saw it crawl toward Brainerd. When the snake reached Brainerd's feet, it reared itself as if to strike its fangs into the back of the missionary's neck. Suddenly, it drew back! Then, it glided out of the tent.

The watching Indians were amazed. Surely, some unseen hand had kept that snake from injuring the white man! They went back to their village and told the chief what had happened. They decided that the white man was under the protection of the Great Spirit and concluded that they must not harm him, but sue for peace.

Presently, Brainerd finished his prayer. He took his Bible and went toward the Indian village. To his surprise, the whole tribe went out to greet him. They treated him with great respect. They listened to his preaching when he told them of Christ. Some Indians cried out in distress, and all appeared greatly concerned. After that, he prayed and exhorted them to seek the Lord.

It was the constant prayer of David Brainerd that God would send forth His blessed Spirit with His Word and set up His kingdom among the poor Indians in the wilderness. He laboured and preached among his beloved Indians until his death at the early age of twenty-nine years. His body was “burned out” in his tireless service for the Lord. One of his last prayers was that the blessed Redeemer might “*see of the travail of his soul, and ... be satisfied*” (Isaiah 53.11).

Adapted from The Children's Story Hour

CHARLIE COULSON, THE DRUMMER BOY

(Continued from page 42)

On the train ride to Washington, D.C., Dr. Rossvally was in a restless state of mind. He moved about from seat to seat and finally found an empty seat in the corner. He intended to sleep, but the moment he closed his eyes, he felt himself between two fires. On the one side, there was the Christian barber of New York, and on the other side, the drummer boy of Gettysburg, both talking about that Jesus whose name he hated. He wondered why they should take such an interest in a perfect stranger. He had been taught by his parents to hate Jesus; that there was but one God, and He had no Son. Now, a desire

sprang up in his heart to know more of that Jesus whom the Christians loved so much.

When he arrived in Washington, where his home was, Dr. Rossvally purchased a morning paper. One of the first things that caught his attention was the announcement of a service in the largest church in Washington. No sooner had he seen it, than something inside him seemed to say, "Go to that church!" He had never before been inside a Christian church during a worship service. At any other time, he would have shunned the very thought, but the conflict within made him want to attend.

During the service, it seemed as if the preacher was looking directly at him. Dr. Rossvally wondered if it might rather be someone behind him, and he turned in his seat to see who that person was. To his astonishment, the whole congregation of more than two thousand people, all seemed to be looking at him. He came to the conclusion that he must be the only Jew in the place, and he heartily wished himself out of the building. He was well-known in Washington, both by Jew and Gentile. The thought flashed across his mind that the next morning paper might read, "Dr. Rossvally, a Jew, was present at the Christian services, not five minutes' walk from the synagogue that he usually attends, and he was seen to shed tears during the sermon." Not wanting to make himself conspicuous, he made up his mind not to take out his handkerchief. However, he could not keep the tears back, and they flowed faster and faster.

When he arrived home, his wife, who was a very strict orthodox Jewess, thought he looked rather excited and asked where he had been. The truth he dared not tell her, and he would not tell a falsehood. He said that he had some very important business to attend to and wished to go to his private study where he could be alone. He locked the door of his study and began to pray with his face towards the east as he had always done, but this gave him no satisfaction.

Dr. Rossvally felt a great perplexity of mind as to the meaning of many prophecies in the Old Testament. One of these was Genesis 49 verse 10: "*The Sceptre shall not depart from Judah,*

nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Another was Micah 5 verse 2: *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratab, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."* A third passage was the well-known verse in Isaiah 7 verse 14: *"Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."* These three passages impressed themselves so forcibly upon him that he cried out, "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Thou knowest I am sincere in this thing. If Jesus Christ is the Son of God, reveal Him to me this night that I may know Him as my Messiah."

It occurred to him that Christians kneel when they pray. Having been brought up as a strict orthodox Jew, he had been taught never to kneel in prayer. He was afraid that he might be deceived in bowing to Jesus, whom he had been taught to believe was an impostor. However, he finally went on his knees to pray for the first time in his life. Although it was a bitterly cold night and there was no fire in the room, the drops of sweat poured down his face. After half an hour, he arose and paced back and forth in his study. He went down on his knees again, and his heart ached, for he had a sincere desire to know this Christ, if He was the Messiah. At last, light began to dawn on his mind, and he began to feel and to believe that Jesus Christ was truly the Messiah. Then, his doubts were gone, and he began to praise God, for a joy and happiness had penetrated his soul such as he had never known before. He had found the true Shiloh, the Ruler of Israel, of whom it had been written, *"He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isaiah 53.3). He looked upon Him whom they had pierced, and he believed that God, for Christ's sake, had pardoned his sin. With great joy he arose from his knees.

In his new-found happiness, he thought that his wife would at once share in his joy. He hurried out of his study into the

bedroom, saying, "Wife, I have found the Messiah." Instead, she looked annoyed and pushed him coldly away. Within a few minutes, she had dressed and left the house, going to her parents who lived across the street. He did not follow her, but went down on his knees, imploring the Saviour that his wife might also have her eyes opened.

The next morning, his wife was told by her parents that she must never again call him husband or she would be disinherited, excommunicated from the synagogue, and accursed. The two children were sent for by their grandparents and told that they must never again call him father; for in worshipping Jesus, he was fully as bad as He was. Oh, the inveterate hatred of the human heart to the gospel of God!

Five days later, he received orders from the surgeon general at Washington, D.C., to proceed west on government business. He tried to speak with his wife and bid her goodbye, but she would neither see nor write to him. He loved his wife and children dearly, and it was with a sad heart that he left home and travelled thirteen hundred miles to his place of duty without seeing them. He wrote a letter to his wife every day, and with every letter, he prayed that God would incline her heart to read at least one of them. He spoke of Christ in each letter and of the joy and peace that he was experiencing in his soul.

(To be continued)

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

**"We know that we have passed from death unto life,
because we love the brethren"**

Sometimes, the best way to understand a word is to know the opposite. The opposite of the word "love" is hatred. Last month we considered the fruit of love toward God as it is found in real Christians. Once they hated God, but now, by the grace of God, they are brought to love Him. This same grace of God

in the hearts of His people will also cause them to love one another.

We may not feel that we “hate” the Lord’s people, but hatred can manifest itself in many ways, such as envy, jealousy, bitterness, rivalry, anger and pride.

At one time, King Saul professed to love David and wanted to have him in the royal court. However, after David slew Goliath and the women began singing the praises of David, we read, *“And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?”* (1 Samuel 18.8). Through jealousy, King Saul now began to hate David.

What a great difference we find in Jonathan, Saul’s son. As the next in line to the throne, Jonathan could also have been tempted to jealousy, yet we read of Jonathan, *“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father’s house. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle”* (1 Samuel 18.1-4). This love was a wonderful display of the grace of God in their hearts, which drew them together in the Lord. It was a loving bond of friendship and kindness that endured in spite of all that Jonathan’s father, Saul, did to David.

The Apostle John, in his first epistle, speaks much of the love that is manifest in the hearts of the Lord’s people. If we read it very carefully, we will notice that where there is love to God, there will always be love to the brethren; indeed, it is an evidence of being one of His people, when we also love the brethren. *“And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment. And he that keepeth His*

commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1 John 3.23,24). As the Lord gives His Spirit to His people, so the fruits of the Spirit will be seen by their love one to another.

This fruit of loving one another may be displayed in many ways. *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth"* (1 John 3.17,18).

The love of God is the foundation of all the fruits of the Spirit because *"God is love"* (1 John 4.16). The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, states that the three principal graces are faith, hope, and charity (love); *"but the greatest of these is charity"* (1 Corinthians 13.13). After Joseph's brethren had treated him in such an unkind way, causing him so much suffering and grief, we might think that Joseph would hate his brethren; given an opportunity, he would seek to punish them. However, when the opportunity came, Joseph was given grace to see the Lord's overruling hand in it all. He displayed nothing but love towards his brothers, although he tested them to see if they had repented of their sins. This is how God deals with His people, showing His mercy through love in all His dealings with them. His Spirit within them will display that same love back towards God and His people.

Of course, no child of God is perfect. Within each of them, there is still a sinful nature. How often the old nature rises up and shows itself! Martha appeared to be angry with Mary when she was left to serve alone, and Mary remained sitting at Jesus' feet. Martha received a loving, but painful, reproof from the Lord Jesus: *"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her"* (Luke 10.41,42). We know that Jesus loved both Martha and Mary, and they both loved Him. Yet, when Martha spoke out of

place, the Lord Jesus lovingly reproved her. The Lord still lovingly reproves His people when sin breaks forth. The Lord will have His people love one another and bring forth that fruit of love that His name might be glorified.

This fruit of love can also be seen in another way: *“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4.32). Very sadly, when sin breaks out, it can cause hurt and distress to others. Harsh words are spoken, emotions rise up, accusations are made, revenge is sought, and many ill feelings are manifested. The enemies of the truth rejoice to see such enmity within the church of God. Many young people have been sadly affected and troubled by the behaviour of those who profess to know and love the Lord Jesus. They have been forced to witness things that should never be seen amongst the people of God. May the Lord grant us grace, if we have caused hurt, to acknowledge our wrong and seek forgiveness. If we have been hurt, may He give us grace to forgive those who have trespassed against us.

On the contrary, it is wonderful when the Lord’s people show a great love one to another. *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore”* (Psalm 133).

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about SUBMISSION UNDER TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 50 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Who said, "It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good"? (1 Samuel 3.18)
2. What had God previously said about his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas? (1 Samuel 2.34)
3. King David said, "Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord ... but let me not fall into the hand of man." Why did he want to fall into the Lord's hand? (1 Chronicles 21.13)
4. What three options had the prophet Gad given David to choose from? (1 Chronicles 21.11,12)
5. Job chapter 1 records how Job suffered some most distressing calamities. What did he say at the end of the chapter? (Job 1.21)
6. What else was Satan permitted to do to Job, and how did Job answer his wife when she wanted him to curse God? (Job 2)
7. "And Aaron held his peace." What had happened which would have caused Aaron deep sorrow? (Leviticus 10)
8. What did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego refuse to do, as a result of which they were thrown into a fiery furnace? (Daniel 3)
9. What did God command Abraham to do which must have deeply perplexed him because it seemed to go contrary to God's promise? (Genesis 22)
10. What prayer did the Lord Jesus pray three times in the Garden of Gethsemane, before going to His crucifixion?

ANSWERS TO FEBRUARY QUESTIONS

1. Ahijah, Abijah.
2. Ahijah was old and could not see.
3. God had told Ahijah that Jeroboam's wife was coming to see him, that she would be in disguise, and also what message to give her.
4. As soon as Jeroboam's wife entered the city, her son would die.
5. "In him there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam."
6. Ahijah had prophesied to Jeroboam while Solomon was still alive, that he would one day be king over ten of the tribes of Israel. (1 Kings 11.29-38)
7. "Because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers." (2

Chronicles 13.18)

8. Jeroboam made idolatrous golden calves in Bethel and Dan and commanded Israel to worship them. (1 Kings 12.28-33)
 9. Jeroboam's hand dried up, so he could not move it. (1 Kings 13.6)
 10. Josiah. (1 Kings 13.2 & 2 Kings 23.15,16)
-

THE LIVING GOD

“Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore.”

Revelation 1.17.18

God lives! Then why should I despond,
As if no help were near?
He knows the sorrows of my heart;
He chose my portion here;
Therefore, my grief to Him I bring,
And tell my Saviour everything.

Psalm 34.15

God sees! I cannot weep unseen;
Then why do I complain?
He numbers every tear; He knows
The cause of all my pain:
He looks upon my misery,
And He will surely comfort me.

Isaiah 65.24

God hears, though listen none beside;
Then wherefore do I fear?
As if my cry could fail to reach
My God's attentive ear;
"Amen" with my petition blends,
And swift deliverance He sends.

Isaiah 42.16

God leads! Then O my soul, thy path
In patient hope pursue!
The world lays snares around my feet,
But Christ will guard me through:
And though mysteriously He guide,
My hand in His, I cannot slide.

Luke 11.13

God gives! Then why, my soul, so poor?
And thy provision scant?
When God the Giver is so rich,
Why dost thou pine in want?
Though in a desert land I be,
My Shepherd can provide for me.

1 Thessalonians 5.24

God lives! Behold Him everywhere.
God hears! Then call for aid.
God sees, and numbers every tear!
God leads! Be not afraid.
God lives and loves; and grace He'll give,
That thou eternally with Him mayst live!

Anna Shipton
(from the German)

The Friendly Companion



“For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
(Romans 10.12,13)

April 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

What is meant by reconciliation? It is a very great word! Not because it has many letters, but because it is a great work; a work that exceeds all the power, wisdom and skill of men. We read in the Book of Proverbs: *"A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle."* It does not say an enemy is harder to be won, but a brother. What a sad evidence of our fallen state! Satanic hatred rises up in place of natural love.

This was manifested in the very first brothers that we read of in the Bible. Cain, being offended, could not be reconciled to his brother Abel; thus, he rose up and killed him. Esau was offended with Jacob and vowed to kill him one day. There was confrontation between Esau's children and Jacob's children all of their days. There was no reconciliation.

Joseph's brethren were so offended with him because of his dreams that they sold him to strangers to be rid of him. Through God's mercy, they were reconciled in days of famine, when they bowed before Joseph as the governor of Egypt, and Joseph provided for them and their families. How beautiful was the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers!

What about you and me? We have offended God by our sin and rebellion against Him. What is more, our hearts are full of enmity toward God. We cannot, and will not, reconcile ourselves to God. Putting away sinful things, good as that is, does not reconcile us to Him. Attendance in the house of God does not reconcile us. Prayers and Bible reading can never reconcile us to Him. How then can we ever be reconciled to God? It seems impossible for sinners such as we are, but what is impossible with men is possible with God.

Dear children and young friends, this is what the gospel of Jesus Christ reveals to us. Our enmity against God is the result of sin. God's enmity and anger toward the sins of His people is a righteous and just anger. What a wonderful way God has devised to reconcile sinners to Himself! He made Christ to be *"a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people"* (Hebrews

2.17). This was prophesied by Daniel regarding the Messiah (Jesus Christ), that He would be sent *“to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness”* (Daniel 9.24).

When Jesus hung on the cross at Calvary, He hung there in the place of His people and paid the price for their sins. Thus, when His Father poured out His wrath upon Him, the Lord Jesus drank of that bitter cup until all the wrath against them was finished. Then, His people were viewed without sin in His sight. Thus, God was reconciled to them in love and mercy.

Very simply, we are told that *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation”* (2 Corinthians 5.19). The word of reconciliation is the gospel!

Reconciliation is a twofold work. First, God is reconciled to His people; second, they must be reconciled to Him. This God does when He gives them a new heart and new desires. *“And you, that were sometime ... enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death”* (Colossians 1.21). In reconciliation there is harmony, union, and communion.

This monthly message is not so plain and simple as most have been, but we feel burdened for each of you that at this time of the year, when we remember the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, you may be helped to understand the great truth of RECONCILIATION. Please read the hymn on the last page.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Our front cover picture shows a monarch butterfly emerging from its chrysalis. Perhaps you have learned about the life cycle of a butterfly in school, or even been able to watch it yourself.

Butterflies go through a process called metamorphosis. A butterfly hatches as a caterpillar, but then forms a chrysalis, hanging upside down for about two weeks. The chrysalis is like

an outer case that hides and protects the caterpillar as it develops and changes. After two weeks, the butterfly emerges from the chrysalis looking completely different. Instead of a caterpillar with many legs, it is now a butterfly with beautiful wings!

The butterfly's metamorphosis can teach us about what the Lord will do for His people at the resurrection, when those who have died will come back to life. When someone dies, his body is buried in a grave and hidden from our sight, just like the caterpillar forms a chrysalis and is hidden inside. But that person's body will not be in the grave forever. That person will rise again, like the caterpillar emerging from the chrysalis.

When a butterfly emerges from its chrysalis, it is amazing to see the complete change that has taken place. We would never guess by looking at a crawling caterpillar that it would one day have such pretty wings. It will be just like that with the Lord's people. When they rise from the dead, they will no longer have a natural body that can die, but a spiritual body that can never die. In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes to the believers, *"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

It is wonderful to see a beautiful butterfly emerging from a chrysalis, but it will be far more wonderful for the Lord's people when they rise again from their graves. They will finally have a body like that of the Lord Jesus. In Philippians 3, Paul writes to believers about how the Lord *"shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."*

Those who have not believed in the Lord Jesus will also be raised from the dead, but it will not be a joyful and beautiful change for them; they will only rise in order to be sentenced to eternal death. Pray that the Lord will give you a new heart and teach you to believe in Him. Then you will one day be given a glorious new body, to live with Him for ever in heaven.

Contributed

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**GEHAZI BECOMES A LEPER**

After he was healed, Naaman returned to Elisha and said, *"Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel."* Now he would worship only the Lord. Naaman wanted to give gifts to Elisha to show his thanks, but he refused them. Naaman was sent home in peace.

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, did not understand why he refused the gifts. He ran after the chariot of Naaman and asked for a piece of silver and two changes of garments. He told Naaman they were for two young men who had just come to Elisha, but Gehazi was telling a lie. He took the silver and garments for himself and hid them in his house.

The Lord showed Elisha what Gehazi had done. Elisha told Gehazi that it was not *"a time to receive money, and to receive garments,"* for God had healed Naaman freely. Because of what Gehazi had done, the leprosy of Naaman came upon him.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Naaman want to give to Elisha? (1 word)
2. Who ran after the chariot of Naaman?
3. What came upon him?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Leprosy.
2. In Jordan.
3. A little child.

Contributed

*“The leprosy
therefore of
Naaman shall
cleave unto
thee”*

2 Kings 5.27

BIBLE LESSONS**LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA**

One of the great truths the Lord teaches His people is that He is always the same. He changes not; what He has been, He always will be. John found it to be so. Many years before, John along with James and Peter, saw Jesus transfigured in His glory, which caused them to fall upon the ground with great fear until Jesus came and touched them. Many changes had taken place in the world and in the church since that time. The greatest change was that the Lord had returned to glory.

Now when John saw Jesus in His glory, he fell down at His feet as dead. Once again, the Lord Jesus laid His right hand upon him, just as He had in the mountain of transfiguration. Although He had returned to glory, Jesus was just the same as when He was on the earth. He understood the weakness and fear of His servant John. He would strengthen him for the work He had called him to do: *"Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter"* (Revelation 1.19).

Besides the seven golden candlesticks, John saw seven stars in the right hand of the Lord. Jesus told John that the seven candlesticks were seven churches, and the seven stars represented the angels (ministers) of the seven churches. The Lord had a special message for each of these churches, which were located within a hundred-mile radius in the province of Asia.

The first church mentioned was Ephesus. Perhaps you remember reading in the Book of Acts how Paul came to Ephesus and that he wrote one of his epistles to the Ephesians.

We are not told in the Scriptures that the other six churches named were ever visited by Paul or any of the other apostles. Yet, there were believers that had formed a church in Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

The Lord had a different message for each of these churches. The churches at Ephesus, Pergamos and Thyatira were praised for things which pleased the Lord, but also rebuked for things which grieved Him.

The churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia received no rebukes, but rather words to encourage and strengthen them because of the persecutions they would have to endure. To the church in Smyrna, the Lord's message was indeed most comforting. He told them that He knew all the tribulation, the reproach, and poverty under which they were suffering. *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; ... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life ... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."* To the church in Philadelphia, the Lord said that He would make their enemies to know that He loved them. He exhorted them to *"hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, ... and I will write upon him the name of My God."*

The last two churches, Sardis and Laodicea, received a sharp reproof from the Lord for the carnal (worldly) state that prevailed among them. To the church at Sardis, the Lord said that if they failed to watch and strengthen what little godliness remained among them, He would come as a thief against them. To the church at Laodicea, He said *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot."* He warned them that if they continued in their lukewarm state, He would spew them out of His mouth as something most distasteful.

QUESTIONS:

1. What did Jesus lay upon John when he fell at His feet? (3 words)
2. What did the seven golden candlesticks represent? (2 words)
3. To which church did the Lord say, "Be thou faithful unto death?" What would He then give them? (4 words)
4. To which church did the Lord exhort: "Hold that fast which thou hast"? Why must they do so? (6 words)
5. What would the Lord do to the lukewarm church? (6 words)
Which church was it?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Patmos.
2. Every eye.
3. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ... the first and the last."
4. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."
5. He fell at His feet as dead.

THE TWO PLANKS

A preacher wishing to explain to his congregation what a dangerous delusion those persons are in who seek salvation partly from their own works and partly from the righteousness of Christ, said to them: "Suppose it is needful for you to cross a river, over which two planks are thrown. One is perfectly new, and the other is completely rotten. How will you go? If you walk upon the rotten one, you are sure to fall into the river. If you put one foot on the rotten plank and the other on the new plank, it will be the same; you will certainly fall through and perish. So, there is only one method left. Put both your feet on the new plank. Brethren, the rotten plank is your own unclean self-righteousness. He who trusts in it must perish without remedy. The new plank is the eternal saving righteousness of Christ."

*F.S. Webster
Cheering Words, 1959*

SOMEONE MUST PAY

In the days before there were open spaces for children to play, they often used the streets as their playground. This was before motorised vehicles became common and made it unsafe in many city areas to use the streets for recreation.

In one town, there was a group of boys playing football in the street. One boy was a particularly good shot, and with all the strength he had, he kicked the ball way up into the sky, but oh dear! As it descended, it crashed through a neighbour's window. All the boys who had kicked the ball ran away, except one. Having an honest conscience, he felt it was best to own up and face the consequences. But first he consulted his father and told him of the catastrophe.

His father said that he must go and apologise to the neighbour. He said, "If it would help, I will come with you." So, with many fears, the lad approached the door of his neighbour, with his father beside him, and gingerly knocked on the door.

Before long, the neighbour appeared at the door. He was obviously upset about his broken window!

"I have come to say that I am sorry for breaking your window," said the trembling boy.

"Well," said the neighbour, "I forgive you, but someone will have to pay for the broken window." Now the boy had nowhere near enough pocket money to pay for such a cost.

At that point, his father stepped in and said: "I will pay for it." The neighbour accepted this kind offer, and the lad went away, relieved more than he could say at the outcome of this misadventure.

How would the lad show he was truly sorry for the broken window? By not kicking the ball in the street so near to the neighbour's house again. He would not think that his father would just pay up if it happened again and so did not need to take care. His father would probably take a different way altogether of dealing with his son if that were the case!

We have a picture here, very simply, of the gospel. Sinners have broken God's law into a thousand or more pieces. They

cannot mend it or pay the price of its broken precepts themselves. But the Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price of sin for those who are made truly to repent of their sins. And yes, sadly, sometimes those sins are repeated, and those sinners need divine discipline to show the wickedness of rebellion. Yet the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is such that the word "whosoever" includes all sinners who are truly sorry. *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3.16)

As one good man put it:

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had made a crimson stain,
He washed it white as snow.

G.D. Buss

THE LITTLE BLACK LAMB

On the morning of November 13th, 1878, I stood under the walls of Jerusalem. I left my tent early that I might get my first full view of the sun rising over the hills. With slow, measured steps, there came out of the Damascus gate a man of lowly rank, clad in a loose, striped garment of coarse material; most likely made partly of goat's hair. He had a turban on his head and a staff in his hand. Now and again, he spoke a few words, and close upon his heels came a little flock. In perfect silence, the sheep followed in the same track as their shepherd, which turned off from the broad, dusty, Damascus road and led up a steep bank of ruins towards the slopes of Olivet, beyond the historic brook Kedron.

The sight was already full of meaning to me, but I had not yet seen all of it. The shepherd and his flock went on, and I took the same road and drew near to the little group as it crept along in search of pasture. A feeble bleat fell on my ear. It came from some creature close at hand, but the cry was so weak that it did not seem to come from the flock. But, in fact, it had; lying in the

bosom of the shepherd, quite hidden, except for its little head, and wrapped in the folds of his outer garment, was a lamb – a little black lamb. This added touch was too much for my heart. With tears in my eyes, I went up to the man and gently took the soft black face in my hand, as it peered out into the morning light. The simple Arab kindly smiled at my interest in his tiny, helpless charge. Too weak to walk, too young to follow in the footsteps of the flock, it had been readily lifted up by the Eastern shepherd, and put in that place of safety, rest and comfort.

The scene faded from my view, but not indeed from my mind. Deep, most deep, was the impression made on my spirit. There, on my first visit to the sacred site of the Great Shepherd's victory by the blood of the everlasting covenant, He had marked out by this incident, those truths which were a living and forcible illustration of His blessed gospel. Pictured forth to the eye and then to the heart, was the care of the heavenly Shepherd for His sheep and especially for His lambs; even the weakest, most sinful, black-hearted ones. It was as though the 10th of John, the 40th of Isaiah, the 34th of Ezekiel, and the 78th Psalm lay open before me.

Adapted from "The Shepherd of Jerusalem" by James Ormiston

THE TRUMPET SHALL SOUND

During the American Civil War, a regiment of soldiers was compelled to sleep in the open field one wintry night. In the early morning, the chaplain arose and saw a strange sight. During the night, several inches of snow had fallen, completely covering the tired, slumbering soldiers, and thus causing the field to be filled with many small mounds, like newly-made graves. The bugler sounded reveille, and almost instantly, a soldier came forth from each mound. It seemed to the chaplain like an illustration of what Paul tells us: *"The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed"* (1 Corinthians 15:52).

Cyclopedia of Bible Illustrations

THE CZAR AND THE SOLDIER

Many years ago, there was a young man in Russia who went off to serve in the army. He was a wild and reckless youth. His father had been hoping the army would reform him, but instead, the young man continued his habits of drinking, gambling, and borrowing money.

The time came when the young man had borrowed all the money he could. A certain sum of money had to be paid the next day, and he did not see how it could be done without selling his commission. If he did that, he would be compelled to leave the army and go home to his father in disgrace. The laws of Russia regarding debt were very strict, and if he could not pay, he knew he would have to go to prison.

That night, as he sat in his barracks, heartbroken at the prospect before him, he thought he would take a paper and count up his debts, and see how he stood. He put down one debt after another, until they made a long column. The total completely disheartened him, and he wrote at the bottom of the paper, "Who is to pay this?" Tired and sad, he laid his head down on his desk and went to sleep.

That night, Czar Nicholas, according to his custom, was walking through the barracks while the soldiers slept, and he happened to come to the spot where the young soldier was sleeping. He saw on the desk the column of debts, and when he came to the bottom saw the question, "Who is to pay this?" The czar quietly took his pen and wrote underneath the question, "Nicholas."

When the young man awoke, he picked up the paper and found written on the bottom the signature of the Czar of all Russia. What did it mean? Could it really have been the czar? It was too good to be true. He could not believe it. But very soon, the money arrived, straight from the emperor himself. The debt was paid.

What a great list of debt is written against every person in the world - sins of thought, word and deed! Those debts to God can never be repaid by any man; but God has exalted His Son Jesus

“to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance ... and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5.31).

Adapted from Moody’s Anecdotes and Illustrations

THE ONLY REMEDY

It is well known that Richard Cecil was very skilful in using illustrations of the truths of the gospel. On one occasion, he was in the company of several younger ministers, and he related the following incident from his own life.

When he was a young man, Mr. Cecil had suffered from a disorder of unknown cause. He went to various medical doctors for advice, but they had failed to cure him. At length, Mrs. Cecil was told of a physician who was very skilled in treating cases of this kind, and she urged her husband to go to him. On entering the physician’s room, the doctor said, “Welcome, Mr. Cecil; I know you well as a preacher, and after giving you the advice you seek, I must beg the honour of a few minutes’ conversation.”

The consultation was made, and the physician said, “There is only one remedy in such a case as yours. Happily, it is very simple. Try it, and you will find relief.”

After the physician told him the remedy, the preacher rose to leave, but the physician asked him to stay a little longer so they might converse together, which they did for half an hour.

On returning home, Mr. Cecil thanked his wife for sending him to such an agreeable man. “What charming conversation! What depth of thought! What beauty of language!”

“I am glad of that; but what did he prescribe for you?” she asked.

After a pause, Mr. Cecil replied, “I have entirely forgotten the remedy. His charm of manner and conversation put everything else out of my mind.”

“Now, dear young brethren,” he said to the ministers before him, “It may be very pleasant when your hearers go away saying, ‘What eloquence! What thought! What agreeable delivery!’ But take care that they do not go away and forget THE ONLY

REMEDY: Jesus and His precious blood! Jesus and His atonement! Jesus and His great salvation!"

And, dear reader, just one word with you. When you are listening to the gospel, think less of the manner than of the matter, less of the minister than the Master! And never forget that there is One only Physician, One only Saviour of sinners, One only remedy for a case like yours – the Lord Jesus Christ and His great salvation!

The Gospel Echo 1913

CHARLIE COULSON, THE DRUMMER BOY

(Concluded from page 65)

While on business in the western part of the United States, Dr. Rossvally wrote to his wife daily for fifty-four days, but he received no reply. The letters were destroyed without being opened, as soon as they arrived. Dr. Rossvally suspected that would happen, but he continued to pray that God would incline her to read at least one of his letters.

Throughout this time, his daughter was in a state of great turmoil; she dearly loved her father, but she also felt a sense of duty to her mother. On the fifty-third night, she dreamed that her father had died, and fear came over her. She made up her mind that the next letter in her father's handwriting must not be destroyed. She watched for the mail to be delivered the next day, and she quickly took her father's letter up to her room, locked the door, and read it over and over again. When she went downstairs, her mother saw that she had been crying and asked the reason why. She told her mother about the dream and that she had read the letter that came from her father in the morning mail. She begged her mother to read the letter.

That afternoon, Mrs. Rossvally locked herself in her room and read the letter from her husband over and over again. Later, she went down on her knees and prayed to Jesus for the first time in her life. Like her husband, she came to the end of all human effort, worldly wisdom and vain tradition; she was enabled to "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the*

world” (John 1.29). She, too, received peace and pardon in her soul. She sent a telegram to her husband, asking him to come home as soon as possible. She told him that the Lord Jesus Christ was also her Messiah and Saviour.

When Dr. Rossvally arrived home, his wife ran to meet him, her face beaming with joy. However, her parents across the street saw them embrace and cursed both of them. It is not an easy thing for a Jew to become a Christian. He or she must be willing to forsake all earthly relationships for the kingdom of God’s sake. Now the words of the psalmist seemed full of meaning to both of them, *“When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up”* (Psalm 27.10).

Not long after, there was a marked change in their daughter, and she also became a Christian. However, their son refused to see them or speak to them. His grandparents promised that they would leave all of their property to him if he would never again acknowledge his parents as father and mother.

A year and nine months after her conversion, Mrs. Rossvally died. She longed to see her son once more, but he refused to come. On the day of her death, she asked for members of the congregation to come and be with her. At her request, they sang “Jesus, Lover of my soul.” When they came to the last verse, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want,” she said in a feeble but clear voice, “It is all I want; it is all I have. Come, Lord Jesus, take me home,” and she fell asleep. From her infancy, she had been taught to hate the name of Jesus, but by grace she had learned to value that name above every name.

About eighteen months after his conversion, Dr. Rossvally attended a prayer meeting in the city of Brooklyn in New York. An elderly lady rose and said, “Dear friends, this may be the last time it is my privilege to testify for Christ. My doctor told me that my right lung is nearly gone, and my left lung is very much affected, so I have only a short time left ... My son, Charlie, was a soldier, and he was wounded in the battle of Gettysburg. He was cared for by a Jewish doctor, who needed to amputate his arm and his leg. Charlie died five days after the operation. The

chaplain of the regiment wrote me a letter and sent my boy's Bible. In that letter, I was informed that Charlie, in his dying hour, sent for the Jewish doctor and told him that while he was amputating his arm and leg, he had prayed to the Lord Jesus Christ to save his soul."

When he heard that lady's words, Dr. Rossvally left his seat, crossed the room, and took her hand, saying, "May God bless you, my dear sister; your boy's prayer has been answered. I am the Jewish doctor for whom your son prayed, and his Saviour is now my Saviour." It was an affecting sight of Jew and Gentile being made "one in Christ Jesus," and of His wondrous power in putting it into the heart of a lowly drummer-boy to manifest the spirit of his Master in praying for the enemies of the cross.

Dr. Rossvally resigned his commission to the United States Army and began preaching the gospel among his Jewish brethren. He was bitterly opposed and persecuted, but he persevered and had the comfort of seeing many Jews brought to know their true Messiah. With great joy and thankfulness, he wrote of the conversion of his own son in 1887. He died in October 1892 to be with the Lord whose name he loved and whose gospel he proved to be the power of God unto salvation.

*Adapted from Charlie Coulson: The Drummer Boy
by M.L. Rossvally (1828-1892)*

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

"For the joy of the LORD is your strength"

The next fruit of the Spirit we desire to consider is the fruit of joy. It is a great blessing to know the true meaning of joy, and even more so, to bear this fruit of joy.

While they are here on this earth, the Lord's people live differently to everyone else. They are given a desire to follow their Master, the Lord Jesus, who said, "*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me*" (Matthew 16.24).

The Lord Jesus taught that the pathway to heaven will not be an easy one. The Lord's people suffer a lot while they are pilgrims and strangers pursuing the narrow way that leads unto everlasting life. Their sorrows are many. Sin will be a continual source of sorrow to them, as they still have a sinful nature. Satan will cause them a great amount of sorrow, both as the tempter and also as the accuser of the brethren. The world will cause them a lot of sorrow; false, professing Christians will also cause them much sorrow. They will have sorrows by the Lord's dealings with them; this may be by chastening, humbling, reproving, convicting, stripping and emptying. Unanswered prayers, the hiding of the Lord's face, and trying things in their pathway are also causes of sorrow. Yet, in spite of all they are called to endure, they will still be favoured with times of joy. The Lord Jesus once said to His disciples, "*And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*" (John 16.22). That was a wonderful promise from Him who knew so much sorrow on this earth: "*He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*" (Isaiah 53.3). He can sympathise with His people in all of their sorrows. We read of Jesus: "*Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God*" (Hebrews 12.2).

The fruit of joy can only be given by God. It is a fruit that every seeking soul longs to know; to have true joy in believing. "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost*" (Romans 15.13). This might be seen with the church in the Song of Solomon. In the opening three verses of chapter three, we read of how the church was seeking her beloved Friend, but she could not find Him. All true seekers will be found praying for mercy through the Lord Jesus Christ. They seek an interest in His finished work, a saving knowledge of Him who gives eternal life to His sheep. Oh, how they long to find Him! For a long time, they have felt the sorrow of knowing themselves as sinners, worthy of eternal damnation in hell. By

the Spirit's gracious teaching, they long to know the Lord Jesus as their soul's salvation. Many times, they may have felt, "*I sought Him, but I found Him not*" (Song of Solomon 3.2). Yet the Lord has an appointed time to reveal Himself as their Saviour. Their hearts are filled with joy when they can truly say, "*My Beloved is mine and I am His*" (Song of Solomon 2.16).

The Lord's people also know times of joy when the Lord Jesus helps them in various ways. If the Lord has taught them to pray, they will look for answers to those prayers. They may have felt like Elijah's servant, "*There is nothing*" (1 Kings 18.43). This causes them sorrow and searching of heart, as they wonder if the Lord will ever hear and answer their poor prayers. They may be brought almost to despair, "*but God, who is rich in mercy*" (Ephesians 2.4) finally appears for them, and their hearts are filled with joy.

There may have been times, in a natural way, when you have lost something that is important; although you searched very carefully, you could not find it. Then you prayed that the Lord would guide you to the lost item. What joy was felt when it was found! Perhaps you felt even greater joy to think that the Lord had answered your prayers.

The Lord Jesus told a parable of the shepherd who lost one of his sheep, and of the woman who lost one of her coins. Both of them sought that which was lost very diligently until they found it. There was much sorrow while they were seeking what was lost; but when it was found, there was great joy, for we read: "*Rejoice with me; for I have found that which was lost*" (Luke 15.6). The Lord Jesus spoke of how there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repents.

The Lord Jesus then told the parable of the prodigal son. There are several things we would notice in this parable. The younger son never had true joy in that far-off country while he wasted his substance until everything was gone. He caused great sorrow to his father when he went away, but the father watched for his son's return. Day after day, he must have looked into the distance, hoping to see him. As time passed, he would have felt

much sorrow of heart. However, the day finally came when the son returned, and the father ran to meet him while he was still a great way off. Joy must have filled his heart as he said, *"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry"* (Luke 15.22-24).

The Lord encourages His people to pray, with the sweet assurance that He will answer them; then they will have joy. *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that going forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him"* (Psalm 126.5,6). Many times, they have sorrow of heart, like Hannah, who felt that her prayers would never be answered. She walked a sorrowful pathway, while her adversary, Peninnah, boasted of what she possessed. In her great sorrow, Hannah poured out her soul before the Lord. When Eli understood that Hannah was a praying soul, he told her, *"Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad"* (1 Samuel 1.17, 18). Hannah was comforted, knowing that the Lord God had heard her cries, and she believed He would give her the son she so desired. What joy must have filled her heart when she first held her little baby Samuel in her arms! *"For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of Him"* (1 Samuel 1.27).

"For the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8.10). All the fruits of the Spirit are given by God. We see in His Word how true joy is always accompanied with praise and worship. God leads His people through sorrows to teach them many things. In the end, they are brought low at His feet, rejoicing and worshipping Him.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about REBELLION. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 74 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

A rebel is one who fights against authority. Children may rebel against their parents by deliberate disobedience; terrorists rebel against the government of their country. In Scripture, rebellion is most often mentioned in speaking of man's defiance of God's authority.

1. Who said, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15.23), and to whom was he speaking?
2. Psalm 107.10 speaks of those who "sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." Why were they in this condition?
3. Under the law for the children of Israel, what was the punishment for a stubborn, rebellious son? (Deuteronomy 21.18-21)
4. Where do the rebellious dwell? (Psalm 68.6)
5. Who, in a wrong spirit, said, "Hear now, ye rebels..." and to whom was he speaking? (Numbers 20.10)
6. Of whom did God speak, later in the same chapter, saying, "Ye rebelled against My word"?
7. Who, in defiance of the words which God had commanded Jeremiah to write, cut the roll on which they were written, and threw the pieces in the fire? (Jeremiah 36)
8. When God sent the prophet Ezekiel, how did He describe the children of Israel to whom Ezekiel was sent? (Ezekiel 2)
9. What belongs to God, even "though we have rebelled against Him"? (Daniel 9)
10. Who was killed when the earth opened and swallowed them up, because they had rebelled against Moses and Aaron, as well as against God's Word?

ANSWERS TO MARCH QUESTIONS

1. Eli.
2. God had said that both Hophni and Phineas would die in one day.

3. David wanted to fall into the Lord's hand because His mercies are very great.
4. David could choose either three years' famine; or three months to be destroyed before his foes, or three days' pestilence in the land.
5. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."
6. Satan was permitted to smite Job with sore boils. Job's answer to his wife was, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2.7,10)
7. Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, had died after offering "strange fire" before the Lord. (Leviticus 10.1-2)
8. They refused to bow down to a golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up. (Daniel 3.12)
9. God commanded Abraham to offer up his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. (Genesis 22.2)
10. "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matthew 26.39)

THE SINFUL HEART REVEALED

"Lord, ... Thou canst make me clean." Matthew 8.2

O the pangs by Christians felt,
 When their eyes are open;
 When they see the gulfs of guilt
 They must wade and grope in;
 When the hell appears within,
 Causing bitter anguish,
 And the loathsome stench of sin
 Makes the spirit languish.

Now the heart disclosed, betrays
 All its hid disorders,
 Enmity to God's right ways,
 Blasphemies and murders;
 Malice, envy, lust, and pride,
 Thoughts obscene and filthy;
 Sores corrupt and putrefied,
 No part sound or healthy.

All things to promote our fall
Show a mighty fitness;
Satan will accuse withal,
And the conscience witness;
Foes within, and foes without,
Wrath, and law, and terrors,
Rash, presumption, timid doubt,
Coldness, deadness, errors.

Brethren, in a state so sad,
When temptations seize us,
When our hearts we feel thus bad,
Let us look to Jesus.
He that hung upon the cross,
For His people bleeding,
Now in heaven sits, for us
Always interceding.

Vengeance, when the Saviour died,
Quitted the believer;
Justice cried, "I'm satisfied,
Now, henceforth, for ever."
"It is finished," said the Lord,
In His dying minute;
Holy Ghost, repeat the word,
Full salvation's in it.

Leprous soul, press through the crowd
In thy foul condition;
Struggle hard, and call aloud
On the great Physician.
Wait till thy disease He cleanse,
Begging, trusting, cleaving;
When, and where, and by what means,
To His wisdom leaving.

Joseph Hart, Gadsby's Hymn 306

The Friendly Companion



Olive trees in a garden near Jerusalem

“That Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which Thou hast said, My name shall be there: that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall make toward this place.”

(1 Kings 8.29)

May 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

There are, no doubt, certain places you love to visit. If you have grandparents, you probably love to visit their house. They make you feel so welcome, and there are many enjoyable things for you to do. They may also have special things for you to eat. Likewise, when your parents visit uncles, aunts, or other friends who have children of your age, you love to play with them.

In the Psalms, we are told of a house that David loved to visit. Do you know whose house it was? He had been in King Saul's house, but he did not really love to be there. He had also been in the house of the king of the Philistines, but he never enjoyed being there. The house that he loved to visit was the house of the Lord: *"Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth"* (Psalm 26.8).

I wonder if some of our young readers have ever felt the same. Have you found yourself longing for the services of God's house? Have you ever felt sad because you were unable to go to the house of God? When David was prevented from going, he recalled with great sorrow how he had once gone *"with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday"* (Psalm 42.4).

In Psalm 84, David wrote, *"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!"* That is a word we hardly ever use today, and it was only used once in the Bible. What does it mean? Instead of the word "amiable" we might use the word "lovely" or "pleasant." "How lovely are Thy tabernacles." To David they were very dear and beloved. The time he spent in the tabernacle of God was delightful and pleasing to him; the Word of God was read, and the praises of God were sung.

David could not go into the Holy of Holies, where the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat above it was placed, but the thought of God's presence, as represented by the ark, stirred up David's affections with a strong desire to come into God's presence. While it is true that God is present in all places, it is the glory of His presence in Jesus that makes His gathering with His people so amiable.

When God appeared to Jacob in a dream at Bethel, Jacob was afraid and said, *"How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God"* (Genesis 28.17). These words of Jacob seem to be a contrast to the words of David. Jacob's heart was pricked with a sense of sin because he had deceived his father; thus the presence of God, at first, was a fearful thing.

How amiable the tabernacle of God must have seemed when David heard the Levites singing the praises of God and blowing their trumpets. How lovely was the sight of the high priest in his beautiful robes and of the priests offering the sacrifices.

In our day also, it is amiable for those who are favoured to worship God in Spirit. When the gospel is heard by faith, and Christ crucified is the substance, how dear (amiable) it becomes to their souls. The very atmosphere of the house of God becomes pleasant.

We remember once being told of a boxer who fought in the ring. When a son was born to him, he said that he wanted to bring the boy to the boxing arena as soon as he could walk so that he could soak up the atmosphere; that would be a worldly atmosphere. We desire that each of our young friends may really experience the spiritual atmosphere of the Lord's house, and that it may be made amiable to you.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

The front cover picture shows a lovely garden with olive trees near the city of Jerusalem. Gardens have such an appealing nature, whether they are private gardens that people have around their houses, or public gardens where you can spend a whole day walking among beautiful flowers, bushes and trees.

The garden of Eden must have been an inexpressible sight to Adam and Eve, for every aspect of it was perfect. It must have been a bitter loss when they were driven out of that lovely garden home.

The garden pictured on the front cover must be very similar in appearance to the garden of Gethsemane. Apart from the garden of Eden, the garden of Gethsemane is the most well-

known garden in the Bible. It was a place that the Lord loved to visit, even though it was the place where His bitter sufferings and grief began, leading up to His crucifixion upon the cross,

The garden of Gethsemane was located on the east side of Jerusalem, and it was no more than a twenty-minute walk from the city. It was just across the brook Kidron on the foot of Mount Olivet.

John tells us in his gospel that Jesus often went to the garden with His disciples. No doubt, there were many reasons why He loved to go there. The olive trees provided shade from the hot sun, and they also gave a pleasant aroma. It was a place where Jesus expounded more fully to His disciples the truths that He taught the people through the day. Here He could find rest and quiet from the busy scenes of the day and from the oppression of His enemies.

“KEPT” and THE SEQUEL

Mr. E.A. Brooker, of Tunbridge Wells, and Mr. E. Hadley, of Lakenheath, once passed each other on the escalators at Birmingham station. One was going up, the other down.

There were only a few seconds to speak in passing.

“How are you?” one called to the other.

“KEPT!” was the answer.

Then they were gone.

On hearing Mr. Brooker call above the noise of the crowd that one word “KEPT,” it so laid on the mind of Mr. Hadley, who himself was journeying that evening to preach in the Birmingham area, that he felt led to take it for his text that night – just the one word “Kept.”

It must have been about twenty years later that Mr. Hadley received a letter from a friend, asking him if he remembered preaching many years previously from one word “Kept.” It had been made a great blessing and help to this friend.

“Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11.1).

Friendly Companion 1986

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE BORROWED AXE**

The sons of the prophets told Elisha that the place where they lived was too small. They wanted to go to the Jordan River and cut down beams to make a larger home. They asked Elisha to go with them, and he did.

As one man was chopping wood, the head of his axe fell off into the water. He cried out in alarm because the axe was borrowed. Elisha asked where the head of the axe had fallen, and the man showed him the place. The axe head was made of iron. It was very heavy and quickly sank to the bottom of the river. What could Elisha do to help?

Elisha cut down a stick and cast it into the river at the place where the axe had fallen. Suddenly, the heavy iron began to swim (float) upward. What a miracle it was! The man put out his hand and took it out of the water. Now he could return the borrowed axe.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was borrowed?
2. What did Elisha cut down and cast into the river?
3. What did the heavy iron begin to do?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Gifts.
2. Gehazi.
3. Leprosy.

Contributed

*“And he cut
down a
stick, and
cast it in
thither ...”*

2 Kings 6.5

BIBLE LESSONS**A VISION INTO HEAVEN**

After John had written the letters to the seven churches, he was given a vision of the throne of God. First, he saw a door opened in heaven. John must have been filled with awe to look right into heaven. Then he heard a voice that sounded like a trumpet, saying, *"Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter"* (Revelation 4.1). Immediately John was in the spirit and saw a throne set in heaven. A rainbow circled the throne, and the One who sat upon it was exceeding bright and glorious.

Around the throne were twenty-four seats, and twenty-four men, the elders of the church, sat upon them. They were clothed in white garments and had crowns of gold on their heads. Out of the throne came lightnings and thunder. (You may remember that there were also thunder and lightnings when God came down upon Mount Sinai to give His law to Israel.) Before the throne was a sea of glass like crystal, and beside the throne were four living creatures, each having six wings. They never rest day or night, calling out, *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."*

When the twenty-four elders heard the living creatures give glory, honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, they fell down before Him and worshipped. They cast their crowns before the throne and joined in praise to Almighty God. With united voice, they cried out, *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created."*

The sight of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders falling down in worship, caused John's attention to turn to Him that sat upon the throne. The eyes of John were fixed on a book (scroll) that He held in His right hand. The book was written on both sides, rolled up, and sealed shut with seven seals.

As John continued looking at the book and wondering what was written in it, he heard a strong angel cry out with a loud

voice, *“Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?”*

Would someone answer the call of the angel? Could anyone take the book and open it? There was no man or angel in heaven or in earth who was able to open the book and look therein. John began to weep much because no one was found worthy to open and read the book. Finally, one of the twenty-four elders said to John, *“Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”*

When John looked again, he saw a LAMB standing in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the twenty-four elders; a Lamb that had been slain. It was the *“Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1.29), the Lord Jesus Christ, with the wounds of the cross upon Him. Although He was in the midst of the throne all the while, John had not perceived who He was. His *“eyes were holden”* for a time, like the two on the road to Emmaus. This is often the experience of the Lord’s people in their lives; the Lord Jesus is with them, though they do not see Him.

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. They each had a harp and golden vials full of sweet-smelling odours or incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sang a new song, saying, *“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”*

Soon John heard the voice of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: *“WORTHY IS THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN TO RECEIVE POWER, AND RICHES, AND WISDOM, AND STRENGTH, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND BLESSING.”*

You can read about this in Revelation chapters 4 and 5.

QUESTIONS:

1. John was given a vision of what?
2. What did John see opened in heaven?

3. What did John do when no one was worthy to open the book?
4. What did one of the elders tell John to behold? (11 words)
5. What did John see in the midst of the throne?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. His right hand.
 2. Seven churches.
 3. Smyrna. A crown of life.
 4. Philadelphia. That no man take thy crown.
 5. Spew them out of His mouth. Laodicea.
-

“NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD”

With the outbreak of the coronavirus, we have been reminded that the Lord can allow sickness as a judgment on the nations. There have been many pandemics throughout the world's history, often of the plague, a severe illness that killed millions. However, the Lord can use these terrible events to show His own goodness and power in upholding and preserving His people.

One man who was brought through many hardships was Martin Rinkart, a German clergyman born in 1586. He had just taken a new position in his hometown of Eilenburg, Germany, when the Thirty Years' War broke out, one of the most terrible conflicts in human history. Throughout the war, he stood by his flock and helped them under every kind of distress.

The troubles started with the quartering of soldiers in his house and frequent plunderings of his food and belongings, but those things seemed small after the plague of 1637 arrived. The town was overcrowded with fugitives from the surrounding country, and in one year 8,000 of them died of the plague. This

included almost the whole town government, a large number of children, and the clergymen of the neighbouring parish.

Rinkart had to do the work of three men, caring for and visiting the sick and dying. He buried more than 4,000 people in all, sometimes performing 40 or 50 funerals a day. Eventually, he even had to bury his own wife. However, he himself remained healthy through it all.

The plague was followed by a famine so extreme that thirty or forty people might be found fighting over a dead cat or crow in the streets. Rinkart, along with the burgomaster (mayor) and one other citizen, did what he could to organise assistance for the hungry. He gave away everything but the smallest rations for his own family.

After all this suffering, the Swedish army came to the town and demanded a very large sum of money as a tribute from the townspeople. Rinkart went to the Swedish general and pleaded for mercy. When he was refused, it is said that he turned to the citizens who followed him, saying, "Come, my children, we can find no hearing, no mercy with men; let us take refuge with God." He then fell to his knees and prayed with such earnestness that the Swedish general finally relented and lowered the amount of money he was demanding.

It was shortly after the end of the war that Rinkart wrote the famous hymn "Nun danket alle Gott," later translated by Catherine Winkworth into the English "Now thank we all our God." This popular hymn has often been sung in times of abundance and prosperity, but it was written after a time of great hardship. Its words of thanksgiving, trust and praise show the power of God to uphold, preserve, and bless His people no matter what the circumstances.

Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done,
In whom His world rejoices;

Who from our mothers' arms
Has blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns
With Them in highest heaven—
The one eternal God,
Whom earth and heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now,
And shall be evermore.

The same God still lives and has the power to “keep us in His grace,” “guide us when perplexed” and “free us from all ills.” May He keep, guide and preserve each of us during these difficult times.

Based on the account by Catherine Winkworth

REALITIES

Nothing but realities will ever stand the brunt of time and trouble. The plated goods wear; the mock lustre fades; the potsherd, covered with silver dross, betrays its base original. The gold may be beaten, bruised, worn down, melted, shivered into dust, and each little grain will still say, “I am gold, do what you will to me, and grind me down to powder.”

J.C. Philpot

LEPROSY

During the coronavirus pandemic, many people around the world have been asked to remain home and practise social distancing to slow the spread of the disease. Those who actually have the disease, or have been exposed to it, have needed to isolate or quarantine themselves to prevent the disease from spreading to others.

This situation may seem strange and unfamiliar to us. However, there have been many outbreaks of disease in the history of the world, and quarantining has been one way that the authorities have attempted to stop their progress. There is even a disease mentioned in the Bible that the laws of the Old Testament dealt with in a similar way – leprosy.

Leprosy is a terrible disease that causes skin sores and nerve damage. There are treatments for leprosy now, but in Bible times, the disease was incurable by man. If an Israelite had some sign of leprosy on his body, he would have to go to the priest. The Old Testament gave instructions for the priests on how to tell whether it was leprosy.

If the person was found to have leprosy, he or she had to live separately from other people and call out “Unclean!” to warn others passing by. The Bible says, *“And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be”* (Leviticus 13.45,46).

The separation of lepers was necessary to protect others, but imagine how terrible it must have been for the lepers! They were exiled from their homes and could only communicate with other lepers. Those of us who have had to remain at home for some time have had just a very small taste of what it is like to be separated from other people, and we have still been in the comfort of our own homes. The lepers had to be separated from their homes, families and friends for the remainder of their lives.

Was there any hope for the lepers? The Old Testament gives only one instance of a leper being cured, that of Naaman the Syrian. But when the Lord Jesus came, one of the ways that He showed the wonderful power and goodness of God was by healing leprosy. There are many examples in the New Testament of lepers who came to Jesus and were healed. Rather than being afraid of or disgusted by their sickness, He showed His compassion and power to heal them. Matthew chapter 8 tells of a leper who came to Jesus saying, *"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean."* What was the Lord Jesus' response? *"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."* He could have healed Him with just a word, but He showed His love and kindness by putting forth His hand to touch him.

What a wonderful blessing it was for the lepers who were cured by the Lord Jesus! Not only were they cured of their disease, but they could finally go back to their homes and families.

Leprosy, the coronavirus, and other sicknesses are illustrations of the power of sin. Sin is like a sickness in our souls. We are all born with it, and it causes all of the suffering and death that we see in the world around us. It is because of sin that we all have to die. We are unclean in our souls, and by nature we are separated from the Lord and His people.

Is there any hope for sinners? Yes, there is hope in the Lord Jesus. Although He healed leprosy when He was on earth, the real reason He came was to live, die and rise again so that there could be a cure for sin. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the Lord's people to show them their sins and draw them to the Lord Jesus by faith. He has promised that those who come to Him to be healed of their sins will never be turned away: *"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6.37).

May the Lord use these current events to teach us the power of sin, but also the power of the grace, mercy and love of the Lord Jesus.

Contributed

A MIRACLE OF GRACE

During the awful visitation in England of that contagious disease of cholera, which swept multitudes to the grave, a minister retired early to bed, hoping for a few hours of much-needed sleep. He was exhausted from bringing the support and comfort of the gospel to many sick and dying souls. He had spent some time in prayer, asking the Lord to bless the word he had spoken that day, and he committed his own soul and body into the keeping of Him who neither slumbers nor sleeps. He lay still for some time but could not sleep, for the scenes of the day continually appeared before him. He had finally fallen into a deep sleep, when the clock struck twelve. Suddenly, there was a knock at the door, and his servant woke him to say, "Sir, there is a man below who says he must speak with you."

The minister arose, dressed in haste, and came down the stairs. A man stood close to the door. The minister held a light to his face, which he seemed rather anxious to conceal. He had a frightening appearance, with a thick, dark moustache and long, unkempt beard. His eyes were sunken, and he had the appearance of one long associated with crime.

"What do you want of me?" asked the minister.

"I want you to come to a dying man who wishes to speak with you."

"What is his complaint?"

"Cholera."

The minister hesitated, and at length said, "I cannot go with you – you do not even tell your name, nor the place to which you would lead me; I would fear to trust my life in your hands."

"You need not fear," said the stranger. "What purpose would it serve to take your life? Come with me; take no money with you, and on my honour, you are safe."

The minister gave another glance at the man, and the word "honour," connected with his appearance, made him smile. "Sit down," he said, "I will go with you." He went again to his room, committed himself to the care of his heavenly Father, and prayed for His blessing on the intended visit to the dying man. He felt

so strengthened after his prayer that he seemed to lose all fear of accompanying the ferocious-looking guide.

He followed the man through many streets and lanes of the town; it seemed as if they had crossed through the entire town, so tedious did the way appear. At length, they came to a long, narrow street, with very run-down houses. It was a part of the town that was well-known for crime and poverty. The minister continued to follow his guide into a long, dirty entryway, which ended in a cul-de-sac or square; the guide stopped, took a knife out of his pocket, and began to scrape away some earth from the ground.

"I can go no farther with you," said the minister; but, considering he was already as much in the power of this man as he could possibly be, his courage revived. He watched with intense interest, and after some time, his companion opened a small trap-door, which disclosed a cavern of considerable depth, from which there was not a ray of light.

"Fear not, sir," said the man, as he let himself down by a rope fastened at the inside. At this moment the minister felt the horror of his situation. If he fled, he knew the man could quickly overtake him, and he would be unable to find his way back in the dark. Therefore, he determined to see the end of this strange adventure; committing himself again in silent prayer to the protection of the Almighty, he watched at the edge of the pit until he saw a light glimmer within it. As it approached nearer, he saw the man place a ladder firmly, which he ascended a few steps and entreated the minister to descend, assuring him again of his safety. He slowly descended into this pit of darkness. At the bottom, stretched upon the ground in various positions, he saw a number of men who looked as savage as beasts. They stared wildly upon him with haggard faces. The cavern was large. The candle which the man held was hardly able to light the place where they stood, and it left the other end in pitch darkness. The man led the minister to the farthest end, where, stretched in a corner upon straw, lay a man dying of cholera.

"Did you wish to see me?"

"I did," he replied in a clear and distinct voice.

"Why do you wish to see me?"

"Because," said the man, "some time ago, I wandered into your church and heard you read something that I want to hear again before I die. Oh! It has never left my mind; night and day, it has sounded in my ear. I thought I could hide from God, but the darkness hideth not from Him; He has found me out; He has laid His hand heavily upon me, and I shall soon appear before Him covered over with my crimes. And did I not hear you say, sir, that God would slay the wicked – that He would say, 'Depart from me, ye bloody men?' O God, I have sinned against Thee; Thou art just. There can be no hope for a wretch like me." Every nerve in his body seemed convulsed with agony. He fixed his eye on the minister, waiting anxiously to hear again that portion of Scripture which had first convicted him of his sin.

"Tell me some of the verse that will bring it to my memory," said the minister.

"Oh!" said the dying man, "It told me that God knew my downsitting and mine uprising; that He understood my thoughts; that He compassed my path and was acquainted with all my ways; that there was not a word in my tongue but God knew it altogether."

The minister then knew that it was the 139th Psalm that had carried conviction of sin into this poor sinner's heart. Praying that this might be the work of the Holy Spirit, he took out his Bible and read the Psalm.

"Oh! That is it, that is it," said the man in a low voice. "I thank God I have heard it again!"

The minister then said, "*The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1.7). *'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners'*" (1 Timothy 1.15.)

"To save sinners," he said; "but not such a sinner as I have been."

"Yes, for such as you. Hear what the Word of God says: *'Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though*

your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1.18).

“How, how?” asked the man eagerly; “What must I do to be saved?”

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved’ (Acts 16.31); your past sins will not condemn you. ‘[Christ] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him” (Hebrews 7.25).

The man stretched out his hands with upraised eyes, as if imploring mercy. “God be merciful to me a sinner,” he faintly uttered, and in that posture his soul departed.

The minister looked around him. “The light of the glorious gospel can shine even in this dungeon of darkness and horror,” he thought. The rest of the men had kept at a distance, but he was determined not to leave without a word of exhortation to them. Coming forward into the midst of them, he spoke of the awful state into which they had fallen, and he exhorted them to repent and seek for mercy of the Lord Jesus, who was able to grant them a full and free pardon for all their past offences.

“It is true,” said the man who led him there, “It was crime that brought us here; we are a gang of robbers. Our lives, sir, are in your hands; but we depend upon you, as a minister of the gospel, not to betray us. We could not now get employment, for no one would trust us.”

“Trust in the Lord,” said the minister, “hear His words: *‘Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth’ (Ephesians 4.28).* Farewell!”

The man then conducted the faithful servant of the Lord until he was past the dark, narrow street and could easily find his way. He returned home with feelings that cannot easily be described, but he blessed God for sending him to proclaim the gospel of salvation to that poor lost one.

The above narrative appeared in an old “Gospel Magazine” with a comment by the then Editor, that he had every reason to believe that it was an authentic account.

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT****“My peace I give unto you”**

The next fruit of the Spirit we desire to consider is the fruit of peace. Paul began nearly all of his epistles by desiring the believers might have peace from God. *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord”* (2 Timothy 1.1,2). The apostle had been clearly taught that all true peace can only come from God, as Jesus Himself said: *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16.33). The Lord’s people know the path of tribulation well, and they long to know that peace which is found in Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus, when living upon this earth, was a Man of peace. He was spoken of in the prophecy of Isaiah as *“the Prince of peace.”* In spite of all the threatenings and accusations against Him, He was always peaceful. He was a Man of peace even in His darkest hour in Gethsemane, when the mob of accusers came with the Roman soldiers to arrest Him. Peter was very quick to use his sword to attack a servant of the high priest, but the Lord Jesus rebuked him, saying, *“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all that use the sword shall perish with the sword”* (Matthew 26.52). The Lord Jesus set a gracious example as a peacemaker, and He left comfort for all His children in the things which He endured. His words were often rejected, and He was publicly set at naught and falsely accused by religious professors, but committed Himself to His Father and His will: *“Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not: but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously”* (1 Peter 2.23).

He came into this world to save His people from their sins – to make peace between them and a sin-hating God. Peace could only be made through the sacrifice of God’s dear Son. It was the

Father's will that Jesus should be the Peacemaker. God, in love to His people, sent His only Son into this cursed earth, made like unto His brethren, so that He was able to become a faithful and merciful High Priest. He is able to show compassion, having put away His people's sins through His own sin-atonement sacrifice. As God, He could not sin, but lived a holy, sinless life, and gave Himself a pure sacrifice upon the cross at Calvary. *"And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unprovable in His sight"* (Colossians 1.20-22).

When sinners are quickened into spiritual life, they are brought into soul trouble. In this, they know something of being convicted and brought guilty of their sins before a holy, sin-hating and sin-punishing God! They are as far from peace in their souls as the prodigal son was when he began to be in want, facing death and eternity. But the Lord, in His rich mercy, begins to teach them of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the ministry of reconciliation, where true peace is to be found.

Godly Simeon could have no peace until he had seen the Lord Jesus. How he longed for that time when the Saviour would be revealed to him. At last, the promised time came, when Joseph and Mary brought in the Child Jesus, and he said, *"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"* (Luke 2.29,30).

Many of the Lord's people long to know true peace in believing. It is their great concern that they should not be left to a false peace, only presuming that their religion is real. They suffer many doubts and fears, because they know they are sinners. They feel so troubled about their eternal state, and have no peace until they are given peace in believing. It is this true peace that they so desire and pray for: *"Be careful for nothing;*

but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4.6,7). The Lord causes His people to pray for it, and He has promised to bless them with true peace which comes from Him alone. The woman who came to Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee was truly broken and repented of her sins. She knew that real, true peace could only come from the Lord Jesus and His forgiving love and mercy. The Holy Spirit always leads broken, repenting sinners to the feet of Jesus, revealing the peace-speaking blood of the "Lamb of God" who alone can forgive sins.

There is a blessed peace when we are enabled to put our whole trust in God. *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee"* (Isaiah 26.3). Many of the Psalms written by David mention his enemies. Those enemies often caused him distress, and he was overcome by trouble. He found no peace until he was enabled to trust in the Lord alone. *"My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace. I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war"* (Psalm 120.6,7). There were many times when he was in danger, and troubles surrounded him on every side. Yet, when enabled fully to trust in God, he could say, *"I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for Thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety"* (Psalm 4.8). In times of trouble and perplexity, may we also be helped to put our whole trust in God and feel peace in leaving everything in His gracious hands. True peace always flows out of a submissive spirit. There are many examples of this in the Scriptures: first, in the life of Jesus, whose whole life was an example of the fruits of the Spirit; He was always submissive to His Father. Submission is the exact opposite of what we are by nature; we are rebellious to God's will. Hannah was unable to have peace until the Holy Spirit enabled her to pour out her soul unto God in prayer, and she truly believed that God's will was best for her. Daniel and his three friends were given grace to yield themselves into God's

almighty hands, knowing that peace could only be found in worshipping the one true God according to His will. The Apostle Paul was brought humbly to submit his whole life unto God after his eyes were opened to see that he had been fighting against the Lord Jesus in a false religious zeal. It was God's will for Paul to suffer much for Jesus' sake, for the good of His people, and for the glory of God. Oh, may we be helped to pray for God's grace in our hearts, that we may know the fruit of peace in yielding up ourselves unto God and to His will.

Our sinful nature is such that there are times when we are determined to have our own way, and we think that it will bring us peace. That is the lust of the flesh and not the fruit of the Spirit. The Lord speaks very clearly: *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the LORD"* (Isaiah 55.8). If we truly love and serve the Lord, then we will desire to know and do His will. There will be times when the Lord will prevent us from going our own way. At first, we may find this very hard and feel disappointed. We may even be left, like Jonah, to be angry with God. However, the Lord's gracious dealings are such that He will cause us to bow before His perfect will and commit all our ways unto Him. Often, in looking back, we can see the wisdom of God in preventing us from going our own way. There is a blessed peace when we are enabled truly to bow before the will of God, believing that God is in control and that He will undertake and supply all our needs for His great name's sake.

A.T. Pickett

THREE PILLOWS

When I visited my beloved friend, Benjamin Parsons, as he was dying, I asked him, "How are you today, sir?"

He said, "My head is resting very sweetly on three pillows – infinite power, infinite love and infinite wisdom."

Paxton Hood, Cheering Words 1973

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about HAIR. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 98 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did Jesus say about the hairs on our head, showing God's perfect knowledge of every detail of our lives? (Luke 12.7)
2. Who was clothed in camel's hair? (Mark 1.6)
3. Who anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair? (John 12.3)
4. Whose hairs grew like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws? (Daniel 4.33)
5. Of whom was it prophesied before he was born that "No razor shall come on his head"? (Judges 13.5, 24)
6. What happened when his hair was cut off? (Judges 16)
7. What difference between Jacob and Esau was taken advantage of in Jacob's deception of his father Isaac? (Genesis 27)
8. Whose long hair seemed to be the cause of his head being caught in an oak tree, which led to his untimely death? (2 Samuel 14;18)
9. What did the Apostle Paul say about long hair on a man and a woman? (1 Corinthians 11)
10. In the tests for leprosy in Leviticus 13, what did a white or yellow hair show, and what did a black hair indicate?

ANSWERS TO APRIL QUESTIONS

1. Samuel said these words to King Saul.
2. "Because they rebelled against the word of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High."
3. Stoning to death.
4. "In a dry land."
5. Moses (and Aaron), speaking to the congregation of the children of Israel.
6. Moses and Aaron. (Numbers 20.24)
7. The king (Jehoiakim). (Jeremiah 36.23)
8. "A rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me." (Ezekiel 2.3)
9. Mercies and forgiveness. (Daniel 9.9)
10. Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their company. (Numbers 16.23-35)

OUR GOD IS IN THE HEAVENS

"But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased" (Psalm 115.3).

Our God is in the heavens,
He hath done what He pleased;
Even when the enemy
Advantages has seized.

Our God is in the heavens;
He works His sovereign will;
Yes, when aggressors prosper,
And work oppression still.

Our God is in the heavens;
He rules the hearts of men,
Who hate Him, and defy Him,
And His great Name blaspheme.

Our God is in the heavens;
His eyes o'er-run the world,
And when His will's accomplished,
Down shall the foe be hurled.

Our God is in the heavens;
His patience is supreme,
His purposes, unhurried,
Flow onward as a stream.

Our God is in the heavens;
O fearful, trembling one,
Seek strength to bear the conflict
Until the battle's won.

For though we seem to suffer,
And sufferings are not eased,
Our God is in the heavens;
He hath done what He pleased.

H.M.H

Adapted from Sower 1941

The Friendly Companion



“Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and
shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a
little moment, until the indignation be overpast.”

Isaiah 26.20

June 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Do you know what a majority is? A minority? In many nations of the world, the leaders are chosen by an election, and the candidate with the majority of votes wins. In some cases, the individual winners in an election join together to form a majority party. The party with fewer members elected becomes the minority party. Those in the majority wield the power.

We always like to be in the majority; to have the most people on our side. We often associate large numbers with security or safety. However, many of you may find that you are often in the minority because of your beliefs. In the present day, many of you will find yourself in a small minority among your classmates and friends regarding the keeping of the Lord's day. Even if you attend a religious school, you will find yourself almost alone when it comes to the commandment to *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work"* (Exodus 20.8,9). In the Book of Isaiah, the Lord declared to His people, *"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath [from keeping it], from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, ... and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord"* (Isaiah 58.13).

Perhaps, even in your own chapel, you feel to be in the minority because you dress differently from other young people, or you cannot go to the places that others do, or use words that others do. You may even have to endure mocking and scorn because of it. This is hard to bear, as we like to be accepted by our peers.

Joseph was in the minority in Jacob's house. His brothers hated him for his dreams, but they hated him just as much for his godliness; they despised him for it! *"But the Lord was with Joseph"* (Genesis 39.2, 21).

Elijah was in the minority in a different way when he stood against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, the whole house

of Ahab, and the greater part of Israel. Although the Lord had reserved to Himself a remnant of seven thousand in Israel, yet Elijah stood alone on Mount Carmel. He said, *"I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord"* (1 Kings 18.22). Perhaps those that were near were afraid to stand with him. Those at a distance probably knew nothing about the challenge of Elijah: *"The God that answereth by fire, let him be God"* (verse 24). God heard Elijah's prayer and sent fire down to consume his sacrifice.

Hananiah (Shadrach), Mishael (Meshach), and Azariah (Abednego) appeared to be in a lonely minority when Nebuchadnezzar commanded that at the sound of music, all the people were to fall down and worship the great image he had made. They truly stood out when all those around them fell down. When brought before the king, they still boldly refused to worship the golden image. In the fiery furnace they were delivered from the wrath of the king, the flames, their enemies, and their bonds.

Those who seek the Lord will always be in the minority. The Lord Jesus said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad in 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"* (Matthew 7.13,14).

Young friends, if you really seek the Lord, you will find yourself in a little company. Satan will tempt you to think that you are wrong; you must be mistaken, for surely all those who walk with the world cannot be wrong. Remember that when Noah and his family entered the ark, they were in the minority. The majority of people went on living in their sinful ways in spite of Noah's preaching and warnings. When Noah and his family came out of the ark, they were the majority.

May the Lord help you to stand alone and never to be ashamed of His Word, His ways, His commandments, and especially of Himself.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

There have been many occasions when the Lord used violent storms, gales, hurricanes, or blizzards to work His divine purposes. The Bible has many accounts of the Lord using the wind. *"He bringeth the wind out of His treasures"* (Psalm 135.7). It was a wind that brought the quails into the camp of the Israelites. It was a wind that stopped Jonah from fleeing to Tarshish.

Our front cover shows a fog covering the land. The Lord has used fog for judgment and for blessing. Aeroplanes have crashed into mountains because of a fog. Many ships have been wrecked when fog covered the shoals and rocks as they approached land. Fog has been used by the Lord in marvellous ways to bring great deliverance to individuals, groups of people, and even armies.

We have read accounts of many during World War II who were able to escape from the German army under the protection of a dense fog. Some escaped from their homes by going onto the roof, which was joined to the roof of their neighbour, and thus went from one end of the street to the other. Others escaped out of their city by crossing streams and rivers and open fields. Their only defence was a dense fog created by God.

Many years ago, when persecution was so great that the Lord's people could not meet for worship in public, they were forced to go out into the countryside. Even there, they were often hunted down by the king's soldiers. There are wonderful accounts of how the Lord preserved them by bringing in a thick fog to hide them. They could hear the soldiers coming near and passing by their gathering, yet they were never discovered.

There is the well-known account of the evacuation of over 300,000 Allied troops from Dunkirk, France, across the English Channel to the safety of England. Night and day, vessels of every kind went back and forth to ferry the troops across. The Germans were unable to see what was taking place because of a dense fog over the channel. It was called the "miracle of Dunkirk."

A similar miracle took place in 1776 during the American War for Independence. The British troops had backed General Washington and his army up against the East River, just below Brooklyn Heights, New York, while British warships patrolled the river. The hope for independence appeared to be hours away from ending with the capture of General Washington and his army. Then, a heavy rain forced the English general to pause his attack. As darkness set in, General Washington began slipping his troops across the river in rowing boats, canoes and rafts. It was a very slow process, and as the day began to dawn, Washington and part of his army were still waiting to cross. The British troops would soon be able to see what was happening and would capture all that remained. Suddenly, a very dense fog covered both armies; the British themselves termed it “the hand of God.” By the time the fog lifted, the last of Washington’s troops had arrived safely on the other side.

THE CHILD DYKE

A TRUE STORY OF GOD’S CARE

The Netherlands is a beautiful country, full of green fields and pastures, but there are few hills. The ground is so flat and low that two or three times the sea has rushed in over parts of it, and destroyed whole towns.

During a terrible storm, called the Saint Elizabeth Flood of 1421, more than twenty thousand people were drowned as a massive surge of water engulfed Zeeland and southern Holland. Some areas that were flooded in the storm remain under water today. It is known as “The Maas,” and in one part of it, there is a little green island called “Kinderdijk,” or “Child-Dyke.” It got that name in the following way.

The flood rushed in over a little Friesland village without any warning. In one of the houses there lay a child asleep in an old-fashioned cradle, made of good solid wood that was tight and strong. When the waters came in with a roar, the old cat was probably frightened and jumped into the cradle with the baby.

The house was torn from its foundation and broken in pieces; yet the baby slept through all the turmoil as quietly as ever. The little cradle floated out on the angry sea in the dark night, bearing safely its precious burden.

When morning came, there was nothing to be seen of the village and green meadows. There was water everywhere. Hundreds of people were out in their boats, trying to save as many lives as possible. On this little bit of an island, they found the old cradle with the baby asleep in it. The old cat was curled up at her feet, all safe and sound!

Where the little voyagers came from, and to whom they belonged, no one could tell; but loving friends were raised up to care for both. In memory of them, the little island was called "Kinderdijk," or "Child-Dyke," and it goes by that name to this day. This story is still told as a remarkable instance of God's providence.

His hand is our perpetual guard;
He guides us with His eye,
And yet how we forget the Lord
Who is for ever nigh.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1933

ADVERSITY BROUGHT PROSPERITY

B.C. Trumbull told the story of a poor man whose small mill and home were washed away by a flood. Everything he had in the world was gone. As he stood on the site, heartbroken and discouraged, he saw something shining in the riverbank which the waters had washed bare. It was gold.

The flood had taken away all that he owned, but it was also the means of making him rich. So it may be with many of us in a spiritual way. Adversity may be the means that God uses to bless the soul, so that we shall thank God for what we thought were calamities.

Adapted from Cyclopaedia of Bible Illustrations by P. Holdcraft

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**THE LORD PROTECTS ELISHA**

The king of Syria came in secret to war against Israel. Elisha warned the king of Israel and told him where the Syrian army was hiding. This happened three times. The king of Syria wanted to know who was telling his secrets to the king of Israel. One of his servants said that it was Elisha the prophet.

The king of Syria sent horses, chariots and a great army at night to surround the city where Elisha was. Early in the morning, Elisha's servant saw them, and he was afraid. Elisha said, "*Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*" Elisha asked the Lord to "*open his eyes,*" and the young man saw that "*the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.*" The Lord would protect His servant Elisha.

When the Syrians came to take Elisha, he asked the Lord to smite them with blindness. They could not tell where they were, and Elisha led them to the king of Israel.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was telling the secrets of the king of Syria?
2. What did Elisha ask the Lord to do to the young man?
3. Elisha asked the Lord to smite the Syrians with what?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. The axe.
2. A stick.
3. Swim.

Contributed

*“Lord, I pray
Thee, open
his eyes,
that he
may see.”*

2 Kings 6.17

BIBLE LESSONS**THE REVELATION GIVEN TO JOHN**

There are many things in the Book of Revelation that are hard to understand, but there are certain chapters which give us a glimpse of the glory and blessing of the saints in heaven. We have looked at John's vision of the throne of God and the Lamb, along with the four living creatures (beasts) and twenty-four elders around it.

John was favoured to see another vision of the throne of God, and before the throne stood a great multitude which no man could number. This multitude was made up of people from "*all nations, and kindreds ... and tongues,*" and they were clothed with white robes and had palm branches in their hands.

John heard this great multitude cry with a loud voice: "*Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.*" The angels of heaven could not join in the song, as they never needed salvation. They looked on and fell down on their faces and worshipped God.

As John looked upon those dressed in white robes, one of the elders asked if he knew who they were and where they came from. John could not tell who they were, even though at one time he had walked and conversed with some of them. They now appeared in resplendent (shining) beauty. John answered the elder, "*Sir, thou knowest.*"

The elder answered, "*These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple ... They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ... for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*" All their sorrows, griefs and temptations were forgotten.

The great tribulation out of which they came, was all the troubles, persecutions and trials that the church of God passes

through while here on earth. *"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"* (Acts 14.22).

While John was given a revelation of the throne of God and those that dwelt around it, he was also shown the judgments of God that would be poured out upon Satan and the devils, upon the nations of the world, and upon all those who did not believe on the Lord Jesus. In that day of God's wrath, many people will hide themselves, even hoping that mountains will fall upon them to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Some of these are powerful people, such as kings, rich men, captains of armies, and other mighty men; there are also free men and bondmen (those who are poor or serve others).

As the Book of Revelation draws to a conclusion, John saw the city of God, the new Jerusalem *"prepared as a bride adorned for her husband."* In that day, God will dwell with them and *"wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."*

Do you remember what brought pain, sickness, sorrow and death into the world? It was SIN! Nothing that defiles, works wickedness, or speaks lies shall enter the heavenly city. *"There shall be no more curse."*

Who can enter this holy city? *"They which are written in the Lamb's book of life."* They will serve the Lord, *"and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads."* Those who enter this city will do His commandments and will have right to the tree of life.

Do you remember how Genesis chapter three ended, when man first sinned in the Garden of Eden? God placed a flaming sword to keep the way to the tree of life! Those who are favoured to enter this city of God will have access to the tree of life; not only to the tree of life, but also to the water of life. John heard the invitation: *"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that beareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."*

Twice at the end of the Revelation, John heard the Lord say, *“Behold, I come quickly.”* What a help and comfort these words were to John and still are to all those who are waiting for Him! The last words John heard from the Lord were, *“Surely I come quickly.”* Well might John cry out *“Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”*

You can read about this in Revelation chapters 6, 7, 21 and 22.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the great multitude clothed with?
 2. What did they come out of?
 3. Who can enter the holy city? (10 words)
 4. What do they have access to? (4 words)
 5. What were the last words John heard? (4 words)
- Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.*

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. The throne of God.
2. A door.
3. Weep.
4. “The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David.”
5. A Lamb.

THE CLEANER

The following is an adapted version of an experience recently recorded on audio by Lee McClelland, an Irish pastor.

I want to give a short testimony from the time that I had in hospital with coronavirus. First, I want to quote a portion of Scripture: *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13.5).

I remember one or two nights when I did not know whether I was going to live or die. I was experiencing incredible respiratory distress, and I thought I was moments away from

being put on a ventilator. On one night in particular, I had really been crying out to the Lord to help me, asking Him somehow to encourage my heart, strengthen me, and bring me through.

God knows all of our needs, and He is able to help under the most impossible circumstances. The next morning, a cleaner came into the isolation ward. No one else was able to get in – no pastor, no friend, no family members – but when no one else could get in, this cleaner suddenly came into my room. People had come to clean the room before, but this particular cleaner was like a ray of sunshine. He began to chat with me, asking how I was, and he told me that he had been a missionary in Nigeria for fourteen years. He began to talk about the love of Jesus and the love of God. I sat there feeling amazed and encouraged as I listened to him telling how he felt Jesus had used his life as a missionary before he came back home to Northern Ireland.

When the man left that day, he said as he stood at the door, “Son, can I pray for you?” I replied, “Absolutely.” He began to pray at the door, since he was not allowed to be too close to me. He asked God to visit me, heal my body and touch my lungs. He stood at the doorway and pleaded with God Almighty to spare my life and continue to use me. That night, I started to improve. Could it have been in answer to the prayer of the cleaner?

I began to feel a strong desire for a packet of prawn cocktail crisps. It seemed like an impossible wish, since no one could visit me. I prayed, “Lord, is it possible that I could have a packet of prawn cocktail crisps and a can of Coca-Cola?” That night, as I was starting to feel better, I prayed the same prayer again.

The next morning, the same cleaner came to my room. He brought in a bag, and in that bag was a couple of oranges, a can of Coca-Cola, and a packet of prawn cocktail crisps. God knows our every need, great and small; He knows our every desire. As the cleaner passed the bag through the door, he just said, “It is a gift from the Lord.” I sat up and ate those crisps with thankfulness to the Lord who had heard my prayers, “*for with God all things are possible*” (Mark 10.27).

Contributed; used by permission

THE ONE TRUE BEST FRIEND

Do you have a mobile phone (or cell phone, as they are known in America) or a tablet? Do you use social media? Do you use abbreviations in your messages and emails to your friends?

Being in my mid-fifties, I well remember when car phones first became available – these were wired into the car and took most of the day to fit! Then true mobile phones came along. Mobile phones got smaller and smaller. Then the “smartphone” came along, and phones got bigger and bigger again so that they could be used for e-mails, the internet and social media.

The first message service was the text message, known as SMS, which stands for Short Message Service. The length of the message was limited to 160 characters (letters or spaces). This meant that abbreviations were very useful and common, and this has carried on and developed over time to the extent that now it is almost like another language.

I am not up to date with all the abbreviations used today, but I do know “BFF,” which, as you probably know, stands for “best friends forever.”

A recent sermon brought these thoughts to my mind. We may have very good friends at school, or at college, university, work, or chapel, even in our families, but none of them can be a true “best friend forever.” No matter how close you are, you may argue, fall out, or move away and lose contact; and even if you remain friends throughout your life, you will be separated by death. Is there anyone, then, who can be a true “best friend forever”?

Yes, there is one that can truly be called a “best friend forever” – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus came to this earth to seek and to save lost sinners, for we have all sinned against a holy God and we all need forgiveness. The Lord Jesus has promised to be the Friend of sinners. He came to earth to live a perfect life, to suffer and to be crucified and rise again to save His people, His friends, from the just punishment for their sins. All those who come to

know the Lord Jesus as their Lord and Saviour will have a true “best friend forever,” One who will never leave them or forsake them. *“There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother,”* says Solomon in Proverbs, referring to the Lord Jesus. The children’s hymn says:

There’s a Friend for little children
Above the bright blue sky,
A Friend who never changes,
Whose love will never die;
Our earthly friends may fail us,
And change with changing years,
This Friend is always worthy
Of that dear name He bears.

Another hymn says:

What a Friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear!

Earthly friends may try to comfort us when we are sad, help us when we are in trouble, and forgive us when we have done wrong; but there is only One who can bear our sins away, forgive all our sins, help us when in difficulty and give us true and lasting comfort and peace. The hymnwriter says:

When most we need His helping hand
This Friend is always near.

May we each come to know that One and only true “best friend forever” – the Lord Jesus Christ. For if, while in this life, we come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, then when our life on this earth is over, He will take us to be with Him in heaven for ever.

N.T. Shaw

APPROVAL

“For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death” (Proverbs 8.35, 36).

The story is told of a young pianist who was making his professional debut in a famous concert hall in one of the capitals of Europe. The fashionable audience was most responsive to his playing, and at the end of the concert they gave him a resounding, standing ovation and called for an encore. Backstage, the young man refused to return to the platform despite the pleas of the stage manager and the concert sponsors. “But they love you!” they expostulated. “They’re on their feet.” The young man replied, “I know they are, but there’s one man sitting in his seat. He isn’t standing.” “What’s one man in a concert hall full of people?” they replied. Quietly he responded, “He’s the master – my teacher!” The approval that really mattered to the young pianist was missing.

In the human heart there is a thirst for approval, a longing for belonging, a hunger for acceptance. Children seek to please their parents and are insecure if they sense disapproval. Teenagers move from seeking to please parents to seeking peer approval. They must be with the “in” crowd, dress as they dress, listen to what they listen to, and conform to their patterns of behaviour – all in order that they might have their peers’ approval.

People do not easily grow out of this longing for others’ approval. No one likes to be thought weird, to be socially outcast, to be ignored or discounted. The tragedy is that sometimes the applause of the crowd drowns out the approval of our Master, the Lord. Problems arise when what He says does not agree with the audience that we wish to impress. Teenagers vacillate between doing what is right and behaving in a way that is “cool.” Businessmen wrestle with doing what is right and doing “what it takes” to close a deal, knowing full well that the Lord does not approve of the methods used.

Wisdom says, "*Blessed is the man that beareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord*" (8.35). The favour, or approval, of the Lord is what matters. No matter how many peers stand and applaud or how many bosses issue good reports, if the Master is not pleased, all is in vain. The whole world can stand, but if the Lord stays seated, all is lost.

It comes down to this: Whom do we wish to please? Whose approval do we crave?

Adapted from One Year Devotions for Men

WHITEFIELD AT THE GLASS MAKER

George Whitefield once preached a sermon from Isaiah 24.15: "*Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires,*" and gave the following illustration: "When I was at Shields some years ago, I went into a glass maker's house. While watching very carefully, I saw several masses of burning glass in various forms. The workman took one piece of glass and put it into a furnace; then he put it into a second furnace, and then a third. I asked him why he put the glass into so many fires. He told me that the first fire was not hot enough, nor the second; therefore, he put it into a third fire, and that fire would make it transparent.

"This man put the glass into one furnace after another so it might be rendered perfect. Oh, may the Lord put me into one furnace after another so that my soul may be transparent, that I may see God as He is!

"If the greater heat had been applied at the beginning, it would have destroyed the article which was in the process of being made perfect. A moderate fire prepared it for one still hotter, and that again for one even more fierce. And it is the same way in the dispensations of divine providence."

Adapted from The Christian's Monthly Record 1888

*BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES***THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT****“For ye have need of patience”**

The next fruit of the Spirit recorded in Galatians chapter five is “longsuffering.” The word “longsuffering” has two other similar meanings, which are forbearance and patience. We need to keep in mind that these are fruits of the Spirit; they are not natural things, but spiritual, and the source is the Lord Jesus Christ alone. An unbeliever may have great natural patience, while a believer may feel to be naturally impatient. May the Lord help us to understand something of this fruit, but especially to be one who bears it to the glory of God.

When we read about the Lord’s people in both the Old and New Testaments, we notice that God lovingly interfered in their lives. That is, as we often hear it expressed, God had dealings with them. God told Noah to build an ark, wherein he and his family would be saved. God told Abram to leave his family home in Ur of the Chaldees and to go to an unknown land which would be given to his seed (children) for an inheritance. God put it into the heart of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. God called Saul of Tarsus by His almighty grace and told him that he would suffer great things for His sake. God worked in the lives of all these godly people, and so many more could be mentioned. They knew something of the Lord’s dealings with them, and they were taught by the Holy Spirit to have patience or to be longsuffering.

If we take Noah as an example, the amount of time and effort it took to build that tremendous structure on dry land is often overlooked. For a hundred years, he needed a huge amount of labour, wisdom and strength as he sought to obey God’s command. He was living in times when people were very wicked, and he must have suffered much opposition and scorn. How he must have needed that grace of longsuffering to endure all those things! At times, perhaps, he may have felt like giving up, as it all seemed too difficult to bear, and yet he struggled on.

Joseph is often set forth as a type of the Lord Jesus. During his life, he showed much forbearance and patience toward those who falsely accused and wronged him. God's dealings with Joseph may appear hard and severe. Potiphar's wife accused Joseph of doing something he had actually resisted doing, and he was cast into that awful prison and kept there for years. Even after he interpreted the dreams of the butler and baker, it was two full years before deliverance came. It is very important for us to remember what the Bible states about Joseph's time of suffering: *"And the Lord was with Joseph"* (Genesis 39.2). There may have been times when Joseph felt he could no longer endure the fiery trial, when he struggled with the false accusations of Potiphar's wife, and even more keenly with the wrongs of his own brethren against him. Joseph was only able to endure because the Lord was with him. Left to himself, he could not have endured. The Lord is always with His people, and He has graciously promised never to leave them. However, there are certain times when the Lord is with His people in a very special way. We also read of Joseph: *"He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that His word came: the word of the Lord tried him"* (Psalm 105.17-19). Not only was Joseph blessed with gracious endurance through all his sufferings, he was granted the grace of patience to wait the Lord's time for his dreams to come to pass against all impossibilities.

The perfect example, as always, is the Lord Jesus. Consider the forbearance of the Lord Jesus towards sinners (His brethren) in all the wrongs they commit against Him, and what He had to endure on their behalf for the salvation of their souls. How He patiently endured all the temptations of Satan, all the opposition and malice of men, and all the misgivings and hardness of heart of His own disciples! We read of Him: *"For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently,*

this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again: when He suffered, He threatened not: but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2.20-23).

There may be times in our lives when we suffer from hardships and opposition. Our hearts and minds become agitated, and we want to take matters into our own hands. God shows His people that by nature they are unable to endure what God lays upon them. Yet, He also teaches them to cry unto Him for this grace of longsuffering, and to look to Him alone, who is the only source of enduring grace.

The life of a true Christian is sometimes compared to a sea journey. By God’s grace alone, they “leave this world’s deceitful shore, and leave it to return no more,” and journey by faith towards the desired haven of heaven. We think of the time when the Lord Jesus constrained His disciples to get into the ship and go to the other side before Him. Then we read this: *“And when even was come, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and He alone on the land. And He saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them”* (Mark 6.47,48). Jesus did not come unto them until the fourth watch of the night, which is just before the sunrise. All that night, they were struggling against the wind. Likewise, many of the Lord’s people struggle against wind and tide. That is, so many things seem to be against them; so many things press them down, especially their sinful hearts. They must labour against many temptations. Yet, the dear Lord, by His almighty grace, enables them to endure unto the end.

Job was another God-fearing character in the Word of God who endured a time of suffering that caused him to bring forth this fruit of longsuffering. *“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and*

of tender mercy" (James 5.10,11). It may appear strange to us that God allowed Satan to cause so much grief and suffering to a man like Job, who was living a very godly life. Satan wanted Job to turn against God and thought that all these afflictions would make him do that, but the grace of God in the heart of Job sustained and preserved him. It enabled him to suffer those afflictions patiently, although he did struggle at times in those deep waters.

In Romans chapter five verse three, we read that "*tribulation worketh patience.*" Tribulation is a word that means great trouble and affliction. It is one of the ways by which the Lord causes His people to bear the fruit of long suffering. He causes them to pass through various tribulations. The natural mind would rather avoid or quickly escape from these tribulations in order to enjoy a life of ease and comfort. Yet Jesus said, "*Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*" (John 15.2). It is in these tribulations that much purging takes place. The Lord's people will prove that they are able to endure through help from the Lord Jesus, the true Vine. Tribulations will come and continue for a set time, so that the Lord may teach His people long suffering and humbly to submit themselves to the will of God.

When the Lord's people pass through heavy afflictions and prolonged trials, and when they feel they cannot carry on any longer because of the pain and distress, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, upholds them. He helps them with a word of His grace, such as: "*Be still, and know that I am God,*" or "*My grace is sufficient for thee,*" or "*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms,*" and they prove, "*But He giveth more grace.*" Whatever we may be called to pass through in the unknown way ahead, may the Lord grant us this gracious fruit of long suffering, that He may be glorified.

A.T. Pickett



OUTDONE BY A BOY

A boy named Michael worked as an errand boy for an office in Boston. He was rather small for his age. One day, some men in the office were teasing him about his small size. They told him that he would never amount to much or be able to do much business because he was too small.

Michael looked at them and said, "Small as I am, I can do something which none of you men can do." They were very curious to know what it was and urged him to tell them. Michael very simply and quietly replied, "I can keep from swearing!" The men admired his courage, and they said no more about his small size. *"And a little child shall lead them"* (Isaiah 11.6).

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1933

A rainbow round about the throne. Let God turn Himself, or look which way He pleaseth, yet still He doth view His church through this bow, putting Him in mind of mercy.

Sower 1885

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about GOD IN CONTROL. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 122 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. When the Children of Israel encamped by the Red Sea and saw Pharaoh's army behind them, it seemed there was no way of escape. What did God do to deliver them? (Exodus 14.21, 22)
2. When the Children of Israel left Elim and came into the wilderness, they murmured because they had no food. What did God do? (Exodus 16.1-4)
3. The disciples were in a boat on the lake of Galilee, when a sudden storm threatened to capsize the boat. What did Jesus (who is God) do? (Mark 4.36-40)

4. The Philistines drew near to battle against Israel just as Samuel was offering a burnt offering. What did God do? (1 Samuel 7.10)
5. The Apostle Peter was imprisoned by Herod, who was determined to kill him. It seemed that Herod would have his way, but what did God do? (Acts 12.6-10)
6. Three Israelites refused to bow down to an idol as commanded by the king, even though threatened with death. The king thought himself above any god. What did God do? (Daniel 3)
7. Sennacherib sent a huge army of Assyrian soldiers against king Hezekiah and Jerusalem, and mocked God. What did God do? (Isaiah 37)
8. Elijah was in hiding by the brook Cherith, as God commanded. What did God do to provide for his food day by day? (1 Kings 17)
9. 2 Chronicles 20 records how two great armies came against Jehoshaphat to battle. What did Jehoshaphat do? What did God do?
10. When Adam sinned, he was driven from the Garden of Eden and from God's presence; he died spiritually and was subject to death naturally, together with all his descendants. What did God do to make a way of escape for His people? (Galatians 4)

ANSWERS TO MAY QUESTIONS

1. "But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."
2. John the Baptist.
3. Mary (of Bethany).
4. Nebuchadnezzar.
5. Samson.
6. His strength departed from him, and the Lord did too. (Judges 16.18-20)
7. Esau was a hairy man, but Jacob was a smooth man. (Genesis 27.11)
8. Absalom. (2 Samuel 14.26; 18.9)
9. Long hair on a man is a shame to him; a woman's long hair is a glory to her. (1 Corinthians 11.14-15)
10. A white or yellow hair indicated the plague of leprosy; a black hair showed that there was no leprosy, or that it had been cured. (Leviticus 13.3, 10, 25, 30, 37)

MY HIDING PLACE

“I flee unto Thee to hide me” (Psalm 143.9)

Thou art, O Lord! my Hiding-place,
In danger or distress;
My weary spirit flies to Thee,
When thronging terrors press.
When sense of sin doth sorely grieve,
When guilt afresh abounds,
Where can the soul self-loathing flee,
But to Thy bleeding wounds?

From every point, within, around,
What hosts of troubles come!
All serve to chase my vagrant heart
To Thee, its blessed Home.
In creatures or in wretched self,
I cannot find a rest;
Each seeming pillow's filled with thorns,
Which drive me to Thy breast.

Dear Shepherd, Thy most helpless sheep
Within Thy bosom hide;
Set me a seal upon Thy heart,
And let me there abide.
The night is dark, there's danger near,
So till those shadows flee,
Be Thou my soul's sweet Hiding-place,
Still keep me HID IN THEE.

J.D.

Friendly Companion 1964

The Friendly Companion



“The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall
preserve thy soul.”
(Psalm 121.7)

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Perhaps you have heard the expression, “You are going about it in the wrong way.” If you are attempting to do something that is sinful in God’s sight, you are doing wrong, no matter how you go about it. The things you try to do, the way in which you do them, and even your motives, are all known to God.

We may endeavour to do something that is good and right in the sight of God, but it becomes sinful because of how we do it. We may desire to obtain something that is honouring to God, but attempt to get it in a wrong way.

Jacob desired the “great blessing” of his father, the blessing that was first given to Abraham and then to his father Isaac. What is more, God had appointed him to have it. Yet Jacob could not rest in God to bring it about, but he tried to obtain it through deceit and lies. He pretended to be his brother Esau, and put on his brother’s clothes and put the skins of a goat on the back of his hands and neck. Thus he smelled like his brother, and he felt hairy like Esau. What an awful deceit it was!

King David had a good desire when he wanted to bring the ark of God up to Jerusalem. David had such love and esteem for the ark of God. In Psalm 132, he wrote of how he had heard of the ark in his youth while caring for the sheep in Ephratah. He tells us that they found it in the fields of the wood.

As king, David longed for the ark to be brought near to him. The priests and Levites, along with the people of Israel, were all of one accord with David. On the day appointed, a great multitude of people gathered with joy and anticipation to see the ark of God being brought up to Jerusalem. They placed the ark on a new cart with two strong oxen pulling it. David and the people played on all kinds of musical instruments – harps, psalteries, timbrels, cymbals, and trumpets – and sang praises unto God. What an impression it must have made upon the children who witnessed it!

Suddenly, the oxen stumbled, and the cart shook. A man named Uzzah put forth his hand to hold the ark. However, God

was displeased and smote Uzzah, so that he died there before David and all Israel. What was wrong? It was not done in God's appointed way. God had given a command to Moses that whenever the ark was moved, the Levites were to carry it upon their shoulders. They tried to move the ark on a new cart, but that was the wrong way.

What a warning this should be to us regarding the worship of God! There is a right order that has been followed from generation to generation, taken from the example set forth in the Scriptures, with Bible reading, prayer, singing, and the proclamation of the gospel. In many places of worship, there is a departing from that order by adding or introducing new things.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Our front cover shows a picture of Mount St. Helens in the state of Washington in the United States. Forty years ago, this volcano erupted with a great blast. The whole northern side of the mountain slid away. It was the largest observed landslide on record. Within a few minutes, an area of about 230 square miles (600 sq. km) was devastated. The total energy output during the subsequent nine-hour eruption was equivalent to 440 million tons of TNT, or approximately 33,000 Hiroshima atomic bombs. That is about equal to one such atomic bomb exploding every second for nine hours! Several more eruptions followed over the next six years. The eruption of Mount St. Helens is often regarded as one of the most significant geological events of the twentieth century. Many valuable lessons are still being learned that challenge evolutionist assumptions about geology.

Lesson One: Many geologists claim that coal beds are formed by a very slow accumulation of organic material, requiring a thousand years to form each inch (2.5 cm) of coal. However, the lesson from nearby Spirit Lake, where a forest of trees was suddenly buried, is that coal beds do form rapidly by catastrophic destruction of forests.

Lesson Two: Most conventional geologists think that complex sedimentary layering can only occur slowly with changing seasons or annual fluctuations. From Mount St. Helens, it was learned that sedimentary layering does form very rapidly by catastrophic flow processes, such as those which occurred during the Genesis flood. Although slurries of volcanic ash behave a little differently from waterborne mud, the processes are essentially the same.

Lesson Three: Two major catastrophes combined to produce a mini Grand Canyon near Mount St. Helens. The long timescales that geologists assign to the erosion of deep canyons are erroneous. Deep canyons can and do form very rapidly. This includes the Grand Canyon of Arizona. What happened at Mount St. Helens demonstrates beyond debate that the sudden release of water cuts canyons rapidly, even carving through hard rock. Such rapid erosion processes operated on a much grander scale during Noah's flood itself and also during its aftermath.

Lesson Four: When the volcano initially erupted, the top 1300 feet (395 m) of its summit was blasted away, leaving an enormous crater. Five times in subsequent months, explosive eruptions destroyed each growing lava dome. Large samples of rock were collected from one of the last lava flows. In 1996, they were sent to a radioisotope laboratory to be dated using the potassium-argon method. The rock was ten years old, but the potassium-argon "clock" dated the rock at 350,000 years old, and minerals within the rock dated at up to 2.4 million years. These results showed that radioactive dating methods may be seriously unreliable. Numerous other historic lava samples from around the world have similarly yielded highly erroneous potassium-argon ages.

The eruption of Mount St. Helens provided a rare opportunity to study geological processes during a catastrophe. Within a few months, there were changes that most geologists believed would take many thousands or even millions of years. It provided a vivid illustration of the cataclysmic power of the

Genesis flood, which reshaped the surface of the entire earth in the span of but a single year and its aftermath.

Adapted from Answers in Genesis by Dr. Andrew A. Snelling

PROCLAMATION ON NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

The following is the proclamation for the National Day of Prayer by the U.S. President, held on May 7th, 2020.

On this National Day of Prayer, Americans reaffirm that prayer guides and strengthens our nation, and we express, with humility and gratitude, our “firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence.” As one nation under God, we share a legacy of faith that sustains and inspires us and a heritage of religious liberty. Today, we join together and lift up our hearts, remembering the words of 1 John 5.14 that tell us when “we ask any thing according to His will, He hears us.”

From our earliest days, our dependence upon God has brought us to seek His divine counsel and unfailing wisdom. Our leaders have often encouraged their fellow citizens to seek wisdom from God and have recognised God’s power to lead our nation ahead to brighter days. When the prospects for our independence seemed bleak, General George Washington proclaimed a national day of “fasting, humiliation and prayer, humbly to supplicate the mercy of Almighty God.” Following the devastating destruction of the Civil War, President Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address and invoked the power of prayer to “bind up the nation’s wounds.” And more than one hundred years later, President Reagan noted our long reliance on prayer throughout our history, writing that “through the storms of revolution, Civil War, and the great world wars, as well as during times of disillusionment and disarray, the nation has turned to God in prayer for deliverance.”

Today, as much as ever, our prayerful tradition continues as our nation combats the coronavirus. During the past weeks and months, our heads have bowed at places outside of our typical houses of worship, whispering in silent solitude for God to

renew our spirit and carry us through unforeseen and seemingly unbearable hardships. Even though we have been unable to gather together in fellowship with our church families, we are still connected through prayer and the calming reassurance that God will lead us through life's many valleys. In the midst of these trying and unprecedented times, we are reminded that just as those before us turned to God in their darkest hours, so must we seek His wisdom, strength and healing hand. We pray that He comforts those who have lost loved ones, heals those who are sick, strengthens those on the front lines, and reassures all Americans that through trust in Him, we can overcome all obstacles.

May we never forget that prayer guides and empowers our nation and that all things are possible with God. In times of prosperity, strife, peace and war, Americans lean on His infinite love, grace and understanding. Today, on this National Day of Prayer, let us come together and pray to the Almighty that through overcoming this coronavirus pandemic, we develop even greater faith in His divine providence.

Now, therefore, I, Donald J. Trump, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 7th, 2020, as a National Day of Prayer. I encourage all Americans to observe this day, reflecting on the blessings our nation has received and the importance of prayer, with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities in their houses of worship, communities, and places of work, school, and homes consistent with the White House's "Guidelines for Opening up America Again."

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty, and of the independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-fourth.

Donald J. Trump

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**A GREAT FAMINE**

There was a great famine in Samaria because the army of Syria had surrounded the city. The people were starving, and they cried out to the king of Israel for help.

Elisha said that the Lord would send plenty of food the very next day. A servant of the king said that it was impossible. Elisha told him, "*Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.*"

Outside the gate of Samaria were four men with leprosy. That evening, they went to the camp of Syria to look for food, but there was no one there. The Lord had caused the Syrians to hear a great noise. They all fled, leaving their tents and animals behind. The four lepers went back to Samaria to tell the good news. The king sent men to go and see, and they found that the Syrian army was gone.

The next day, food from the enemy was sold in the gate of Samaria. The hungry people rushed out to buy. The king's servant was trampled upon, and he died. He saw the food but never ate of it, just as Elisha told him.

QUESTIONS:

1. When did Elisha say the Lord would send food?
2. What had the Lord caused the Syrians to hear?
3. Who saw the food but never ate of it?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. Elisha.
2. Open his eyes.
3. Blindness.

Contributed

*“Behold, thou
shalt see it
with thine
eyes, but
shalt not
eat thereof.”*

2 Kings 7.2

*BIBLE LESSONS***THE FIRE ON THE BRAZEN ALTAR**

For nearly sixteen years, we have been writing these Bible lessons from the New Testament Scriptures. Prior to that, we spent eight years writing on the books of Genesis and Exodus, from the creation of the world to the setting up of the tabernacle, with its furniture and order of worship.

As we endeavour to take up where we left off, it is important to remember that the Old Testament is inspired by the Holy Ghost as much as the New Testament; it bears witness of the Lord Jesus. Both Testaments teach the doctrines of the fall of man, the election of God, the regeneration of the Holy Ghost, the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the preciousness of the blood of the covenant.

The tabernacle, along with its furniture (the brazen altar, laver, table of shewbread, candlestick, altar of incense and the ark of the covenant), all pictured something of the Lord Jesus to the Israelites. The Lord made known to Moses and Israel that He had chosen the tribe of Levi to perform the services of the tabernacle. The high priest would also be appointed from this tribe. The first high priest was Aaron, the older brother of Moses. His sons were appointed to assist him as priests, to help prepare and offer the sacrifices.

After the tabernacle had been set up, the first sacrifice was prepared to be offered on the brazen altar with wood underneath. The Lord sent fire from heaven, which burned up the offering. When the children of Israel saw the fire of God consume the offering, they shouted and fell on their faces before the Lord. How wonderful it was that God had accepted the sacrifice offered by their priests! Morning and evening, the priests would offer a sacrifice for sin. By these sacrifices, God revealed how much He hated sin. By requiring them to be repeated every day, God reminded them that the blood of bulls, goats, and lambs could not actually take away sin. They were a picture of a better sacrifice; the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who would offer Himself for the sins of His people.

After the fire on the brazen altar was started by God, the priests had to keep adding wood so that it never went out. *"Our God is a consuming fire."* Even when they journeyed, this fire was to continue burning. Burning coals were placed in a special pan and carried by the priests until the tabernacle was set up again, and the coals placed under the brazen altar.

Inside the tabernacle was another altar, called the altar of incense. Sweet perfumes were offered up to the Lord on this altar. The priests would carry burning coals from the brazen altar in a bowl and place them on the altar of incense with sweet spices. The fire that was used to make the sweet perfume on this altar must come from the fire that God had kindled on the brazen altar.

One day, a very sad event took place which filled the people of Israel with great fear. Aaron's two eldest sons, Nadab and Abihu, each took a censer and put fire in it, along with incense. The fire they took was called *"strange fire"* because it did not come from the fire the Lord had sent. They disobeyed God's commandment. Perhaps they thought that the fire they took was just as good as the fire that God sent from heaven.

Without warning, fire went out from the Lord and devoured them. Aaron and his other sons were not permitted to go out of the tabernacle to bury them, lest they should also die.

You can read about this in Leviticus chapters nine and ten.

QUESTIONS:

1. Which tribe was appointed to perform the services of the tabernacle?
2. Who was the first high priest?
3. Where did the fire come from that burned the sacrifice?
4. What were the names of Aaron's eldest sons?
5. What kind of fire did they take?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. White robes.
 2. Great tribulation.
 3. *"They which are written in the Lamb's book of life."*
 4. The tree of life.
 5. *"Surely I come quickly."*
-

EDITOR'S NOTE

We have included the "National Day of Prayer" address, for as far as we are aware, apart from the Prime Minister of Australia, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, and the President of the United States, there has been no public acknowledgement of God by the leaders of other nations. It was especially disappointing that so many churches in the U.S. were closed on this day when they could have remained open, admittedly at reduced capacity.

By Friday, May 22nd, the governors of some states in the U.S. had allowed certain businesses to open, which they called essential. However, in some states, churches were ordered to stay closed. This caused President Trump to announce that he was identifying houses of worship as "essential." He said, "The governors need to do the right thing and allow these very important essential places of faith to open right now – for this weekend ... In America, we need more prayer, not less." He added, "Some governors have deemed the liquor stores and abortion clinics as essential, but they have left out churches and other houses of worship. It's not right. So, I'm correcting this injustice and calling houses of worship essential."

United States Attorney General William Barr also warned that coronavirus restrictions by states and local government should be applied evenly. This was a reproof against those who singled out religious organisations by shutting them down, while allowing businesses more to their liking to remain open.

We do live in very solemn times: *"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"* (1 Peter 4.17)

PRAYERS BY NATIONAL LEADERS

There are a couple of national leaders who have offered public prayers during this time of crisis.

One was Prime Minister Andrew Holness of Jamaica, who said, "...There is always something symbolic when the leaders of the nation say to the people of the nation, 'Let us pray' ... We pray because we recognise that our own work, our own efforts will never be good enough. We pray because we recognise a Force that is stronger than us ..."

He then prayed, "I come acknowledging that we have sinned against You, we have sinned against our people, and we repent, and we ask for forgiveness, mercy, and cleansing in Jesus' name. Hear our prayer and forgive us of all sins in Jesus' name ... We hereby seek Your face and turn from our wicked ways, asking for Your mercies and forgiveness for our sins, and seek by faith and by choice to humble ourselves in Your sight, acknowledging our sins individually and collectively." Before closing his prayer, he quoted Daniel chapter 9 verses 4-6, 9-10, and 18-19.

Another was Prime Minister Scott Morrison of Australia, who prayed, "Heavenly Father, we commit our nation to You in this terrible time of great need and suffering of so many people. We do this also for the entire world ... Father, give us strength, here, in this country; give us wisdom, give us judgment, give us encouragement ... May You shine upon all of us at this time as we seek Your grace, as we seek Your strength, and as we seek Your favour. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen."

Note: We have included the text of the prayers as originally spoken, although we do prefer the use of the pronouns "Thee" and "Thou" to address the Lord.

A SCATTERED BIBLE

Many years ago, a patient in the American hospital in Turkey was given a copy of the Bible. He was very pleased and brought it home to his native Armenian village. One day, a priest saw him reading the Bible and snatched it away. He tore it in pieces and flung them into the street. There the pieces lay until a

grocer picked them up to use as wrapping paper in his store. He wrapped each small purchase in the leaves of the Bible. In this strange way, one Bible was scattered throughout the whole village.

Soon, customers began to ask the grocer if he had any more such leaves of paper. They had read the torn pages and wanted to know more of that Book from which they came. The grocer did not know anything about the Bible, and he could not help them find another one. However, the leaves of the Bible that had been used for wrapping paper were treasured by the poor of the village. They were read over and over again.

Finally, a colporteur (seller of Bibles), travelled through the Turkish provinces, and one day he came to this obscure village. He was amazed to see a hundred persons come hurrying to him for Bibles or parts of the Bible. No gospel had been preached at this place, and no Christian teacher had been at work. The scattered Bible from the hospital patient had proclaimed its own message of light and life. It proved the truth of God's own word in Isaiah 55 verse 11: *"So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."* This true story was told by the Bible colporteur.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1933

THE WORD OF THE LORD WAS PRECIOUS

Haralan Popov was a pastor in Bulgaria at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution. In July 1948, his home was ransacked in the middle of the night, and he was taken away for "a little questioning," leaving behind his wife and two young children. What had he done wrong? Nothing! He simply preached the gospel and refused to make political statements from the pulpit. The Minister of Religious Affairs wanted him and other ministers to declare loyalty to the Bulgarian Communist party and to praise communism. For this he was arrested, and the

“questioning” was followed by thirteen years of unspeakable torture, beatings and starvation in prison.

Pastor Popov was not the only one who suffered such things. The leaders of many denominations were sentenced to life in prison and confiscation of all their property by the State. Their families were left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Anyone who tried to assist the arrested pastors or their destitute families would be sent to a concentration camp.

Pastor Popov was moved from prison to prison; sometimes in solitary confinement and other times crammed into a small cell with many others. One of those prisons was on an “island of horror,” where extremely hard labour was required of the prisoners for eighteen hours a day with very little food or water. Guards on horseback chased them three or four miles from the barracks to the work fields each morning and back again in the evening, beating them with whips along the way. Of the six thousand prisoners in that place, only a few hundred survived. When a man is without God, there is no limit to his depravity or the depths to which he will sink. Those guards had no human compassion or kindness left.

Pastor Popov determined that his pulpit would be wherever he was. His place of ministry was in prison cells, exercise yards, or anywhere else that he could secretly speak with others. The prisoners were in dire need, both spiritually and physically. Material things often dull a sense of need for God, but in prison, the men were removed from wives, children, jobs and every earthly possession. They had time to think, and many prisoners genuinely realised their need of God. More than anything else, Popov longed for a Bible. The Word of God held the answer to the prisoners’ needs, but he did not have a Bible, and naturally speaking, there was no possibility of getting one. He prayed and left it in God’s hands. No prison bars could stop Him. The impossible was possible with God!

The torture and sufferings of the prisoners was like a pendulum; sometimes a little less, but then much worse again. At one time, he and one hundred men were dropped through a

trap door into a dark, damp pit in the ground, being fed a few ounces of bread daily and a little flavoured water, called soup. Months passed by. Then, one by one they were taken out and asked to become “informers” in exchange for release from the pit. What a temptation it was! When Pastor Popov was summoned, for a brief moment, he closed his eyes in silent prayer, and suddenly the Lord’s word came to him: *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 1.7). It became clear to him that to become an informer would be to lose his faith and hope in God, as well as the confidence of his fellow prisoners. He refused, and he was told that he was being returned to the pit to die.

At last, after nine months in that dark pit, a new prison director took charge, and the men were released to perform needed hard labour. Only God had kept Pastor Popov alive, while many others had perished. His life and destiny did not depend upon the prediction of another human, but on a higher will and power. God had opened the door of the pit for him.

Little by little, conditions in the prison changed for the better. One day, Pastor Popov noticed that the man next to him had something in his hands. It looked like a little book, and he was tearing out a page in which to roll a cigarette. To Popov’s great astonishment, he saw that the book was a New Testament! He had not seen a Scripture portion for five years, and he instinctively grabbed it. The man started to grab it back, but then he noticed the tears flowing down Popov’s cheeks and looked at him with surprise. Popov asked him where he got the book and was told that he found it in a garbage can.

Popov pleaded with his cell-mate for the book but was refused. He knew the other prisoner only wanted it for cigarette paper. He could not bear the thought of God’s Word, which he had not seen for so long, being used for such a purpose. At that time, they were allowed a little money for personal items from the prison canteen, and he offered the other prisoner all the

money he had for the New Testament. Seeing how much the book meant to Popov, the other prisoner simply gave it to him. Pastor Popov clasped it in his arms and wept. God's Word! *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart"* (Jeremiah 15.16).

For five years, he had starved physically, but he had starved even more spiritually; and that hunger was more painful than the physical. From the time of his conversion in 1926 until the day he was arrested, the Word of God had been his inseparable daily companion. Then, abruptly, he had been cut off from it. It was an indescribable loss to be without a Bible. Of course, he knew some verses and longer portions, too, but because of the torture and beatings, he had forgotten certain parts. Torture often has the effect of clouding the memory.

Pastor Popov knew that he would not be able to keep the New Testament for long. Eventually the prison guards would find and destroy it. As long as he remained on that island prison, he could hide it in the straw out in the fields. Each day he hid it in a different place, so they would not notice a pattern. He put a marker of some kind by it, so he could dig up the book later to read. He knew he had to keep it in the fields, because the cells were often searched. Occasionally he risked taking it back to the cell to read at night, praying there would be no surprise inspections. It gave him an opportunity to read to the other prisoners. He decided to memorise as much as possible, and he was able to learn forty-seven chapters.

Then Popov was moved to another prison. During a surprise inspection in the night, the cells were searched, and everything written or printed was taken, including the Testament. It was a great loss, but they could not remove the Scriptures that were hidden in his heart.

The prisoners were given almost daily propaganda lectures and forced to read newspapers, editorials and articles to promote communism and its goals. Popov was briefly given access to the Word of God in a most unexpected way. An imprisoned Roman Catholic priest told him there was an old

Bible in the prison library. That seemed unbelievable. A Bible in a Communist library! Evidently the prison officials had no idea it was there. At the first opportunity, Popov went to the library, found the Bible, and took it back to his cell. He kept it for several weeks, and his cell-mates began to read it. Then the prisoners in adjacent cells wanted to read it. The Bible was secretly passed from one cell to another. In freedom, many had refused to read God's Word. Now, they hungrily read its words. The Bible was circulated through countless hands for several weeks. Finally, news of the Bible got back to the prison director, who was very angry and took it away.

After thirteen long years, Pastor Haralan Popov was released from prison. His body was broken from the years of sufferings, but his faith in God was stronger than ever. Who can measure the fruits of his ministry in those dark prisons? The Scriptures had been scratched on countless cell walls, to bring hope and comfort to the prisoners who followed. He left behind in every prison, men who had been brought to know and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. They were given strength from God and help to endure the most terrible sufferings and prison conditions.

Adapted from Tortured for his Faith by Haralan Popov

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

“Thy gentleness hath made me great”

The next fruit of the Spirit spoken of by the Apostle Paul in Galatians is the fruit of gentleness. May the Lord grant us a right understanding of this fruit and how it is manifested in a child of God.

We need look no further than the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus as a clear evidence of the source of this fruit. There were many religious leaders and other people who opposed the teachings of the Lord Jesus and tried to portray Him as an imposter. At times, they would attempt to use the Scriptures against Him, suggesting that the Scriptures said one thing and the Lord Jesus said another.

On one occasion, they brought before Him a woman taken in the very act of adultery. *“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto Him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, they say unto Him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest Thou? This they said, tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground, as though He heard them not”* (John 8.3-6). There is no doubt that this woman was guilty of the crime they accused her of, and there is no doubt that Moses in the law stated that such should be stoned to death (Leviticus 20.10). The scribes and Pharisees were sure they had Scripture on their side, and they wanted Jesus to say something contrary to the Scriptures. However (and this is a lesson for all of us), Jesus appeared completely to ignore them! Many have wondered what Jesus wrote on the ground, but we are not told, so we must leave it. Yet the Lord Jesus was looking right into their hearts and saw their hypocrisy. He also knew their motives and intentions. These religious leaders were determined to trap the Lord Jesus, and they foolishly persisted with their questions, demanding an answer from Him.

“So when they continued asking Him, He lifted up Himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (verse 7). The Lord Jesus did not shout, get angry with them or even explain what the Scriptures meant. He very gently revealed the truth by His power; they were guilty of the same sin in their own hearts, and they were no better than the poor woman before them. So each of them turned away in shame.

The account does not end there. *“When Jesus had lifted up Himself, and saw none but the woman, He said unto her, woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more”* (verses 10,11). Jesus also saw what was in the heart of this woman, for He had drawn her to Himself. Consider God’s gracious way of overruling Satan’s intentions and setting forth His own great

love and mercy to a poor lost sinner. With what gentleness did the Lord Jesus deal with both His enemies and the guilty woman! As Almighty God and the Almighty Saviour, He has perfect knowledge and understanding of the power and dominion of sin; He also has power to save and redeem His dear children from the curse of sin.

When Judas Iscariot led the band of soldiers, priests and others to arrest the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter, in his own spirit, thought he would deal with them. He promptly used his sword against the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. How we need to be delivered from our own evil nature; from rushing forward in our own strength to deal with those who trouble or threaten us! *"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword"* (Matthew 26.52). Jesus saw in Peter's heart the effects of the fall; pride, self-righteousness, self-confidence and more. Yet how gently Jesus dealt with Peter and with His enemies! What an example of compassion, kindness and gentleness He displayed, as He healed the man's ear!

We know how gently Jesus dealt with Peter after he had denied Him. One look flowed into his heart and broke it. Jesus, as God, had much higher thoughts than Peter. He had, and still does have, a complete understanding of everything. When the Lord humbles His people and makes them realise this a little, their own spirit is subdued. As the power of His Spirit flows into their hearts, the effect of Christ's gentleness makes them submit to Almighty God. May we be kept quietly committing all to the Lord at the throne of grace.

The fruit of gentleness is found in every heart where the Holy Spirit begins a work of grace. There is a wonderful example of this in the case of the Gadarene. He was truly a wild man who could not be tamed, filled with a legion of evil spirits. He was so captivated by the devil that it seemed nothing could be done for him. His fellow creatures tried to bind him in chains, but Jesus saw that he was bound by Satan; he could only be healed by His almighty power. When Jesus cast out the legion of devils,

the mad Gadarene became a completely different character. *"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid"* (Luke 8.35). What a transformation! He would, no doubt, always remember what he once was, and be so thankful to the Lord Jesus for the great things He had done for him.

We would also consider the Apostle Paul. As Saul of Tarsus, he had such hatred against the disciples of the Lord Jesus that he would stop at nothing to destroy them. He would be very harsh in dealing with them, whether men or women. When the Lord Jesus met with him at Damascus, there was a great change. From that moment, he was a "new man." *"Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5.17). For the rest of his life, the fruit of gentleness manifested itself again and again. *"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you"* (2 Corinthians 10.1). *"... We might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children"* (1 Thessalonians 2.6,7). As the Lord Jesus had dealt so gently with Paul, this same grace manifested itself in the way Paul behaved towards others.

Another example is the Philippian jailer. The ministry of Paul was blessed of God at Philippi, and a number of people were converted. The enemies of the truth tried to put a stop to his preaching. They accused him of troubling the city by teaching customs that were not lawful. The magistrates commanded Paul and Silas to be beaten and cast into jail, and ordered the jailer to keep them securely, *"who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks"* (Acts 16.24). At midnight, there was a great earthquake, and all the doors of the prison opened. The jailer, awaking and seeing the prison doors wide open, feared that all the prisoners had escaped. He was about to take his own life,

when Paul cried out, “*Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.*” This had a greater effect upon the jailer than the earthquake itself, and he cried out, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” (verse 30). The apostle preached to him and his household the gospel of Jesus Christ, the way of salvation. The Lord blessed His own Word, touched their hearts, and wrought a great change in all of them. The jailer, who earlier had thrust them into the inner prison and bound their feet with cruel iron stocks, now gently, lovingly washed their wounds.

There are many other examples in Scripture where the fruit of gentleness can be seen in the Lord’s people. It is a lovely fruit to behold, and when it truly comes from the Lord’s gracious Spirit, it is to His honour and glory alone.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about DAVID’S EARLIER YEARS AS KING. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 146 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. David was first anointed king over only one tribe of Israel. Which one? (2 Samuel 2.4)
2. Who did Abner, as captain over Saul’s army, make king over the rest of Israel? (2 Samuel 2.8-10)
3. About how old was David when he was finally made king over all Israel? (2 Samuel 5.4-5)
4. Who did David especially show kindness to for Jonathan’s sake? (2 Samuel 9.1,6)
5. David wanted to build a house for God, but the prophet Nathan was sent with a message to him. Who did Nathan say would build the house? (1 Chronicles 17.11,12)
6. What reason did David later give why he was not permitted to build the temple? (1 Chronicles 22)
7. Twice the Philistines came to fight in Rephaim and David

enquired of the Lord each time. What lesson do you think there is for us in this? (2 Samuel 5)

8. When David wanted to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim, he did not enquire of the Lord. What did he do instead? (1 Chronicles 13)
9. Where did David go wrong as a result and how did God show His displeasure? (1 Chronicles 13; 15)
10. Solomon said, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth" (Proverbs 24.17). What instances can you find in the first four chapters of 2 Samuel where this was true of David?

ANSWERS TO JUNE QUESTIONS

1. God divided the sea in front of the Israelites by a strong east wind and they went through the sea on dry land to the other side.
2. God sent the Israelites manna, every day except the Sabbath.
3. "And He [Jesus] arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."
4. "The Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them."
5. God sent an angel to open the prison doors, to release Peter from his chains, and to lead him to safety.
6. God was with the Hebrew children in the fire so that it did not hurt them at all, and they came out untouched by it. (Daniel 3.22-25)
7. "The angel of the LORD went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (Isaiah 37.36)
8. God sent ravens to bring Elijah bread and flesh every morning and evening. (1 Kings 17.6)
9. Jehoshaphat prayed to God, and God set the two armies which came against him one against another, so that they destroyed each other. (2 Chronicles 20)
10. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4.4-5)

REMEMBER ME, AND VISIT ME
(Jeremiah 15.15)

Remember me, O gracious Lord,
I'm sinful, weak and vile;
Oh, drop some kind and loving word,
And give another smile!

Remember me; the way is dark,
Yet would I look to Thee;
In safety steer my shattered bark
Across life's troubled sea.

Remember me, when some hid snare
Would catch my heedless feet;
Oh, come with Thy preventing care,
And grant Thy mercy sweet!

Remember me, for help I cry;
Oh, look upon my case!
In pleasure or adversity
Grant all-sufficient grace.

Remember me, O Lord, I pray,
In dark temptation's hour;
Let not my wand'ring footsteps stray;
Oh, keep me by Thy power!

Remember me when at Thy throne
I scarce can raise a cry;
Oh, hear my breathing, or a groan,
And help me from on high!

Remember me, whate'er my lot,
Where'er my path may be;
Oh, gracious God, forget me not,
For good remember me!

Lydia

The

Friendly Companion



“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”
Romans 12.21

August 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

By G.D. Buss

Dear Children and Young People,

In Matthew chapter 7, the Lord Jesus is coming to the end of His sermon on the mount. He leaves His hearers with four contrasts, in which He shows the difference between that which is of the flesh (that which is natural to us) and that which is of God.

In verses 13 and 14, He describes two gates and two ways: the strait gate and the wide gate. The word “strait” refers to a narrow passage. Those who live in England will know, for example, of the Straits of Dover, which is the narrow channel between Great Britain and France. So, the strait gate, which leads to the narrow way, is that which leads to life eternal. The gate is so narrow that there is only room for one at a time to pass through it. In other words, it is a personal matter between the sinner and God. He or she cannot squeeze through the gate with their parents, family or friends. Also, in squeezing through, much has to be left behind; we cannot pass through while holding on to the things of this world.

The late Sydney Hickman of Blackboys used to tell a true story of a young man who was seeking to know the way to heaven. He asked his pastor, the late Mr. Jabez Field, whether he should give up his attachment to cricket, to which he had given much of his spare time. His pastor answered that he considered that the strait gate was so narrow that he would not be able to squeeze through with a cricket bat as well! It may not be a cricket bat with some, but if your conscience is alive unto God, you will recognise that there are things which must be left behind if you are earnest in seeking the Lord. The flesh will still seek to bring something else along the way, but it is a strait gate and a narrow way. Our willingness to discard those sins and things which “*so easily beset us*” will be a gauge of our sincerity in following the Lord (Hebrews 12.1). We cannot lay these things aside in our own strength, but where the fear of the Lord is in living exercise, the love of Christ will constrain us to do

what is right in God's sight and for the good of our never-dying souls.

In verses 15 to 20, Christ speaks of two trees: a good tree and a corrupt tree. How can we tell which tree is which? "*By their fruits ye shall know them*" (Matthew 7.20). The corrupt tree of our fallen nature cannot bring forth good fruit. The good tree of the "born again" sinner can only bring forth good fruit. Sadly, the child of God knows that he has both trees within, and sometimes the devil will tempt him, as he did Eve, to partake of the corrupt tree; but that brings forth guilt and condemnation. When the child of God is enabled to shun the bad and seek the good, then there are fruits of faith, repentance, hope, love and that which pleases the Spirit.

Then in verses 24 to 28, Christ speaks of two foundations. The difference between them was exposed when the storm came. The man who built his house on the sand no doubt built it much more quickly than the man who had to dig deep to lay his foundation on the rock; but it was the wise man's house which withstood the storm. It is only those who are built on Christ, the solid Rock, who will withstand the storms of sin, temptation, trouble and death itself. All others will prove as foolish as the man who built on a sandy foundation.

Many years ago, there was a man called Simpson. He tried to prove the Lord Jesus wrong by building a house on the sand at Sandbanks near Bournemouth. Up went this attractive house, and soon he was able to move in. However, the first storm that came undermined the foundation, and by the time the storm had passed, the house was a crumpled heap of stones and sand! This monumental folly remained for many years as a witness to the truth of God's Word, until eventually the local authorities carried away the rubble.

Through which gate, on which road, from which tree, and on which foundation are you to be found?

Your sincere friend and former Editor.

G.D. Buss

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Hummingbirds are one of the smallest and most beautiful birds created by God. They are called hummingbirds because their wings beat so fast that they make a humming sound. The wings of hummingbirds beat about 70 times per second. Their hearts also beat fast, up to 1,260 times per minute, while the hearts of most birds beat between 50-160 times per minute. Hummingbirds are native to the Americas. There are 325 unique species in the world, but six are most common. The ruby-throated hummingbird is the most common in the greater part of the United States.

The female hummingbird weaves her tiny nest with feathers and plant fibres, tying them together with spider silk. She usually lays two eggs. The babies are about the size of a bee.

Hummingbirds may be small, but they have big appetites. They have very fast metabolisms and are constantly moving, looking for nectar or small insects, like mosquitoes, to swallow mid-flight. They have unique, long, curvy bills and long, textured tongues to help them obtain nectar from flowers.

Hummingbirds are excellent acrobats. They are the only birds that can fly forward, backward, upside down or straight up, like helicopters. They can even hover, so they do not need to slow down when they feed. They can rotate their wings 180 degrees in all directions, giving them their amazing flight ability.

Another interesting fact about hummingbirds is that they can see colours that humans cannot. A study was recently done on broad-tailed hummingbirds that revealed their ability to see ultraviolet light. For example, they can perceive a difference between red and ultraviolet red. This adds a whole new dimension to their vision that we as humans can only imagine.

It is wonderful to consider the wide variety of birds created by God. They each show forth the perfect wisdom and skill of their Creator. *"Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"* (Matthew 6.26)

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**LAND RESTORED**

Elisha spoke to the woman of Shunem, whose son he had restored to life. He told her to go and live in another place, for the Lord was going to send a famine for seven years. So, she and her son went to live in the land of the Philistines. They returned after seven years, and she went to ask the king for her house and her land to be restored.

The king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, and wanted to know about the great things that Elisha had done. Gehazi was telling of the boy whose dead body had been restored to life. At that very moment, the women of Shunem and her son came to plead for her house and her land. Gehazi said to the king, *"This is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life."*

The king asked the woman about this, and she told him. Then the king appointed an officer to help her, saying, *"Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now."*

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the Lord going to send for seven years?
2. Whom did the woman ask for her house and land?
3. What did he tell the officer to do? (first 5 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. The next day.
2. A great noise.
3. The king's servant.

Contributed

*“Restore
all that
was
hers...”*

2 Kings 8.6

BIBLE LESSONS**THE SCAPEGOAT**

While the morning and evening sacrifices for sin were made every day, there was one day each year that was very special for the Israelites. It is often referred to as the great Day of Atonement. For the Old Testament believers, it was a picture of the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, who was offered up for the sins of His people.

On that day, all the activity was centred in the midst of their camp where the tabernacle was placed. It is important for us to remember that they did not have a Bible to read, which would explain how God in mercy would deal with sin. As the day began, Aaron the high priest would take a bullock and offer it up for his sins and the sins of his whole house. He first had to wash himself with water, a reminder that he was a sinner who needed cleansing as much as the people. The Lord Jesus, the great High Priest, did not need to wash Himself, as He was without sin. He was never defiled!

After washing himself, Aaron would put on special linen garments. He wore a linen coat, linen breeches, a linen girdle and a linen mitre, all of which were called holy garments. From head to foot, Aaron would appear holy to the people; God's picture to them of His Son.

Aaron then went to the door of the courtyard of the tabernacle to receive from the congregation of Israel *"two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering."* He then presented them before the Lord and cast lots upon them. The lot would determine the fate of the two goats. One goat was designated for the Lord, to be offered up for a sin offering for all the people. It was burnt upon the brazen altar, and its blood was taken by Aaron into the tabernacle, passing through the holy place, right into the most holy place behind the vail. There Aaron sprinkled the blood of the goat upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.

After Aaron had finished offering the bullock for his own sins and the goat for the sins of the people, he would bring the live

goat before the Lord. He would lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and “*confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and ... send him away by the hand of a fit man [ready or prepared] into the wilderness. And the goat [would] bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited.*” The second goat was given a special name to signify what it did. That name was the “scapegoat.” Both goats were looked upon as bearing the sins of the people. The first goat, in giving its life, represented the death of the Lord Jesus for His people, bearing their sins and the curse due unto them. Likewise, the scapegoat, after the sins were confessed upon its head, was led into the wilderness, never to be seen again. What a representation of the Lord putting away the sins of His people! Their sins can never come back upon them.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are told that when the Lord shall appear the second time for those who look for Him, it shall be “*without sin unto salvation*” (Hebrews 9.28).

All His people shall “scape” (escape) the eternal death that was due to their sins. What a wonderful day the Day of Atonement was to the believers in the camp of Israel! They would return to their homes with the sweet sense of their sins forgiven and forgotten by the Lord. Year after year, as they kept the Day of Atonement, the gospel was preached to them through the two goats; one for the Lord, and the other as the scapegoat.

You can read about this in Leviticus chapter 16.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the special day in the year known as?
2. While Aaron had to wash himself with water, who did not need to wash Himself?
3. Where did Aaron sprinkle the blood of the goat? (9 words)
4. What did Aaron do when he placed his hands on the head of the live goat? (11 words)
5. What name was given to the live goat?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. Levi.
2. Aaron.
3. Heaven.
4. Nadab and Abihu.
5. Strange fire.

RESIGNATION OF THE EDITOR OF THE GOSPEL STANDARD

Although the *Friendly Companion* is designed for the instruction of children and young people, we are aware that the magazine has readers of all ages. We are sad to learn that the Editor of the *Gospel Standard* has felt the need to resign the editorship due to many personal matters. We would acknowledge the Lord's goodness and mercy in enabling him to be faithful to the truth in Jesus: "*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Corinthians 4.2). He has known the burden of editing the magazine month after month, at many times feeling overwhelmed, yet he can say, "*Thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation*" (Psalm 27.9). We would prayerfully wish him every blessing. May the Lord be with him and his dear wife in their home and in his pastorate and ministry.

We are thankful to learn that the Committee has unanimously agreed to ask his son, Mr. Stephen Rosier, to edit the *Gospel Standard* magazine until the end of the year. May the Lord give him grace, strength and wisdom for the work. I am sure all our readers join us in expressing our warm thoughts and prayers for the Lord's blessing to abide upon him.

“I FEEL MY MOUTH IS NOT LARGE ENOUGH”

(An account of Jemima Gosden of Arlington, Sussex)

The evil of sin was first shown to her, and she was given a concern for her soul's salvation when about eight years of age. She heard a minister relate the circumstances of losing the key of his school box, and it left a mark on her. When her brother died, she said, “O Father, where is he gone?”

When she herself became seriously ill, she expressed fears that she would be lost. She wished she might live a little longer. She wished she was like her father, but felt she could not pray. That was in the month of June. In July, she said to her sisters, “O what shall I do if I am lost? O if I did but know where I was going.” On July 4th she repeated the verse (Gadsby's hymn 474):

When I can read my title clear,
To mansions in the skies,
I bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.

The next day, being in great pain and darkness of mind, she said, “What a hard heart I have.” When anyone told her that they believed the Lord would pardon her sins, she would say, “O but I want to feel it for myself.” One day she lay about twenty minutes begging for pardon, and that her death might be a warning to her sisters and brothers, at the same time thanking the Lord for easing her pains, which had been very distressing. She would often say, “O if I get what I want, how I would praise the Lord!”

Much distressed by the near approach of death, she was often exhausted, but one day she said, “O Father, I feel I have a little hope. I do feel I love the Lord; I really do hope He has pardoned my sins.”

The following Monday, she began to praise the Lord in an astonishing manner for what He had done for her, saying, “O my dear Father, O my dear Father; O if you could see that beautiful place which the Lord has prepared for me: I can see it and Jesus Christ in the midst. Now I can bid you goodbye, Father and

Mother. I love my earthly friends, but now I love Him more. Do help me to praise Him. I feel my mouth is not large enough." Addressing her brothers and sisters, she kindly entreated them to "never be ashamed to bend your knees in prayer as I have been; ask for a feeling heart; don't put it off till you come to die. I hope, this will not be forgotten by any, and I hope my dear brothers and sisters that you may long to know these things after seeing me where I am."

She now began to question her mother, "Do you think my time is near, Mother?" When told that she thought it would not be long, the little sufferer said that she did not want to be impatient, nor for her mother to feel hurt, but she did long to be gone, quoting, "Weary of earth, myself, and sin." Sometimes she would pray aloud for her little brothers and sisters, saying, "Do, dear Lord, teach them what sin is in early life; do not let them go astray as I have done."

When her weakness increased and her mind was troubled, she would beg not to be deceived, saying that she hoped she was not a hypocrite; and then, as her spirits revived and hope sprang up afresh, she would again seek her release, if it were the Lord's will to take her. Thus, she lingered, more than once saying goodbye to her parents, only to revive again, until the appointed hour came when she quietly fell asleep in the Lord at the age of thirteen years.

Adapted from Friendly Companion 1966

THE SECRET SUPPLY OF OIL

In his dream, John Bunyan saw the Interpreter lead Christian to a place where a fire was burning against a wall. One was standing by it, always casting much water upon the fire to quench it; yet the fire burned higher and hotter.

Christian asked the Interpreter what this meant. He answered, "This fire is the work of grace that is wrought in the heart; he that casts water upon it to extinguish and put it out, is the devil: but in that thou seest the fire, notwithstanding, burn higher and hotter, thou shalt also see the reason of that."

The Interpreter took Christian to the back side of the wall. There he saw a man with a vessel of oil in his hand, which he continually (but secretly) cast into the fire. He told Christian, "This is Christ, who continually, with the oil of His grace, maintains the work already begun in the heart; notwithstanding what the devil can do, the souls of His people prove gracious still. Christ stood behind the wall, maintaining the fire, to show that it is hard for the tempted to see how this work of grace is maintained in the soul. They are '*kept by the power of God through faith, unto salvation*' (1 Peter 1.5)."

Extract from The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan

A STORY ABOUT MR. JOHN BUNYAN

Mr. John Bunyan spent twelve years in a jail in Bedford for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. His jailor was very much impressed with his character and conduct. When he found that he could trust Mr. Bunyan perfectly, he showed him much kindness. He allowed him to go out occasionally to spend a night with his family or to visit his friends. He also entrusted him at times with the care of the prison.

The following story is told about the jailor and Mr. Bunyan. The persecuting bishops in London had heard that Bunyan was often allowed out of jail. They sent an officer to talk to the jailor about it. He was to get there in the middle of the night, hoping to find Mr. Bunyan out of the prison, to prove the complaint against him.

Mr. Bunyan was actually at his own home that night. Although he could not tell why, he felt so restless that he could not sleep. He told his wife that the jailor had allowed him to stay away until morning, but now he felt that he must return immediately.

When he came to the jail, the jailor scolded him for making him get out of bed at that hour to let him back inside. Very early in the morning, the officer arrived and asked the jailor, "Are all your prisoners safe?"

"Yes, sir," said the jailor.

"Is John Bunyan safe?"

"Yes, he is."

"Let me see him."

Mr. Bunyan was called, and appeared, and all was well.

After the officer was gone, the jailor said to Mr. Bunyan, "Well, you may go out again whenever you think proper, because you know when to return better than I can tell you."

It was while in jail that Mr. Bunyan wrote the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a book which has been a great blessing to the church of God.

Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume 3

RESTRAINED AND CHANGED

A dissenting minister was invited to preach in a licensed barn, several miles distant from any town. (Dissenting ministers were those who did not belong to the established church, the Church of England.) The preaching had continued for some months on a Lord's day evening, and many people from the adjacent villages attended.

Two farmers agreed to come and disturb, or have a little sport with, those poor, despised people that assembled to worship. One of them, an excellent player on the flute, was to come into the barn and begin to play "God save the king" at a fixed time. Meanwhile, a number of their farm labourers were to be arranged outside the door to sing the national song. Accordingly, on the day appointed, the two farmers took their seats in the barn. The other men, who had procured a bench from the neighbouring public-house, were arranged outside. To encourage them in their plans, they had been given a plentiful supply of beer.

The preacher entered upon his discourse, but the player on the flute did not begin according to the arranged plan. The other farmer tugged at his coat, and whispered for him to begin; but God, "*who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will*" (Ephesians 1.11), had discharged the arrow of conviction

into his conscience. He remained motionless, although repeatedly urged by the neighbour to commence playing. The labouring men came several times and looked into the barn, waiting for their leaders to begin the disturbance; but, as God had stopped the leader, they behaved peaceably.

From that time, the farmer became an earnest seeker of the Lord Jesus Christ, and was brought to a saving knowledge of Him. He continued to be a follower of the despised Nazarene, while his companions remained in utter darkness.

The changed farmer has often declared that such was the power of God and the deep impression of his own guilt, that he had not the least power to take his flute out of his pocket, although he came fully determined to make a disturbance. Thus was fulfilled the Lord's word: "*The one shall be taken, and the other left*" (Matthew 24.40).

Shall we ascribe the conversion of this poor sinner to God on account of any work done by him? Certainly not; but wholly to the free, sovereign mercy of God in Christ Jesus. All His sheep shall hear His voice at the appointed time, and eternal life shall be freely bestowed upon them. They shall hear the voice of the Son of God by faith and live.

Adapted from The Sower 1882

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD

Born in the year 1600, this Scottish minister is probably best known for his letters, many of which were written while he was banished from his congregation for eighteen months. Later he became a professor at St. Mary's College in St. Andrews, and he took a prominent part in the preparation of the Westminster Confession.

In 1660, a book which he had written was condemned by the parliament to be burned, and they were eager to have its author martyred also. He was deposed from all his offices, deprived of his pastoral charge, and summoned to appear at the next parliament for high treason, since he had written against the king. But as the messengers carried the citation to him,

Rutherford lay on his deathbed. As he received the document they brought, he said, "Tell them that I have a summons already from a superior Judge and judicatory, and I behove to answer my first summons; ere your day arrives, I will be where few kings and great folks come."

When the messengers reported his condition, the Council declared with feeble malice that he must not be permitted to die within the College walls. However, one member arose and said, "Ye have voted that honest man out of his college, but ye cannot vote him out of heaven." Nothing could be truer than that courageous word.

Banner of Truth 1977

KINDNESS RETURNED FOR EVIL

"Be not overcome of evil; but overcome evil with good"
(Romans 12.21).

There was a very cross old woman who lived all alone. Nobody could live with her. The neighbours had as little to do with her as possible. Children were very much afraid of her.

A new family from the country moved into the next house, and the mother of this family soon learned the character of Madam Bates. The neighbours said that she would kill their hens, stone their kitten, and do everything to annoy them. Mrs. Grey answered that if Madam Bates did those things to them, she would somehow "kill her with kindness." She meant that she would try to "*overcome evil with good.*"

Well, it was not long before the new neighbours had a touch of Madam Bates' tongue, and it was very sharp. So, when Mrs. Grey had a barrel of nice apples from the country, she sent a basketful to her. That was *her* way of fighting. However, Madam Bates never spoke a word of thanks to the girl who took the apples to her. Instead of thanking her, the spiteful woman tossed them all back into Mrs. Grey's backyard. That was not all. Mrs. Grey had a little dog, named Fido, who liked to make friendly calls to the neighbours, just as he used to do in the country. Fido certainly meant no harm. One day, finding the

old woman's gate open, the little dog walked in to greet her. And what did Madam Bates do? She poured hot sudsy water on his back. Poor Fido ran yelping home, and it took a long time for him to recover from his scalding. What did Mrs. Grey do? She brought some soothing medicine to help the old woman with a troublesome cough.

Not many weeks after, when Mrs. Grey was working near her back door, she heard low groans. She listened carefully. "Something has happened to poor Madam Bates," she said. She quickly went to her home to see what was the matter. Sure enough, the old lady had fallen down and sprained her ankle so that she could not get up. Mrs. Grey helped to lift her up and assisted her into the house. She bathed and wrapped the ankle and helped her into bed. Then she brought her some warm tea. "Oh!" said Madam Bates, with tears rolling down her cheeks, "You have been such a kind neighbour. You fairly *killed* me with your kindness." That is just what Mrs. Grey meant to do.

'Tis better a wrong to endure,
Than wrong on another impose;
Revenge will no enmity cure –
Resentment will only make foes.

To God alone vengeance belongs,
And He has appointed a day,
When all their oppressions and wrongs
He will to the wicked repay.

Adapted from The Little Gleaner 1933

A CHRISTIAN'S REVENGE

A British sergeant, serving in Egypt, was once telling an English minister a few things about how the Lord had led him. The minister asked how he had come to have faith in God.

"Before we came here," answered the sergeant, "we were on the island of Malta. A certain soldier in my group had been converted, and he was not ashamed to testify of his faith in Christ. With great boldness, he often spoke about the Word of

God. We gave this young soldier a terrible time, but it did not seem to hinder him.

"One evening, we returned to our barracks, soaking wet from the rain and exhausted. Before we went to bed, this soldier kneeled and began to pray. For this he was made to suffer. I picked up my heavy, muddy shoes and threw one of them at one side of his head, and then struck him with the other shoe on the other side of his head. I threw them with such a force that I could have killed him. He did not react to this, but he very calmly went on with his prayer.

"The next morning, however, I found my shoes carefully cleaned and polished beside my bed. This was the soldier's answer for the cruel mockery of his sergeant. This broke my opposition, and that same day a change came into my life. It pleased the Lord to use this incident for my eternal salvation. All honour be to His name!"

Adapted from For the Generations to Come, Volume 1

COALS OF FIRE

There was a quarrel between two men living in the southern part of Africa, and they became bitter enemies to each other. After a while, one of them found a little girl, belonging to his enemy, in the woods at some distance from her father's house. He seized her and did an unspeakably cruel thing; he cut off both her hands. As she was sent home in great distress and pain, he said to her, "I have had my revenge."

Years passed by, and the little girl had become a young woman. One day, there came to her father's door a poor, worn-out, grey-headed old man. He asked for something to eat. She knew him at once as the cruel man who had cut off her hands. She went into the hut, and ordered the servant to take him bread and milk, as much as he could eat. Then she sat down and watched him eat it. When he had finished eating, she dropped the covering that hid her handless wrists from view. Holding them up before him, she exclaimed, "I have had *my* revenge!" She repeated the very words he had uttered when he so cruelly

maimed her. The man was overwhelmed with surprise and humiliation. The secret of her kind action was that, in the meantime, she had become a Christian. She had learned the meaning of the verse: *"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head"* (Romans 12.20).

Adapted from Cheering Words 1989

CHRISTIANS TARGETED FOR PERSECUTION

Most of our readers live in lands where we may worship God and read His Word without fear. These are great blessings, for which we ought to be truly thankful. This is not the case in many parts of the world.

Christians in Nigeria and other countries have been targeted, abused, and murdered by jihadist groups like Boko Haram. Their governments seem unable or unwilling to stop this violence against Christians. Boko Haram is a Nigerian jihadist militia pledged to ISIS. They stormed a village and abducted 110 schoolgirls. Five of them were killed and eventually 104 were released. One brave sixteen-year-old girl, named Leah Sharibu, remains a prisoner because she refuses to renounce her Christian faith, and she is threatened with death.

The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) has delivered an oral intervention at the United Nations on behalf of Nigeria's Christians. They are also sending a critical legal advocacy letter to the government of Nigeria, demanding that it act to free Leah. They are seeking public awareness of her story.

We wonder how many would be willing to stand for their faith in the face of abuse and even death. Like Daniel, Leah was not afraid to stand alone. May we be helped faithfully to confess the name of Jesus in whatever situation we may be in. May we also remember to pray for Christians who are under persecution. *"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body"* (Hebrews 13.3).

Contributed

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT****“Goodness”**

The next fruit of the Spirit spoken of by the Apostle Paul in Galatians is the fruit of goodness. The Bible uses the words “good” and “goodness” in different ways, and we need to consider carefully what this fruit is, as well as what it is not.

Many professing Christians believe that doing good is very easy, and they have many supposed good works. They like everyone to see what good Christians they are, and to be held in admiration by others. But it is only as the Lord gives a new heart that His people can bring forth any good fruit.

We read that a certain man came to Jesus, calling Him “Good Master.” The Lord Jesus replied, *“Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God”* (Mark 10.18). We also read, *“There is none that doeth good, no, not one”* (Romans 3.12). We have all sinned against God, and by nature we can do nothing that is truly “good” in the sight of God.

However, in our behaviour towards others, we should always seek to do good. When we see others in trouble or in need, it is only right that we should do our utmost to help where we can. *“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it”* (Proverbs 3.27). The Lord Jesus spoke a parable about a good Samaritan who cared for a man who had been robbed and beaten and left half dead. Unlike the priest and Levite, who passed by on the other side of the road, the Samaritan showed compassion to him. He kindly tended to the needy man, and took him to a place where he would receive further care. He paid the whole bill, expecting nothing in return. The Lord Jesus had spoken the parable in answer to a Pharisee who asked, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* (Luke 10.25). He was looking for some good works that he might do to merit God’s favour. The answer of the Lord Jesus showed a Samaritan selflessly doing all he could to help a stranger. He was not looking for any recognition from men, neither doing it to obtain merit before God. It was all done

before God who looks at the heart. That was the very opposite of the way many Pharisees acted, and for which the Lord Jesus most solemnly reproved them.

Consider the parable of the Pharisee and the publican who went up to the temple to pray. What a difference there was in their prayers! The Pharisee thought he was doing good by fasting twice a week and giving away a tenth of his income. He boasted of how much better he was than the publican. All the while, God was looking into this man's heart and saw nothing but abominable pride. This Pharisee had totally deceived himself and those around him. He thought he was good, and yet he was evil. He thought he was righteous, but he was a terrible sinner. He thought that by doing all those good deeds, he was obtaining God's favour and merit. God says in His Word, *"To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word"* (Isaiah 66.2). The publican did not think he had any goodness at all. He knew that he was a guilty sinner and sought the mercy of God. The psalmist David was brought to the same place as all the Lord's people are. *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise"* (Psalm 51.17). This is the fruit of goodness that the Lord desires to see brought forth in His people.

The important thing to remember is that God looks upon the heart. He always sees the spirit in which something is done, and the motive for which it is done. There are many things which can be considered good in a natural sense, that are performed by people from all different religions around the world. Yet, the Lord's people, under the gospel of Christ, have a much higher standard. It is summarised in these few words, *"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10.31). When, by the grace of God, we humbly walk by this rule, the fruit of goodness is brought forth to God's honour and glory. Yet many of the Lord's people feel to come far short of this standard and wonder if they bring forth any fruit at all. The Apostle Paul bemoaned, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh),*

dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil that I would not, that I do" (Romans 7.18,19). He knew the plague of his own heart; that he was a sinner, and nothing good could be found there. He had been taught that God could see right into his heart, and He could read the motives, desires and innermost thoughts. We, too, may grieve because of the sins we feel, and because there seems in us nothing good at all. The Lord Jesus spoke of the last day, when the sheep and the goats would be gathered before Him. The sheep of Christ could not see any of the good works which were spoken of them. They were the little things done for His people out of love for Him.

Perhaps, some may be tempted to think that it is of no use to try to be good or do good, because they do not feel they possess the grace of God in their hearts. It is absolutely right that all of us should seek to do good. May we look to the Lord for help to do so, and to seek His honour and glory in everything we do. The Lord will continually teach, *"For without Me ye can do nothing"* (John 15.5).

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about SECRETS. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 170 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did Rachel hide in a secret place, which her father Laban, with all his searching, could not find? (Genesis 31.30-35)
2. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision" (Daniel 2.19, 27-29). What secret was it?
3. What kind of person reveals the secrets of other people? (Proverbs 20.19)
4. God has His own secrets and sometimes He is pleased to reveal

- them. What did Jesus say that His Father had revealed to Simon Peter? (Matthew 16.16-17)
5. Jesus rejoiced that God had hidden things from some people and revealed them to others. From whom were these secrets hidden, and to whom were they revealed? (Luke 10.21)
 6. What three things did Jesus say we should do in secret (meaning, without any outward show)? (Matthew 6)
 7. We can have no secrets from God. Which verses in Psalm 139 show that God knows both our thoughts and our words?
 8. Who is the “secret of the Lord” with, and what does He show to them? (Psalm 25)
 9. Jonathan shot three arrows in a way which implied a secret message. What was the message, and who from his hiding place saw the arrows and understood the message? (1 Samuel 20)
 10. To whom was it said, “For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun”?

ANSWERS TO JULY QUESTIONS

1. Judah.
2. Ishbosheth, the son of Saul.
3. Between thirty-seven and thirty-eight years old.
4. Mephibosheth.
5. A son who would be born to him.
6. David had shed much blood upon the earth. (1 Chronicles 22.8)
7. We need to pray to God continually and not to think that because God has answered in one instance, that in another similar instance we can manage things ourselves. (2 Samuel 5.17-25)
8. “David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.” (1 Chronicles 13.1)
9. David carried the ark of God on a new cart drawn by oxen, instead of the Levites carrying it as God commanded. God struck Uzzah dead when he put his hand out to steady the ark. (1 Chronicles 13.7-10; 15.2)
10. Of his enemies, David grieved over the death of Saul (2 Samuel 1.17) and over the death of Ishbosheth (2 Samuel 4. 9-12). Also over Abner who had previously been an enemy but had been reconciled to him (2 Samuel 3.31-34).

A CHILD'S PRAYER

Though I am but a child so small,
And Thou, O God, doth rule o'er all,
Yet Thou canst hear me when I pray;
Oh, teach me how and what to say.

Thou, who art here and everywhere,
Take me beneath Thy special care;
Protect me, Lord, by night, by day,
Asleep, awake, at school, at play.

Teach me Thy holy name to praise;
Keep me from wicked words and ways;
For not too young am I to sin,
A wicked heart have I within.

And, though my body soon may die,
My soul must live eternally
In endless bliss or endless woe,
In heaven above or hell below.

Oh, gentle Saviour, loving, mild,
Who once became Thyself a Child,
Who freely left Thy throne above
To die for those whom Thou didst love:

Bestow on me, I pray, Thy grace;
Oh, make me early seek Thy face;
In mercy, Lord, look down on me,
And suffer me to come to Thee.

Gathered Gems

The Friendly Companion



The Old Faithful Geyser in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, USA

**“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to
stand against the wiles of the devil.”
(Ephesians 6.11)**

September 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

All around the world, people are told that there are warning signs that the world is being destroyed by human activity. Between air pollution and water pollution, the environment is reported to be in great danger. In a recent survey in the United States, junior and senior high school students said that their greatest fear was the near destruction of the world due to climate change. No doubt, in higher levels of education this theory is even more strongly promoted. Those who advance this philosophy show clearly that the “earth” is their god. The Word of God declares plainly: *“While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease”* (Genesis 8.22). The Lord has created the earth, with its lands and seas, in such a way that it cleanses itself in a most mysterious, yet wonderful way. We remember reading of an oil spill off the coast of Alaska in the 1970’s. Great environmental destruction was predicted; yet, within a year, there was no visible evidence of any lasting damage.

No one wants to breathe dirty air or drink polluted water; yet these are not the real pollutions that we need to fear. There is another kind of pollution that all human beings are responsible for, although it is never mentioned. In the minds of most people, it would be an offence to suggest that such things would even be thought of as pollution. In speaking of His ancient people, the Jews, the Lord called them a city that was *“filthy and polluted,”* because they obeyed not His voice, received not correction, trusted not in the Lord, and drew not near to God (Zephaniah 3.1,2).

In Psalm 106 verses 37 and 38, the Lord testified against the children of Israel: *“Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.”* Before they entered the land of Canaan, Moses warned them from God, as in Numbers 35 verse 33: *“So ye shall not pollute*

the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood [death] of him that shed it.” In Ezekiel 36 verse 18, the Lord declared why He had poured out His fury and scattered Israel among other countries: *“For the blood that they had shed upon the lands and for their idols wherewith they had polluted it.”*

The nations of the world are filled with such blood. In many places that have been blessed to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is the shedding of the most innocent blood of all, when babies are aborted from their mothers' wombs. The land is polluted with blood!

The city of Sodom in the Old Testament was polluted by a sinful lifestyle that has become very prominent in our days. It is a lifestyle that God abhors! When men “marry” men, and women “marry” women, God calls it an abomination. The land is polluted.

There is another sin for which God will destroy the world. Not only the vain world is guilty of this sin, but also many who are very religious. It is the polluting of the Lord's day. The Lord said to His people: *“Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil”* (Isaiah 56.2). In chapter 58 verse 13, the Lord enlarged the commandment by saying, *“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.”*

The nations of the world are increasingly filled with idolatry, murder, thefts and rioting. We are told: *“In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous [greedy], boasters, proud, blasphemers [speaking evil of God], disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent [without self-restraint], fierce, despisers*

of those that are good, traitors, beady [headstrong], highminded [filled with pride], lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3.1-4). All of these sins and many other things are polluting the world and will bring down God's righteous judgment and the ultimate destruction of the world.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

Recently we were favoured to visit our friends at Old Paths Strict Baptist Chapel in Choteau, Montana, staying with their pastor and his wife, Mr. & Mrs. M. Pickett. It was a journey of 3,800 miles round trip.

On the journey, we visited a few national parks such as the Badlands and Mount Rushmore in South Dakota, Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, and Glacier National Park in Montana. We enjoyed driving through very scenic places, such as the Needles Highway and Spearfish Canyon near Mount Rushmore, and the Teton mountain range, which led us up into Yellowstone Park. It is the oldest national park in the United States, being established in 1872. The scenery is very beautiful, with mountains, lakes, canyons, rivers and waterfalls, as well as many different kinds of wildlife. Geysers are the most unique features of the park, and there are about 500 of them, nearly half of all the geysers in the world. Geysers are hot springs that erupt periodically. The eruptions are the result of super-heated water below the ground which becomes trapped in channels leading to the surface. Boiling water farther below produces a tremendous volume of steam, which then forces the trapped water out of the vent (the main opening) and up into the air until the pressure is relieved. Scientists have used the study of geysers as a small-scale model of volcanoes.

Old Faithful, which is shown on the front cover picture, is the most well-known geyser, because it erupts regularly every 60 to 90 minutes. Columns of boiling water are thrown from 100 to 185 feet (32 to 56 m) into the air, lasting from one and a half to five minutes. It has erupted faithfully every day since it was

first named in 1870. Depending on the length of an eruption, it shoots between 3,400 to 8,400 gallons of water into the air. The name given to the geyser, "Old Faithful," is very fitting; yet it continually fluctuates in the time between eruptions and the duration of eruptions.

There is One who is truly faithful. *"Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations"* (Deuteronomy 7.9). His faithfulness never fluctuates, never alters, never fails. He is faithful to His Word. *"Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out"* (John 6.37). There are many precious promises about the faithfulness of God: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1.9). He will preserve His people blameless: *"Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it"* (1 Thessalonians 5.24); *"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"* (1 Corinthians 10.13). He is very faithful to His promise: *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13.5).

AN ENEMY IN DISGUISE

During early American history, there were many conflicts between the settlers and the American Indians. One clear September night, a young soldier named Hugh found himself in an exciting and perilous position. He had volunteered as a sentry for the night on one of the outposts, even though he knew that on the four preceding nights, brave comrades of his own had been found dead at the same spot.

"You will be number five," said his companions as he bade them good night.

"Have no fear," he said. "My orders are to shoot anything that moves, and you can depend upon it, if even a bird stirs, I'll do it." And so he went his way.

His senses were sharpened to more than their usual keenness by a consciousness of peril. Alone in the stillness of the midnight watch, the faces of his dead comrades rose before his mind. His post was on a slightly rising ground; a partly-cleared space stretched before him, and there was a thick forest in the distance. No sign of life broke the stillness during the first few hours of his watch. Eventually, the grey dawn stole over the quiet scene and revealed not even the trembling of a leaf.

Hugh, naturally adventurous, began to think that he would have a very uneventful watch to speak about. As his thoughts wandered, he observed a large, wild hog leaving the distant forest. It appeared to be picking up food as it gradually came closer. Hugh's eyes were fixed upon the movements of this animal with very little concern. As it came closer, he suddenly remembered his orders and resolution: "If so much as a bird stirs, shoot it."

"I must do it," he said to himself, "though this beast is hardly worth the powder." Levelling his musket at the hog, he took careful aim and fired. A sharp cry of agony broke the stillness, and the alarm brought two other sentries to the spot. They soon discovered that an Indian had been disguised in the skin of a hog. Hugh thanked God with all his heart, as he saw how narrow his escape had been. He had been saved from death through the wonderful providence and mercy of God.

This story is told to point out the danger in which many stand without being aware of it. No foes are really so dangerous as those which creep up on us in disguise and thus take us at a disadvantage and off our guard. Many a young person has been exposed to great danger without perceiving it. Things are sometimes called by deceptive names, such as pleasure, courage, or even duty, and thus the victim has been ensnared. We can never afford to trifle with danger, or to neglect even the smallest precautions against it. May divine grace make and keep us ever on our guard.

Adapted from The Banner of Truth 1978

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**ELISHA GOES TO SYRIA**

Elisha the prophet went into the land of the Syrians, the enemies of Israel. The king of Syria was sick. When he heard that Elisha had come, he sent his servant Hazael to meet him with a present. The king of Syria wanted Elisha to ask the Lord if he would recover of his disease.

Elisha told Hazael that it was possible for the king to recover, but *“the Lord hath showed me that he shall surely die.”* Elisha gazed sadly at Hazael, and then he wept. Hazael asked why he wept, and Elisha said that he knew Hazael would do great evil to the children of Israel. He would set their strong holds on fire and kill many of them.

Hazael answered, *“Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this?”* He did not know how evil his heart was. Elisha told Hazael that he would be the next king over Syria.

When Hazael returned to the king, he told him a lie. He told him that Elisha had said he would surely recover. However, the next day, Hazael killed the king and reigned in his place.

QUESTIONS:

1. Into which land did Elisha go?
2. Who was sick?
3. Who became the next king of Syria?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. A famine.
2. The king.
3. Restore all that was hers.

Contributed

*“The man
of God
is come
hither.”*

2 Kings 8.7

BIBLE LESSONS**THE JOURNEY TO CANAAN COMMENCES AGAIN**

While the children of Israel were camped at the base of Mount Sinai, they marked the first anniversary of the Passover which they had kept on the same night they went out of Egypt. They had spent the greater part of that first year in the wilderness of Sinai, receiving the commandments of God, as well as instructions for building the tabernacle and for the worship of God.

The Lord spoke unto Moses: *“Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month [the first month] at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it”* (Numbers 9.2,3). Knowing how forgetful His people were, the Lord gave this commandment to stir up their minds in remembrance of that memorable day when they were delivered from the oppression of Egypt.

On the day the tabernacle was set up, the Lord caused the pillar of a cloud to come down and rest upon it. At night it became a pillar of fire. The cloud and fire were a sign of God’s presence with them. As long as the pillar of cloud and fire stayed low over the tabernacle, the people rested in their tents.

A few days after they kept the Passover, the cloud lifted up from the tabernacle. The children of Israel knew the time had come for them to journey on toward Canaan. How pleased they must have been to resume their journey again! When the cloud arose from off the tabernacle, Moses prayed: *“Rise up, LORD, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel.”* It was a prayer for the Lord to destroy their enemies and to return with blessings for His people.

The Lord commanded Moses to make two silver trumpets. They were to be blown by the priests to call the people together. The priests needed to learn how to blow different sounds on the

trumpets. When they sounded an alarm, the people would prepare for war. At other times, they would blow the trumpets to inform the people that it was time to journey again.

After departing from Mount Sinai, the people journeyed for three days, for the cloud kept moving before them until they came to Paran. The three-day journey must have been difficult for them, and the people began to complain. The anger of the Lord was stirred against them. A fire went forth and burnt some of those in the outermost parts of the camp. How soon they forgot what happened to Nadab and Abihu! When Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire ceased to destroy the people. Moses gave the name "*Taberah*" to the place, which means "a burning."

From Taberah, the cloud led them on toward the next stopping place on the journey to Canaan. They were tired and hungry, and they grew weary of the manna which fell daily round about their camp. Some in the camp lusted for meat. They thought about the fish, onions, melons, leeks and cucumbers which they had eaten in Egypt. They spake against God, saying, "*Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? ... Can He provide flesh [meat] for His people?*" (Psalm 78.19,20)

The anger of the Lord was kindled greatly when He heard their complaints. The Lord told Moses that He would provide flesh for the people, not just for one or two days, but for a whole month until it would become loathsome unto them. Moses answered the Lord that the people were six hundred thousand footmen, beside women and children. He asked the Lord if the flocks and herds must be slain, or all the fish of the sea be gathered, to satisfy the great host of Israel. The Lord answered Moses, "*Is the LORD's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether My Word shall come to pass unto thee or not.*"

The Lord caused a wind to bring quails from the sea, and they fell around the camp two cubits (about three feet) high. For two days, the people gathered the quails and feasted on them. While the meat was yet in their mouth, the Lord smote the people with a very great plague. Moses gave a special name to this place also.

He called it Kibroth-hataavah, which means “the graves of lust,” because there they buried the people that lusted for meat.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 9 to 11.

QUESTIONS:

1. What anniversary did the children of Israel keep in Sinai?
2. What two things were a sign of God's presence with them?
3. What was the name given to the place where fire consumed many of Israel, and what does it mean?
4. What did the Lord cause to fall around the camp two cubits high?
5. What does the name Kibroth-hataavah mean?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Levi.
2. Aaron.
3. Heaven.
4. Nadab and Abihu.
5. Strange fire.

“Would God we had died in this wilderness!” (Numbers 14.2) And they all had their wish. What a dreadful thing is a murmuring heart! Deliver me from it, O Lord.

John Berridge

A FATHER'S ALPHABETICAL ADVICE TO HIS CHILDREN

Ask Jesus to save you.	Matthew 7.7
Be prepared for eternity.	Amos 4.12
Confess your sins before God.	1 John 1.9
Do not let Him go until He blesses you.	Genesis 32.26
Earnestly seek the guidance of the Spirit.	Psalms 48.14
Firmly grasp the promises of God.	Hebrews 10.23
Glorify God in life, conduct and conversation.	Isaiah 41.16
Help the needy and afflicted.	James 1.27
Imitate the example of Christ.	John 13.15
Join in nothing that would dishonour Jesus.	1 Samuel 2.30
Keep yourselves unspotted from the world.	James 1.27
Let your trust be in the finished work of Christ.	John 17.4
Make Jesus your All and in all.	Colossians 3.11
Never tell a lie.	Revelation 21.8
Often attend the means of grace.	2 Peter 1.10
Pray without ceasing.	1 Thessalonians 5.17
Quench not the Spirit.	1 Thessalonians 5.19
Read a portion of the Bible daily.	Acts 17.11
Shun the intoxicating cup.	Proverbs 20.1
Trust truly in the blood of the Lamb.	Revelations 7.14
Unite only with those who fear God.	Malachi 3.16
Vex not a righteous God by unsanctified conduct.	Revelation 22.15
Watch the ways of God in providence and grace.	Nahum 2.1
X-hibit a character of meekness and humility.	Ephesians 4.2
Yield not your members as instruments of unrighteousness.	Romans 6.13
Zealously labour in Christ's vineyard.	Matthew 2.4
	<i>George Cowell</i>

A SHOWER OF RAIN IN ANSWER TO PRAYER

In the 1960's, there was a gracious old lady who loved to be in the house of God. Sadly, however, she had several fainting spells at chapel. These caused a great disturbance during the

service, and they were also disruptive for those who had to take her home. Her daughter-in-law, who was also a truly gracious lady, was her chief care-giver. She thought that it was really best for her mother-in-law to stay home. The services were relayed to this old lady's house, so she could hear the service if she was willing. But was she willing? She had a strong mind and deep desire to be in chapel, which caused a conflict with her loving care-giver, who felt it was much safer for her to remain at home.

Wednesday was chapel night, so again the question was debated. The old lady said that if it rained, she would take that as a sign from God that she should listen at home. She probably thought she was safe in saying that, because it was one of those sunny days without a cloud in the sky. All day long, her daughter-in-law prayed and looked for the sign of a cloud. But it was like it had been for Elijah's servant: "There is nothing."

However, at 5:00 pm a cloud appeared, and for about ten minutes there was a shower of rain. The gracious old lady, seeing this shower, called her daughter-in-law, saying, "I see it has rained. Then I must not go to chapel tonight."

One hardly knows which grace shone the brightest; the prayer for rain by the loving care-giver, or the recognition of God's token and obedience to it by the dear, aged lady.

G.D. Buss

"I WILL SING OF EXCELLENT THINGS"

The late Herbert Dawson was pastor at Union Chapel, Bethersden, Kent, from 1915 to 1969. He was walking near his home one day when he heard a woman's voice singing. He noticed the singing was coming from an open bedroom window, and he stood outside and listened. The hymn was being sung by an elderly lady from his congregation, and this was just a few days before she died on 23rd December, 1945, aged 91 years.

The woman's name was Eliza Oliver. Interestingly, she was the great-grandmother of the previous Editor of the *Friendly*

Companion, Mr. Gerald Buss, and she was also distantly related to many in our congregations today. In her old age, she became stone deaf, but she insisted on going to chapel, arriving half an hour early. Since she was unable to hear properly, her daughter would show her the text of the sermon. Her pastor, Mr. Dawson, would often call to see her on a Monday morning, and she would tell him about her meditation on the subject of the text. Although she was so deaf, Mr. Dawson felt that she was one of his best hearers! What a gracious example she was to those who are younger. She is buried with her husband William in the graveyard at St. Margaret's Church, Bethersden.

At that time, the hymnbook used at Union Chapel, Bethersden, was *Steven's Selection*, and the hymn Mrs. Oliver was heard singing was a hymn by Samuel Medley, number 766. Samuel Medley was a gifted hymnwriter, and his sweet hymns bring out the precious gift of free, sovereign grace to unworthy sinners as taught by the Holy Spirit. His hymns often close with the solemnity of death and the blessed prospect of heaven for saved sinners brought safely home at last. What an unspeakable mercy to enter into the sweet language of this hymn, as no doubt, Eliza Oliver did during her last days here upon earth! (see back cover for hymn)

Contributed

A MESSAGE TO A DYING WOMAN

A missionary in a large city climbed a broken staircase to the top of a dirty, crowded apartment building. He suddenly noticed a man standing on the landing at the top of the stairs. His entire appearance was repulsive, and he seemed to be half-drunken. He had such a savage look in his eyes that the missionary shuddered. His first impulse was to go back, but the man had already noticed him. In a gruff voice, he demanded what the visitor was doing there.

"I came to see if there was anyone in need," said the missionary. "I have a message for the sick and the troubled that

is good to hear. It is good for healthy people too," he added with a smile. "In fact, since it is God's Word, it is good for everybody."

The ruffian angrily told him to leave at once or he would kick him down the stairs. While the missionary was trying, with gentleness and patience, to soothe the angry man, he was startled to hear a feeble voice. It seemed to come from behind one of the rickety doors which opened upon the landing, saying, "Who is that? If it's a preacher, send him here."

"Bill, Bill," cried the voice, clearly that of a woman. "Do you hear? I want the parson. Let him come in, I say."

The man uttered an oath, but he stood aside and nodded toward the door from behind which the voice had seemed to come. He said gruffly, "You can go in since she wants you."

The missionary pushed open the door and entered the room. It was a wretched place, wholly destitute of furniture, except a three-legged stool and a bundle of straw. Upon this lay a feeble, aged woman, who appeared to be very ill. When the visitor had entered, she raised herself upon one elbow, fixed her eyes eagerly upon him, and asked, "Are you a preacher?"

The missionary nodded.

"Then can you tell me about the blood which cleanseth from all sin?"

He sat down upon the stool beside her and asked, "My poor friend, what do you want to know of the blood which cleanseth from all sin?"

There was something urgent in her voice and manner as she replied, "What do I want to know of it? Man, I am dying! I am going to hell – I know I am! I deserve to go if ever anybody did. I've been a wicked woman all my life. It's hard for such as us to be anything else, but I might have been better. My old man wanted me to go to church, and he would have been a better man if I had let him; but I used to make fun of him and laugh him out of it. He made me go once, though, and I heard the preacher say there was blood which cleanseth from all sin. I do not remember anything else; I would have forgotten that, but

my old man kept talking about it. When he was dying, I fetched a preacher who told him more. He wanted me to hear, but I wouldn't listen. My old man never seemed to hear enough, and he said it made him happy. He died, and I never thought more about it till I became sick. Then I wanted my son Bill to fetch a preacher, but he wouldn't. It is a wonder that you came up here. Now you can tell me all about it."

Many years before, that same missionary had been anxious to preach the gospel in China. He had grieved sorely over the disappointment when providence closed that path of usefulness to him. As he listened to the old woman's story, he realised that he did not need to go far away to find lost sinners to preach the gospel to. Right here was a soul as dark and ignorant as any in far-off China. Many such were dying every day, and going before their Maker with the words, "No man cared for my soul." A sense of responsibility thrust at his heart, as he opened his Bible and read the first chapter of John. The poor woman seemed to devour the words, and when he paused, she exclaimed, "Read more! Read more!"

He read the second chapter. A slight noise made him look round. The savage ruffian had followed him into his mother's room. Although his face was partly turned away, the missionary noticed that he was listening. He read the third, fourth and fifth chapters of John, answering her questions as he went along; trying to show her clearly the way of salvation through Christ. He kneeled down and prayed earnestly for the woman's soul, and for that of her degraded son, who still stood with his arms folded, leaning against the wall, sullenly listening. As he rose from his knees, he met the poor woman's gaze, and interpreting the request she seemed too agitated to utter, he said, "I will come again early tomorrow. You must also pray for yourself, and ask God to teach you. While you are lying here and thinking, say to Him, 'Lord, teach me; open my eyes to see the truth!' God will hear you."

The poor woman lived for nearly two weeks. The missionary was able to relieve some of her physical suffering, but it was for

her soul that God enabled him to render the greatest service. She clung firmly to the one idea that she had at first of the cleansing blood. She learned slowly but surely of Christ the Saviour of sinners, and of God's infinite love. She died at last with a smile of restful peace on her face, confident in the efficacy of the precious blood.

Her reprobate son was usually present during the missionary's visits. The missionary afterwards learned that he was fearful his mother would disclose the secret of his life, that he was a burglar. He dreaded lest the missionary should learn of it and betray him to the police. On the day of his mother's death, he confessed it himself voluntarily. He begged the missionary to help him start on an honest life. He moved away from his evil surroundings and became a reformed character. Eventually, we hope, he was brought to believe in Christ and saved as "a brand plucked from the burning."

Adapted from The Little Gleaner

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

"Faith"

The next fruit of the Spirit spoken of by the Apostle Paul in Galatians is the fruit of faith. But what is God-given faith? It is that which believes God's Word, trusts in His Word, acts upon it, and looks for its fulfilment. Paul says in Hebrews 11 verse 1: *"Now faith is the substance [margin: ground or confidence] of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Faith directs the Lord's people to the One who alone can save them from all of their sins – the Lord Jesus Christ. By the eye of faith, the Lord Jesus is seen as the Saviour of sinners. By the work of faith, the sinner is brought to centre his only hope of salvation on the finished work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2.8). We will never truly seek the Lord without faith (see Hebrews 11.6).

Hebrews 11 is a wonderful chapter. It sets before us many of the Lord's people in Old Testament times who lived by faith. The fruit of faith was manifested by different people in very different circumstances. All of them were brought to believe in God through the power of the Holy Spirit, by the gift of faith. By faith they all believed in the Word of God, served the Lord, and followed the Lord – and they all died in faith.

Let us consider Abraham as an example of a life of faith. He left his homeland in Ur of the Chaldees because God called him to go to a land he had never seen. God promised to give him the land for an inheritance to his children after him, when as yet he had no children. Only as God's Spirit is given and a soul is made spiritually alive can there be any obedience to the voice of the Lord God. If Abraham only heard in a natural way and did not act upon it, or if he had remained in Ur because he wanted to stay where his family and friends were, we could not say that Abraham had any faith at all. God-given faith will always believe in the Word of God, however impossible it may seem. Abraham, being quickened by the Holy Ghost with the grace of God imparted, believed God's Word and obeyed it. He ventured by faith, in humble obedience to what God had said, depending upon Him to fulfil His Word. God-given faith always glorifies God, as He is the Author of this precious grace. Without it, it is impossible to please God; but God is glorified when His people walk by faith, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work within their hearts.

God had also spoken to Abraham concerning his seed. This meant that Abraham would have a child. For many, many years, his wife Sarah was childless. That was a great trial to Abraham, especially when Sarah went beyond the age of bearing children. It appeared impossible for Abraham to have any children. Sadly, Sarah gave Abraham some very foolish advice in suggesting that her maid, Hagar, could also be his wife to bear the promised child. That was not done by faith, and it ended in great sadness and distress. Abraham was brought to see his terrible mistake, and he was given great faith fully to believe in God's Word.

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform” (Romans 4.18-21). This is such a clear example of how the gift of faith enabled him to believe in the Word of God, despite all that appeared contrary to it. Abraham also believed in the Word of God concerning One who was greater than Isaac, even the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8.56).

Moses is given as another example of faith. At the age of eighty, the Lord God told him to return to Egypt to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, through the wilderness, unto the promised land. What faith was given to Moses as he endured all sorts of difficulties and trials along the way! There were times when the children of Israel did not believe the Word of the Lord. There were times when enemies came to fight against them, and other times when Moses’ faith was greatly tried. Yet the Lord led them all the way; Moses was upheld, strengthened, and continued to walk by faith, trusting alone in God. *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11.27).

Ruth is another gracious character in the Word of God who manifested faith in God. She left everything she knew in Moab, to go with her mother-in-law, Naomi, who was also a widow. She went to live the rest of her life in a land she had never seen before, with a people she had only known as enemies. Boaz later said to her, *“It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work [of*

faith], and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust” (Ruth 2.11,12). No doubt, Naomi had spoken to Ruth about the Lord God of Israel. She must have told her about the Word of God and His promises unto His people; what the Lord had done for His people and even about the promised Messiah. Ruth was given faith to believe the Word of God, and she went with Naomi to dwell in the land of Israel amongst the people of God. Even when Naomi tested her sincerity, Ruth replied, “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1.16).

These are just a few examples from the Old Testament of the Lord’s people who bore the fruit of faith. There are also many others in the New Testament. It is this grace of faith that will be manifested as a fruit in all the Lord’s people as they live upon this earth. May we each be prayerfully concerned to know the grace of faith, and may it be manifest in our life, walk and conversation, bringing forth glory to God alone.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about the CARING PROFESSION. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 6 to 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 194 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What was the name of the baby to whom Naomi became nurse? (Ruth 4.16, 17)
2. What word is usually used in the Bible that means a doctor? (Jeremiah 8.22)
3. Jesus likened Himself to a doctor. Who did He say He had come to heal? (Luke 4.18)
4. Who did Jesus say needed a doctor? (Mark 2.17)

5. Who said, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me"? (Exodus 2.9)
6. What proverb about doctors was used tauntingly against the Lord Jesus, especially when He was crucified? (Luke 4)
7. Two midwives are mentioned in Exodus 1. What did they do, in disobedience to Pharaoh's commandment, because they feared God?
8. Which of the four gospels was written by a doctor? (Colossians 4)
9. What "medicine" was used when Hezekiah was "sick unto death" and which the Lord blessed to his recovery? (2 Kings 20)
10. Who said, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children"?

ANSWERS TO AUGUST QUESTIONS

1. Her father's images (idols).
 2. Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which he had forgotten.
 3. A talebearer.
 4. It was revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.
 5. God's secrets are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.
 6. We should do our alms in secret, pray to God in secret and fast in secret. (Matthew 6.4,6,18)
 7. Psalm 139.2,4.
 8. "The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will shew them His covenant." (Psalm 25.14)
 9. The message was that Saul was determined to kill David, and he needed to flee, and David, hidden in the field, understood this. (1 Samuel 20.18-22,33-39)
 10. David. (2 Samuel 12.12)
-

EXCELLENT THINGS

Wake, all our cheerful powers, to praise,
And touch the tuneful strings,
While we our thankful voices raise,
And sing of heavenly things.

The eternal, sovereign love of God,
That source of all our bliss,
When by the Spirit shed abroad,
How excellent is this!

The Spirit's work of sovereign grace,
In age or youthful years,
Where'er this blessed change takes place,
Most excellent appears.

Jesus, the Saviour, Brother, Friend,
Of such poor worms as we,
Whose loving-kindness knows no end,
How excellent is He!

The Saviour's blood and righteousness
Are great beyond compare,
Nor can our loftiest songs express
How excellent they are.

Cheerful, my soul, attend His Word,
Believe, obey and sing,
The gospel is, O bless the Lord,
So excellent a thing.

When I, at death, leave all things here,
And up to Jesus flee,
Then will these glorious things appear
Most excellent to me.

Samuel Medley

The Friendly Companion



“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are
not saved.”
(Jeremiah 8.20)

October 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

The life of Samuel stands out for its godliness, from his earliest days to his last. Like Joseph, Moses, David, Daniel and John the Baptist, the grace of God shone brightly in him, even during very dark times.

The account of Samuel's remarkable birth, after his mother had been barren for many years, has often been a favourite part of God's holy Word. His mother, Hannah, prayed fervently that God would grant her a son, whom she would give back to the Lord. When he was born, his mother gave him the name of Samuel, which means, "asked of God."

Hannah was very faithful to her vow; she brought her young child to the house of God in Shiloh to live with the old high priest, Eli. How hard it must have been to leave the home of his father and mother and to live with a stranger! No doubt, his mother told him why it must be done and encouraged him to be strong, saying that she hoped to come and see him every year. What a difficult thing for a little boy!

While he was yet a young boy, Samuel was called by God. One night, while he was sleeping in the sanctuary, the Lord called his name. Samuel quickly rose and went to old Eli, saying, "*Here am I; for thou calledst me.*" Eli told Samuel that he had not called him. This happened three times. At the third time, Eli perceived that it was the Lord who was calling Samuel. He told him to lie down, and if the call came again, he must answer, "*Speak, LORD; for Thy servant beareth.*" The Lord did come again and called Samuel. He revealed solemn things that He would do to the house of Eli because of the sins of his sons. What honour the Lord bestowed upon the young child Samuel in giving him this revelation! In doing so, the Lord passed over all the aged men in Israel.

Samuel's case shows that God can and does speak to those who are in their youth. Satan may tell you that God does not

Speak to such. Many who are older may believe that God does not speak to the young, but God's Word reveals that He does.

You may wonder how you would know if God has spoken to you. You will know it by the solemnity that will come upon you. You will also know it by the weight of His word upon your spirit. You will know it by an unexplainable unction (life and power) that will attend it. You will also know it by the abiding effect it has in your heart. May the Lord truly speak to you! *"The Lord revealed Himself to Samuel ... by the Word of the LORD"* (1 Samuel 3.21).

As Samuel grew, he became an esteemed judge and prophet. He anointed the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David. Every year, Samuel went in a circuit to certain cities and gave judgment in matters respecting the law of God.

Samuel, like Moses before him, often interceded for Israel that God would not destroy them for their sins. In the prophet Jeremiah's day, God spoke unto Israel: *"Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of My sight"* (Jeremiah 15.1). Even after his death, God honoured Samuel by placing his name with that of Moses.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

In the northern hemisphere, the harvesting of crops takes place mostly from September to November, with October being the most productive month. Perhaps some of you planted vegetable gardens this summer, and you have been reaping the produce for some time.

Farmers who laboured to sow their crops of grain back in April and May are now busy bringing in the increase. Whether they acknowledge God or not, the Lord truly does give the increase.

It is wonderful to see the fields just as the little green shoots are sprouting upward. As the grain grows and matures, it raises the hope for a good harvest. Light, heat and moisture will determine the quality of the grain, and thus the price that the farmer will be paid.

The picture on the front cover shows a very large wheat field being harvested. The machines cut the stalks of grain and separate the grain kernels from the chaff. The chaff is returned back onto the field, while the grain is taken away and gathered into bins. What a miracle each harvest is!

Each year, as the crops are harvested, it speaks to us of the harvest of the world. That is the end of the world, about which the Lord taught His disciples. The Lord spoke a parable about a man who sowed good seed in his field. Likewise, an enemy came by night and sowed tares (weeds) beside the wheat. Both the wheat (the godly) and the tares (the ungodly) would grow together until the harvest. The harvest is the end of the world, when the tares will be gathered and burned in the fire. The wheat will be gathered unto the Lord Himself.

This is the field, the world below,
In which the sowers come to sow,
Jesus the wheat, Satan the tares,
For so the Word of truth declares;
And soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home.

Most awful truth, and is it so?
Must all the world the harvest know?
All who profess are wheat or tares:
Harvest will come at unawares.
Yes, soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home.

To love my sins, a saint to appear,
To grow with wheat, and be a tare,
May serve me while on earth below,
Where tares and wheat together grow,
But soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home.

But all who truly righteous be,
Their Father's kingdom then shall see,
Shine like the sun for ever there,
He that hath ears then let him hear,
For soon the reaping time will come,
And angels shout the harvest home.

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JEHORAM, A WICKED KING OF JUDAH**

Jehoshaphat was a good king of Judah, and he feared the Lord. However, he made peace with Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. His eldest son, Jehoram, was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab.

When Jehoshaphat died, Jehoram became king of Judah. He did evil like the kings of Israel. He slew all of his brothers and made the people of Judah worship idols. Then, the Lord caused enemies to come against him. They took away his sons, his wives, and everything in his house. Only the youngest son was left. *“And after all this the Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease.”*

After two years, Jehoram died of his sickness, but the people of Judah were not sad. They did not mourn for him or bury him with the other kings. The people made Ahaziah, his youngest son, king in his place. However, Ahaziah was wicked like his father, because his mother, Athaliah, taught him to do evil.

QUESTIONS:

1. Jehoram was married to the daughter of whom?
2. With what did the Lord smite him? (3 words)
3. Who taught Ahaziah to do evil? (3 words)

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Syria (of the Syrians).
2. The king of Syria.
3. Hazael.

Contributed

*“... he reigned
in Jerusalem
eight years,
and departed
without being
desired.”*

2 Chronicles 21.20

BIBLE LESSONS**THE REBELLION OF MIRIAM AND AARON**

Moses became so weary of the complaining and murmuring of the children of Israel that he felt unable to bear with them any longer. What a hard way it was! The Lord was very gracious to him. He told Moses to gather seventy men, who were known to be elders in Israel, to the tabernacle. The Lord said that he would take of the spirit which was upon Moses and put it upon the elders, so they could help *"bear the burden [care] of the people."*

Moses must have been very thankful for this help. The children of Israel were a rebellious and stiffnecked (stubborn) people, and there would be many more times when the spirit and patience of Moses would be sorely tried. Little could he imagine who would be the cause of his next trouble. It was his own sister Miriam and his brother Aaron, the high priest. The Lord tells us in the gospels: *"And a man's foes shall be they of his own household"* (Matthew 10.36). They came against Moses because of his Ethiopian wife. Why were they not troubled by that before?

It is very sad, but true, that when we become dissatisfied with someone, we can find many different things in their life to justify ourselves for treating them unkindly. Even members of churches may find small and petty things to use as an excuse for acting unkindly toward their minister or another member.

It was not so much the Ethiopian wife of Moses that stirred up Miriam and Aaron, but rather a spirit of pride in their own hearts. The real cause was jealousy. They said, *"Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not spoken also by us?"* That was the real cause of their enmity against Moses! We read: *"And the LORD heard it."*

What could Moses do? The Bible tells us that *"the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."* The man who stood boldly before Pharaoh and pronounced the plagues upon Egypt, the man who then stood

before God in Mount Sinai to receive the law, was so meek before his fellow men.

In Psalm 76, we read that God will arise to judgment *“to save all the meek of the earth”* and *“the remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.”* That is just what He did for Moses.

The Lord suddenly spoke to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, *“Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation.”* As Moses, Aaron and Miriam stood at the door of the tabernacle, *“the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle.”* Then the Lord called Aaron and Miriam to come near and hear His words. He told them that if any man was called to be a prophet, He would make it known by giving that man a vision and speaking unto him. The Lord said that it was different with His faithful servant Moses: *“With him will I speak mouth to mouth [face to face], ... and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold [the glory of His presence]: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?”* The anger of the Lord burned against Aaron and Miriam, and He departed from them.

As the Lord departed from the tabernacle, Miriam's appearance became white like snow; it was the dreaded disease of leprosy. What a solemn judgment the Lord brought upon her! The fact that Aaron was not inflicted with the disease suggests that Miriam was the instigator of their rebellion against Moses.

Aaron looked at his sister with abhorrence because of the leprosy. He pleaded with Moses, *“I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.”* Miriam, who was so quick to speak against Moses, was ashamed and said nothing.

Aaron asked Moses to intercede for Miriam that she might be healed. Moses was ready to forgive them and he prayed: *“Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee.”* The Lord answered Moses, *“Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.”*

You can read about this in Numbers chapters 11 and 12.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many men were appointed to help Moses?
2. What were the names of the two who became envious of Moses?
3. What does the Bible say that Moses was above all men on the earth? (2 words)
4. What disease came upon Miriam?
5. How long was Miriam shut out of the camp?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. The Passover.
2. The pillar of a cloud and the pillar of fire.
3. Taberah. A burning.
4. Quails.
5. Graves of lust.

“EXCEPT YE BE CONVERTED”

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18.3).

Girls and boys, no one is too young to need conversion; no one is too young to be converted. You know, the various testimonies we have heard before our church, many of them have spoken of how the Lord began to deal very solemnly, very graciously with them when very tiny children. I remember one speaking before our church of when being very small, taking a sweet and the Lord bringing that one under deep, solemn concern for stealing. I remember another one speaking about being a very small child and disobeying her mother and feeling the wickedness of it.

I wonder if you boys and girls sometimes only think of religion as being for older people. I wonder if you sometimes

think that there is plenty of time. The point is this, that there is none who is too young to die. None of us knows how long we have to live. So I would put the question to each of you: if you suddenly died, would you be in heaven or hell? You say, "How do I know?" Jesus tells you, "*Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" The point is this: have you been converted or have you not?

One Thursday evening just over a year ago, I came into the pulpit. Of course, it was seven o'clock and the clock was showing seven o'clock. When the first hymn had finished being sung, the clock said five minutes to seven, not five minutes past seven. As I read the chapter, I kept glancing at the clock and realised it was going the opposite way round. When I had finished reading the chapter, it was a quarter to seven, and I wondered if there was something the matter with me. When we finished the prayer, it was half past six. We finished the service at half past five. I had been in the pulpit all those years and the clock had always been going the right way round, and suddenly it started going the opposite way.

That is just what conversion is. Your life is going one way from when you are born, and then one day there is a complete change and everything starts going round the opposite way. We need that to take place in our lives which took place with the clock. Like a person being on a journey and he is driving on and on and suddenly he realises it is the wrong direction, and he has to stop and turn round and start driving back completely opposite to the way he was once driving. Except that happens to you, Jesus says you will not get to heaven.

This complete turning round, this complete going in the opposite direction, has it happened to you or not? With some, it happens very suddenly, for instance Saul of Tarsus. With others it happens more gradually. They cannot tell you the exact spot, time or place when it happened. But the point is this: there is that complete turning round, that going in the opposite direction. And the point I am pressing on you is, has it happened to you? It either has or it has not, and really if you are

honest, you know it. In your innermost heart you know this, whether your life has always gone on the same or whether there has come a complete change in it.

B.A. Ramsbottom, Excerpt from Bethel Pulpit #48

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Thomas Cecil Gibson, of Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire, died on August 10th, 1980, aged 88. The following is his own account of his early impressions.

I was born into this sinful world, a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, on June 11th, 1892. Having been brought up under the sound of the truth, it has often been a matter of exercise with me that I cannot look back to any particular spot or time when I hope the Lord first began with me. I have sometimes been sinful enough to wish He had left me to grow up to a certain age in ignorance and then given me a clear and unmistakable call by grace. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are His ways our ways. *"Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, What makest Thou?"* (Isaiah 45.9). *"Hath not the potter power over the clay,"* to fashion His vessels as He please? (Romans 9.21)

I believe the solemnity of death and eternity, and that I had a never-dying soul that must live forever, were deeply impressed upon my mind at a very early age. I do not think I could have been more than two or three years of age when, at my mother's knee, she taught me several of the little hymns in the Clifton Hymnal, and these are the lines that fastened themselves upon my young mind:

And am I born to die,
To lay this body down?

Also:

Let me think, if I were dying,
(And I very soon must die),
On what hope am I relying,
To what refuge could I fly?

I used to ponder these lines over in my young mind and wonder what would become of me should I die, feeling I must go either to heaven or to hell. I also well remember, as I was taught the children's little prayer, "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild," how earnestly, and I believe prayerfully, I uttered the words:

In the kingdom of Thy grace
Give this little child a place.

Thus, these early impressions were made, and I believe fixed by the Holy Spirit as a nail in a sure place. One thing that gives me some small measure of hope and encouragement is this: I feel that I did not begin with God, but that God began with me, for sure I am that I was too young to have even any natural thought or concern as to my state as a sinner before a holy God or that I possessed a soul that must live forever. I was brought up under the sound of the truth [at Ebenezer, Luton] and heard the pathway and exercises of the Lord's people traced out, and what a blessed people they were. I used to feel:

With them numbered may I be,
Now and in eternity.

Thus I grew up, sometimes apparently indifferent and unconcerned, but at other times the things of eternity would be a great concern to me, and bring me again and again to cry to the Lord to have mercy upon me and put His fear in my heart and give me to know that I had an interest in His grace.

THE FRENCH SHOEMAKER

Many years ago, a boy called Auguste was born in the French village of Laheyecourt. His father was a farmer, a Roman Catholic, like everybody else in the village. Auguste was the eldest son in the family. When he grew old enough, he was sent to the local school and did very well there. He might have preferred to go on with his studies, but his father had no such thoughts.

Auguste did not seem strong enough for farm work, so he was apprenticed to the village shoemaker.

After a few years, Auguste was thought to be old enough to go further away. Travelling to Bar-le-duc, the nearest town, he there began to look for a situation. In the providence of God, he found a place in the workshop of a Christian shoemaker and remained with him for a year.

Auguste was very happy under the kind treatment of his Protestant master, and he found the other young men to be very pleasant and friendly. Some of them came from Germany, and frequently at work these men would sing together some of their lovely psalms and hymns. Auguste would not go with the rest to the Protestant place of worship, but he was greatly attracted by the music of his fellow-workmen and grew familiar with the words. Moreover, his master gave him a New Testament, which he accepted with pleasure. On his last Sunday, he was persuaded to attend an evening prayer meeting at the Protestant church. Much to his surprise, he heard himself being prayed for by name – a thing which touched him very much.

The next morning, the shoemaker and all of his workmen went to the station with Auguste to see him off! They all said goodbye very kindly, and the shoemaker took the boy aside to give him some sound advice about going out into the great world. “I want to leave a verse with you, Auguste,” said the master. “Let me mark it in your New Testament, and I shall pray that God will plant it in your heart.” The verse that he showed to Auguste and marked heavily was James 1 verse 5: *“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”*

Auguste travelled to the first big town, where he easily found work. However, after a few months, he set off again. His intention was to settle near Paris, so he began to work his way from town to town. At last, he found a position that suited him in a village just outside of Paris, and there he decided to stay.

During all this time of growing up, Auguste never lost his love for books that was instilled in him by the village schoolmaster.

Now that he was his own master, he used all his leisure time in walking to Paris to buy books. On one of those book-buying trips, on a warm, summer day, Auguste got so hot and tired that he sat down to rest on the steps of a church. After a short time, he heard singing that sounded familiar; it reminded him of the hymns of his fellow workmen at Bar-le-duc. Peeping in at the door, he could see that it was a Protestant church because it was very plain inside; there were no images or crucifixes. He crept in, enjoyed the singing, and willingly listened to the sermon.

The pastor rose, and in a peculiarly deep voice, gave out his text: *"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."* The stranger in the pew immediately recognised the words, and they smote his heart with living power. Listening with absorbed attention, Auguste saw himself lacking wisdom indeed, an ignorant and needy sinner. In the weeks that followed, the words of the text were constantly in his heart, and he was led by the Holy Ghost to ask for the true wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. God gave him his request, and Auguste became a new man, born again from above.

A few months later, the pastor at Bar-le-duc received a letter from Auguste, glowing with joy and thankfulness, as he told of the wonderful change that had been brought about. He told the pastor that he felt a longing to make known to others the wisdom of God which had brought so much happiness to himself. "Of course," he went on, "I have no real education, and all I can do is to make boots and shoes! Do you think, therefore, that I should stifle this longing to become a minister? Or may I keep it before me as something to strive for, if the way is opened?"

I do not know how the pastor replied, but it was not long before the Lord showed Auguste the next step. A serious illness laid him low; after many weeks, when Auguste was able to be about again, he came back to his native village to convalesce. During that time, he was able to pay many visits to the pastor at Bar-le-duc, and at last the pastor invited him to stay in his house.

One day, news arrived of the death of a Protestant in one of the nearby villages. At that same time, the pastor was laid aside by illness, and the church elders suggested that Auguste should take the funeral. This would involve praying in the house of mourning and then preaching at the graveside.

With fear and trembling, Auguste went forth to preach his first sermon. The man who died was the only Protestant in the village. He had married a Roman Catholic girl, and the three children were brought up in that faith. His wife had died, and her mother cared for the children; she hated the Protestant faith and even the sight of her son-in-law's Bible. During his last illness, the poor man spoke to his children, regretting that he had not brought them up as Protestants, but urging them to read his Bible. It was under these circumstances that Auguste conducted his first service. Beside the coffin, he prayed fervently for the three desolate children, the eldest of whom was only sixteen. All of the children were greatly impressed and comforted, in spite of the hostility of their relations.

At the graveside, the whole village turned out to attend, partly from sympathy with the children, but chiefly from curiosity to see what a Protestant funeral was like. It was an ordeal for Auguste, but, filled with the Holy Spirit, he was enabled to preach with great power. For the first time, the crowd of villagers heard the gospel of the grace of God.

Auguste returned home, entirely convinced that he was called of God to the ministry. He sold a little property that had come to him, and with the proceeds, he was able to pay for his training.

God confirmed Auguste's first sermon with signs following. A number of the villagers begin to seek after God, coming to the services at Bar-le-duc, and all three children were led to put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. The grandmother threw her son's Bible into the fire on the night of the funeral, but the children clung to the truths that they heard from Auguste. Eventually, they were taken to live with their father's Protestant relations.

Andrew's Prayer and other Stories

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF GEORGE WASHINGTON

George Washington is well known to Americans for the accomplishments of his adult life as commander-in-chief during the American Revolution, as a statesman and as the first president of the United States. Few are familiar with his youth. Yet, what occurs in one's youth often determines what one becomes as an adult. George Washington was often in prayer from the time of his youth.

In 1754, a war erupted in America, known as the French and Indian War. It was a struggle between France and England for colonial supremacy in America. Both France and England were eager to claim the American continent for themselves and to establish trading rights. Trading posts on both sides were attacked and pillaged as the dispute escalated.

A young surveyor, named George Washington, was selected to make a perilous trek of more than five hundred miles through a pathless, wintry wilderness to deliver a document to the French commander. It outlined the English claims to the Ohio Valley and warned against further intrusion into that region. Washington was just twenty-one years of age at the time. With an interpreter and a guide, he endured snow and storms, crossed over mountain passes, and travelled through dense forests and into flooded valleys, where they were forced to cross raging rivers on rafts. Washington delivered the document, but the French general said that he had been commanded to remove every Englishman from the Ohio valley and he meant to carry out his orders. Washington returned to the English headquarters at Williamsburg within eleven weeks, receiving widespread praise for his boldness and persistence in overcoming dangers.

Negotiations having failed, there was eventually a conflict over the disputed territory. George Washington was made a lieutenant colonel and asked to join other forces to recapture the site of a fort at the junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers. It was a brutal battle, with tremendous

loss of lives and the eventual retreat of the English armies. Washington's part in the battle of the Monongahela is one of the most significant events of his early life and helped to shape his character. He wrote to his brother, "By the all-powerful dispensations of providence, I have been protected beyond all human probability or expectation; for I had four bullets through my coat, and two horses shot under me, yet escaped unhurt, although death was levelling my companions on every side of me!"

A famous Indian warrior, who was a leader on the side of the French in the battle, was often heard to testify publicly that he had fired seventeen times at Washington with his rifle and could not bring him to the ground. Considering that these experienced marksmen rarely missed their target, it seems evident that an invisible hand turned aside the bullets. Washington's escape was so remarkable that special mention was made in a sermon preached shortly after the battle by Rev. Samuel Davies, who later became the president of Princeton University. He said, "I cannot but hope that Providence has preserved that heroic youth, Colonel Washington, in so signal a manner for some important service to his country."

Fifteen years after the battle, a company of Indians, led by an old, respected chief, approached George Washington and his friend, Dr. Craik, as they were travelling toward the western territories. Through an interpreter, the old chief gave this account of what had happened: "I am a chief and ruler over my tribes. My influence extends to the waters of the great lakes and to the far blue mountains. I have travelled a long and weary path that I might see the young warrior of the great battle. It was on the day when the white man's blood mixed with the streams of our forest that I first beheld this chief [Washington]. I called to my young men and said, 'Mark yon tall and daring warrior ... Quick, let your aim be certain, and he dies.' Our rifles were levelled, rifles which never missed – 'twas all in vain, a power mightier far than we, shielded you. Listen! The Great Spirit

protects that man [pointing at Washington], and guides his destinies – he will become the chief of nations ... I am come to pay homage to the man who is the particular favourite of heaven, and who can never die in battle.”

Today, few have heard about this important story. However, it has been documented in more than three dozen diverse historical texts. Through this account, an even greater appreciation and awe may be felt for the manner in which God sovereignly intervened and preserved in the past. It may also give hope to those in the future who seek the Lord and put their trust in Him.

*Adapted from An Account of God's Providential Care by
David Barton*

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

“Meekness”

The next fruit of the Spirit set forth in Galatians chapter five is meekness. Meekness is a most beautiful fruit that is found in every Christian. We should remember that since these fruits are produced by the Holy Spirit, it is not an option whether a child of God shall bear them or not. By His gracious dealings, the Holy Spirit will make sure they are manifest in His people: *“And every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15.2). So, when the Lord will have His people bear the fruit of meekness, He will deal with them in such a way as to cause them to bring it forth. It also follows that it is not possible for one who is not born again of the Holy Spirit to bring forth real spiritual fruit, although many professing Christians may bring forth what appears to be fruit. This fruit may be compared to what we call ornamental fruit. It looks very similar to real fruit, but it is so bitter that it cannot be eaten.

What is it to be meek? Sometimes it can be very difficult to describe the meaning of a word. As we have written before, it is often helpful to understand the opposite meaning. In

researching this, we came upon the following: “Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity (calmness, composure) of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.” Also, “Meekness respecteth the spirit or inward man, being a virtue that moderateth inward anger and rash passions.” Meekness is associated with humility and quietness, yet it also submits to God’s absolute authority.

Would anyone dare to suggest that being meek is weak or soft? Then let them remember the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Almighty God: *“Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11.28-30). The Lord Jesus clearly states that He is meek. Throughout His life upon this earth, He displayed much meekness despite all the attempts of His enemies to provoke Him to react angrily against them. The only time we read of the Lord Jesus appearing to be angry was when He saw the temple (the house of God) being used as a place of commerce. *“And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves”* (Matthew 21.12,13). We do not believe that Jesus “lost His temper,” but He was so grieved to see what was taking place in such a sacred place. He was determined to show His displeasure by casting them all out. In the very next verse, we read that the blind and lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them all. Let us also remember that it is written, *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”* (1 Corinthians 6.19). This is why the Lord deals very harshly with His people at times when they defile their hearts through sin. God is angry with the wickedness of our hearts by nature. He will destroy

and cast out all that is defiling, in order to make the hearts of His people a “house of prayer” to His own glory.

The meekness of the Lord Jesus was manifest when He went up to Jerusalem. *“All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by the prophet [Zechariah], saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass”* (Matthew 21.4,5). He did not ride on a majestic horse draped with robes and all the pageantry that would be associated with the entrance of an earthly king, but He meekly sat on a poor man’s beast. In Zechariah’s prophecy, the word “lowly” is used for “meek.” This also sheds light on what the word “meek” really means.

His meekness was also seen in the judgment hall, when an earthly ruler treated the Lord from heaven with such contempt and provocation, yet the Lord Jesus answered him not a word. It has been said that the only crown the Lord Jesus wore upon earth was the crown of thorns. Yet, as the King of kings, He was in absolute control of all events, fulfilling His wonderful plan of salvation.

Moses is also spoken of as one who displayed meekness, in spite of being in a position of authority and leadership. *“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth”* (Numbers 12.3). This is mentioned at the time when Aaron and Miriam (his older siblings) were jealous of their younger brother. When they spoke against Moses, we read, *“And the Lord heard it”* (Numbers 12.2). Let us always remember that if we speak against others in an unkind way, the Lord God is listening. In this modern day, when a lot of communication is through technology, we should also consider that everything that is messaged to others is noted by God. Be very careful what you say or write! Aaron and Miriam were dealt with very solemnly by God. They had been lacking meekness in this matter, and God did not overlook it. Throughout all the wilderness pilgrimage, Moses was the God-ordained leader. He displayed wonderful leadership qualities

despite the bad behaviour of the children of Israel who often tried to undermine his authority. Moses meekly continued as the Lord God upheld him.

In Psalm 25 we read, *"The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way"* (verse 9). For someone to be guided or taught, that person needs to be willing to listen to instruction. May we be kept from that spirit which makes it appear as if we know better than others. In this day, when self-confidence is often associated with success, may we not display the attitude that we know it all.

Jonah had a very hard lesson to learn when he was determined not to go to Nineveh as God had commanded. After the storm in the sea, and then three days and nights in the belly of that great fish, the Lord God mercifully spared him in answer to prayer. Then Jonah very meekly obeyed God when the commandment came the second time to go to Nineveh. *"Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power"* (Psalm 110.3).

We are living in a day when those who are truly meek are despised by many. They are thought to be weak because they do not display over-confidence in themselves or a determination to have their own way. May we know something of the grace of God in our hearts, causing us to live unto Him and to bring forth the fruit of meekness.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about the REFERENCES BY JESUS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 9 & 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 218 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. Genesis 2.24; Matthew 19.4-6. What should a man leave, and what should he cleave to?

2. Isaiah 56.7; Mark 11.17. What should God's house be, and what had it become?
3. 1 Kings 10.1; Matthew 12.42. Why did the Queen of Sheba visit King Solomon?
4. Genesis 7.13-21; Luke 17.26-27. What judgment did Jesus refer to, which, though long delayed, came suddenly and without remedy to so many?
5. Jonah 1.17; Matthew 12.39-41. What happened to Jonah and what did the Lord Jesus compare this with?
6. Exodus 3.4-6; Luke 20.37-38. What doctrine which the Sadducees denied (see Acts 23.8) did Jesus teach in referring to the account of Moses and the burning bush?
7. Genesis 19.26; Luke 17.32. Lot's wife is a solemn warning to us – what happened to her and why?
8. Isaiah 29.13; Mark 7.6. What was wrong with the worship of the Pharisees?
9. In Luke 4, Jesus referred to miracles relating to two Old Testament prophets. Who were the two prophets and why were the Jews so angry?
10. When Jesus was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4), what three Old Testament scriptures did Jesus quote in answer to his temptations?

ANSWERS TO SEPTEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Obed.
2. Physician.
3. The broken-hearted.
4. They that are sick.
5. Pharaoh's daughter.
6. "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4.23)
7. The midwives refused to kill baby boys when they were born, but saved them alive. (Exodus 1.17)
8. Luke. (Colossians 4.14)
9. A lump of figs. (2 Kings 20.7)
10. The Apostle Paul. (1 Thessalonians 2.7)

O SPEAK TO ME!

For one great favour oft I've prayed,
Prayed that Thy love might be displayed,
In one soft word to me conveyed –
O speak to me!

Thou sayest, "My sheep do hear My voice";
Am I a sheep, Lord, of Thy choice?
Speak, then and make my heart rejoice,
O speak to me!

If 'tis Thy will that I should wait
For many years at mercy's gate,
For Christ revealed to my poor heart,
Yet speak to me!

Tell me I shall not wait in vain,
That I at length the Pearl shall gain,
Thus help me to my suit maintain,
O speak to me!

Young People's Hymnal 127

The Friendly Companion



“These all died in faith, not having received the promises,
but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of
them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were
strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”
(Hebrews 11.13)

November 2020

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OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

This month will mark a very significant event in world history. Four hundred years ago, in November of 1620, a small group of one hundred and two persons, known as the Pilgrims, finally arrived in North America. They could never have imagined or perceived what would arise from their venture.

The providence of God is wonderfully seen in the events of the seventeenth century (1600's). In 1605, God intervened when a wicked plot to kill the king of England and blow up the Houses of Parliament was uncovered. The death of the king would, no doubt, have prevented the printing of the King James Bible in 1611. God truly does reign among the children of men.

Even though King James had authorised the printing of the Bible that now bears his name, he opposed the godly remnant throughout his kingdom. They had separated from the Church of England because they thought many of its beliefs and practices were unscriptural. These people were given the name of "Separatists." In spite of fines and imprisonment, this little group increased in numbers. Having heard that there was religious freedom in Holland, many endeavoured to escape from their homeland. In the years 1607 to 1608, many of the small congregations paid ship merchants to ferry them over the English Channel to Holland. They sold all of their possessions and risked their lives to do so. One group found that journey to be very perilous, as a fierce storm drove them off course, and it was two weeks before they arrived in Amsterdam.

These exiles formed several congregations in Amsterdam. After about a year, one group, led by John Robinson, decided to start afresh at Leyden. They had strong views about independent church government, and thus they decided to leave their English brethren. Until the time of their departure to America, the congregation in Leyden lived in sweet harmony amongst themselves. Their pastor, John Robinson, was a man of great abilities, with a calm, quiet demeanour. He was blessed

with much light in the Word of God and had a very gracious effect upon his congregation.

Although they enjoyed religious freedom in Holland, the Separatists experienced many hardships. The worldly influence around them proved to be a great temptation to their children. With the difference in language, they felt themselves to be foreigners in a strange country. By 1617, steps were taken to obtain a passage to the Virginia Colony that had already been established in America. It was a matter of much prayer and supplication to the Lord, that He would make a way for them if it were His will. They needed a word of promise from the king of England that they would be given religious freedom in the New World.

It was decided that only part of the Leyden congregation should go to America, the rest hoping to follow in the next year. They received word that a group of Separatists in England had obtained passage to America on a ship named the *Mayflower*. They would wait for the people from Leyden, who would be coming aboard a smaller ship named the *Speedwell*. The group of Separatists who went to America later became known as the Pilgrims. A pilgrim is a person who goes on a journey for religious reasons.

The parting of the Pilgrims from their brethren in the Leyden congregation was very sad. They joined together for one last service, committing each other unto God. When they arrived at Southampton, the *Mayflower* was waiting for them. The majority of the Pilgrims on the *Speedwell* were assigned to go on board the *Mayflower*.

The two ships set sail on August 5th, 1620. After a few days, the *Speedwell* suffered a severe leak, causing the two ships to return to the port at Dartmouth. After repairs were made, they started out again, only to experience further troubles. Over three hundred miles out in the Atlantic, the *Speedwell* began to leak again. They were forced to turn back once more. How tried they must have been! Was it really the will of God for the Pilgrims to seek refuge in America? This time they returned to

the port in Plymouth, and it was decided that the *Speedwell* was no longer seaworthy. The *Mayflower* was already over-crowded, but they made room for at least twelve of the thirty Pilgrims who had been on the *Speedwell*.

Finally, on September 6th, 1620, the *Mayflower* departed on its long, lonely journey across the Atlantic Ocean. For the first few weeks, the journey seemed to prosper. To their dismay, the fair weather did not last; the ocean became very tempestuous, with mighty waves beating upon the ship. The ship was twisted so hard that the beam supporting the main mast cracked. Through God's mercy, one of the passengers had brought a long iron screw, by which they were able to bring the beam back into place. The storms kept coming with gale-force winds. Passengers became very sea-sick, and disease spread through the ship. We can hardly conceive how primitive the conditions were. The air was chilly, their clothes were wet, their food was meagre, and their faith was sorely tried.

Finally, on November 9th, they arrived on the shores of the New World. The strong storms had blown them so far off course that they were far north of the Virginia Colony, their intended destination. Knowing they would have to start a new colony, before they left the ship, they agreed to enter into a covenant, though very basic, whereby they pledged to conduct themselves cordially to one another.

Having been blessed with religious freedom in our times, we cannot really understand how oppressive it must have been when the Pilgrims could not worship God according to the teachings of the Holy Spirit in their heart. The longing for religious freedom enabled them to risk their lives and to endure such extreme hardships to obtain it.

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

While still aboard the *Mayflower*, the Pilgrims drafted and signed a compact or constitution for their new colony. It was a

brief document establishing a precedent for constitutional law in America based on the two principles of faith and freedom. It became known as the Mayflower Compact. Our front cover shows a painting of the Pilgrims signing the Mayflower Compact aboard the *Mayflower*. The text of the document follows:

“In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c. Having undertaken for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and the honour of our King and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia; do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.”

The Mayflower Compact was signed by forty-one men on November 11th, 1620. It would prove to be a cornerstone for law and government in America. It was clearly founded on the higher law of the Bible, rather than upon the whims of man.

THE GUNPOWDER TREASON AND PLOT

When I was a boy at school, on November 5th each year, we would go around the playground singing:

Remember, remember the 5th of November
Gunpowder, treason and plot.

This, of course, referred to November 5th, 1605, when a man named Guy Fawkes, with others, had schemed to blow up the English Parliament with gunpowder. He and the others had secretly hidden the gunpowder in the basement of the British

Houses of Parliament. Had this plot succeeded, the effect would have been disastrous for the people of England. Assembled for that occasion would have been the King and Queen, the Princes and both Houses of Parliament, along with the Prime Minister, his Cabinet and all the leaders of the British nation.

Guy Fawkes was a Roman Catholic, and his aim was to have the Pope as the dictator of the people. Yet, there was something else that would have been prevented had he succeeded, something of utmost importance.

King James, in January 1604, had called together the prominent leaders of the churches to a conference in Hampton Court Palace. The reason for this meeting was to discuss the production of an accurate version of the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, that could be understood by ministers and people alike, a version which would fulfil William Tyndale's desire: "If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scripture than thou doest." That had been Tyndale's answer to a Roman Catholic priest.

William Tyndale was martyred on October 6th, 1536. Nevertheless, he had laid the foundation which was to lead to the King James (Authorised) Bible, first printed in 1611. God preserved the King and the translators so that the Bible should be printed, and God has maintained it to the present day, being the most accurate version of the Scriptures ever to be produced in the English language. Despite the multitude of versions produced in recent years, the King James (Authorised) Bible will never be improved upon for accuracy and simplicity of style.

How we recognise God's hand in the preservation of the truth! The question is – Do we believe His Word?

M.T. Pickett

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JEHU ANOINTED KING OF ISRAEL**

Elisha the prophet gave a box of oil to a young prophet. He told him to find Jehu, a captain of Israel, and take him into a room alone. He was to pour the oil on Jehu's head and say, *"Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel ... And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab."*

Then Jehu rode in his chariot to Jezreel, where Joram, king of Israel, had gone to be healed. He had been wounded in battle, and Ahaziah, king of Judah, had come to see him. A watchman spied the company of Jehu coming toward the city with great speed.

King Joram and King Ahaziah went out to meet Jehu in their chariots. When they saw that Jehu had not come in peace, they turned and fled. Jehu killed Joram with his bow and arrow. His captains followed after Ahaziah and killed him also. Joram and Ahaziah were from the wicked house of Ahab, whom the Lord had told Jehu to destroy.

When Jehu entered the city, the wicked queen Jezebel was looking out of a window. At Jehu's command, the servants threw her out of the window and she died.

QUESTIONS:

1. Who was anointed king over Israel?
2. Which two kings of the house of Ahab were killed?
3. Which wicked queen was thrown out of a window?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. Ahab.
2. An incurable disease.
3. His mother Athaliah.

*“By Me
kings reign,
and princes
decree
justice.”*

Proverbs 8.15

BIBLE LESSONS**THE SPIES SENT OUT**

The children of Israel were now approaching the land of Canaan. Jacob and his sons had left the land of Canaan to sojourn in Egypt when Joseph was the governor, more than four hundred years before. They probably thought they would return to the land God had promised to them when the famine was over. However, Pharaoh had said that the land of Goshen was the best part of Egypt, and so it proved to be. The children of Israel had no desire to return to Canaan after the famine.

Joseph's brothers and their children must have had fond memories of the land of Canaan. No doubt, they told the generations born in Egypt about the richness of the land and its bountiful blessings. Surely, they told them that God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that their seed would inherit the land. However, by the time the children of Israel journeyed out of Egypt, much of that knowledge had been forgotten.

Now, as they approached the borders of Canaan, they asked Moses to send men to spy out the land. They said that these men would be able to tell them the best place to enter and the nature of the cities in the land. The saying pleased Moses, and he appointed twelve men, one from each tribe. Of the twelve men, there were only two whose names would be remembered: Caleb, from the tribe of Judah, and Joshua, Moses' servant, from the tribe of Ephraim.

They spent forty days observing the cities, the people and the abundance of the land. When they came to the brook of Eshcol, they cut down a branch with a cluster of grapes so large that they had to carry it on a pole between two men. There was plenty of grass for their flocks and fertile fields to grow their grain. There were fruit trees in abundance and streams of water flowing down the mountains and hills into the valleys. It was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey.

When they returned to the camp of Israel, the men told Moses and the people, *"We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this*

[the cluster of grapes] is the fruit of it." They also showed them the pomegranates and figs they had taken.

Sadly, ten of the spies brought an evil report, saying, *"the people be strong ... and the cities are walled, and very great."* Then they added, *"And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, ... and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight."*

When Caleb heard the words of the ten spies, his spirit was stirred. He stood before Moses and the people, saying, *"Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."* Caleb's faith enabled him to look right past the high-walled cities and the mighty giants unto the mighty God of Jacob.

However, the men that went with him cried out louder, *"We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we."* They gave such an evil report that the congregation of Israel wept all night and murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying, *"Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness!"* What a solemn wish! How careful we should be in all of our expressions and in the thoughts of our hearts. What if God should act according to them? He did so to the unbelieving spies and the multitude who followed them. None of them would enter the land of Canaan, but they would die in the wilderness.

The people were determined to appoint a new captain over them and to return to Egypt. When Moses and Aaron heard it, they fell on their faces before the whole congregation. Joshua and Caleb rent their clothes as a sign of deep distress and grief. They tried to encourage the people, saying, *"The land ... is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; ... their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not."*

Seeing the Lord's servants, Moses and Aaron, fallen on their faces, and hearing the words of Joshua and Caleb, should have caused the people to consider and to follow their advice.

However, their unbelief was so great that they forgot their deliverance from Egypt and Pharaoh's army. They forgot the miracles God had performed for them; the bread from heaven and the water from the rock. Their anger was as strong as their unbelief, and they took up stones to kill Joshua and Caleb.

You can read about this in Numbers chapters 13 and 14, and Deuteronomy chapter 1.

QUESTIONS:

1. How many spies did Moses send to spy out the land?
2. Who was appointed from the tribe of Judah? Ephraim?
3. For how many days did they spy out the land?
4. What were the people determined to appoint over them?
5. And where would they return?
6. What did Joshua and Caleb say had departed from the people of the land?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. Seventy.
2. Miriam and Aaron.
3. Very meek.
4. Leprosy.
5. Seven days.

THE PILGRIMS REACH THEIR NEW LAND

Four hundred years ago, on November 9th, 1620, the Pilgrims arrived on the shores of North America. William Bradford, who was one of those Pilgrims, wrote, "Being thus arrived in a good harbour, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth." They had been at sea for sixty-five

days and sailed for 2,812 nautical miles, encountering fierce storms that threatened to destroy the ship. During that perilous voyage, one man died, and a baby boy was born. The *Mayflower* landed near the coast of Cape Cod, north of where they had intended to settle in Virginia. Stormy seas and dangerous shoals kept them from sailing farther south.

There were no friends to welcome the Pilgrims, and no houses or inns in which they might find shelter. It was nearly winter, and the land before them presented a wild and savage view; a desolate wilderness, possibly full of wild beasts and wild men. William Bradford wrote, "What could now sustain them but the Spirit of God and His grace?"

For weeks, the Pilgrims slept aboard the *Mayflower*, while groups of explorers searched for a suitable site to build a colony and to learn about the new land. One of the greatest fears had been of the American Indians, the native inhabitants of the land. They had read reports of their cruel and barbarous behaviour, in which they delighted to kill and torture captives. On the first excursion, they saw five or six Indians, who immediately ran away into the woods. The Pilgrims followed after them, hoping to establish a peaceful relationship, but could not find them. A few weeks later, a group of Pilgrim explorers camped on shore. During the night, they heard "a great and hideous cry." They shot off a couple of muskets, and the noise ceased. They concluded that wolves had caused the noise. However, in the morning, they heard a loud cry and were suddenly attacked by Indians, whose arrows came flying amongst them. A few of the men fired shots, and soon the Indians fled. Through the providence of God, none on either side had been hit or hurt.

On December 11th, the Pilgrim leaders found a suitable location for their colony on the shores of a sheltered harbour. There was a broad clearing that sloped upward from the harbour to a high hill, and there was also a fresh water brook. There were no signs of inhabitants near this land; just empty, abandoned cornfields. Unknown to the Pilgrims at the time, this clearing had been the site of a sprawling village of Patuxet

Indians. A few years previously, they had been ravaged by a deadly epidemic, and the land was left forsaken and uninhabited.

On December 20th, after prayer and consultation, a majority of the Pilgrims agreed to build at this site. It was called Plymouth Colony. The work was delayed by gale-force winds and driving rains. People were becoming ill in the confined quarters of the *Mayflower*, rations were running low, and winter weather had begun. They began felling trees, and first built a “common house” for storage, protection and temporary shelter. Small plots of land were marked off, and lots were drawn to see who would build on each of them. The Pilgrims initially built crude, frame, clapboard cottages, topped with thatched roofs, made from marsh reeds and cattail leaves. They built houses on both sides of a narrow street that extended up the hill. A home for Captain Myles Standish would be built near the crest of the hill. The top of the hill was fortified with a battery of artillery, composed of cannon from the *Mayflower*.

While the Pilgrims worked hard to build their colony, illness began to strike down men, women and children. Within a few months, half of their company had died, especially in January and February. During this bitter time, there were only six or seven persons who remained well. They fetched wood, made fires and cared for the sick both day and night. Two of those persons were William Brewster, their minister, and Myles Standish, their captain. The dead were buried on the hillside in unmarked graves, lest the Indians should realise how vulnerable the Pilgrims were.

By spring, only seven cottages had actually been built. William Bradford wrote, “The spring now approaching, it pleased God the mortality began to cease among them, and the sick and lame recovered apace, which put as it were new life into them; though they had borne their sad affliction with as much patience and contentedness as I think any people could do. But it was the Lord which upheld them.”

Adapted from Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation

SAMOSET AND SQUANTO

Over the winter months, the Pilgrims had often seen the smoke of distant Indian fires; several times, they saw Indians at a distance. A peace delegation, led by Captain Standish, had attempted to make contact, but failed to locate any inhabited Indian villages.

One day in March, a lone Indian walked boldly up the dirt street between the row of cottages until he came face to face with surprised Pilgrim leaders. "Welcome, Englishmen!" he said. His name was Samoset, and he was from an Indian tribe much farther north. He had learned English from cod-fishing crews from England, who had taken him on board and eventually left him in the Cape Cod region. Speaking in broken English, he told them that the site of their colony was known as "Patuxet" or "Little Bay." The former inhabitants had died of a plague. He told them that the leader of the Indian tribes in that area was named Massasoit. He also told them about another English-speaking Indian called Squanto. The Pilgrims treated Samoset as their guest, housing him for the night in one of their homes and sending him away with gifts. Several days later, he returned with Squanto and a few other Indians. An hour later, Chief Massasoit made an appearance with about sixty men.

The Pilgrims treated Massasoit with the respect that was due to a head of state. They indicated that they wanted to trade with the Indians and to make peace. They seated Massasoit on a rug and cushions in one of their homes. The respect shown and the diplomacy were successful. Chief Massasoit agreed to a peace treaty that would rarely be duplicated in the American Colonial Era. Both sides honoured it for more than half a century. Through the providence of God, this peace treaty proved critical to the survival of Plymouth Colony, because of their severely reduced numbers and limited defences.

The wonderful story of Squanto was another instance of God's providential care over the Pilgrims in helping them to survive. Squanto was believed to be the sole survivor of the Patuxet Indians who had previously inhabited the land on which

the Pilgrims built their settlement. He was among a group of Native Americans that were kidnapped by cruel Captain Hunt in 1614, to be sold into slavery in Spain. Some sympathetic Roman Catholic priests in Spain managed to free some of them. Squanto found himself living in London, and there he became fluent in English. In 1619, he came back to America as an interpreter and guide for Captain Thomas Dermer. When Squanto returned home, he discovered that an epidemic had wiped out his people and their village. He was taken in by the Pokanoket tribe under Chief Massasoit.

In addition to his key role in the peace treaty, Squanto became a valuable and trusted friend and teacher for the Pilgrims. He taught them how to fish and how to plant corn, and served as a guide. He instructed them in the skills necessary to survive in the wilderness.

One cannot help but marvel at the wonderful providence of God in bringing Samoset and Squanto, two friendly, English-speaking Indians into the very place where the Pilgrims built their colony. William Bradford said that Squanto was “a special instrument of God for their good beyond their expectation.”

Adapted from Of Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford and Mourt's Relation: A Journal of the Pilgrims at Plymouth

“STORMY WIND FULFILLING HIS WORD”

David Morgan had just been appointed to his first command as captain of a “sperm-whaler” in the Pacific. The owner of the ship was an Australian merchant: he had a number of vessels engaged in whaling. David had been in the business for some years, but he was still quite a young man.

Until recently, David had been as much without religion as all of his friends. Thoughts of eternal things never entered his mind; the name of God was never on his lips except in blasphemy. Ten days before he was due to sail, the providence of God led him into a seaport chapel, where a service was taking place. The mighty power of God arrested him, and he was

convicted of his sinful state by the Holy Spirit. Subsequently, he was brought to put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. David's experience was, "My sins deserve eternal death, but Jesus died for me!" In a very short time, he became a completely changed man in Christ Jesus.

The time for sailing arrived, and the voyage soon began. Although they had sailed with David before, many of the crew were astonished at the change in the young captain. His language was the first sign of change, for now he was never heard to swear. Before long, not a man on board dared to use a profane word in the captain's hearing. The discipline on the ship was kept up well, and the honest uprightness of the new skipper caused a cheerful contentment among the crew.

David, of course, had only experienced this great change in his life ten days before he took over the ship. By prayer and reading of the Bible, he eagerly sought the Lord. One night, as he was reading, the young captain came upon the ten commandments in the Book of Exodus. As he read the fourth commandment, the question came into his mind of how it should affect his conduct. "Suppose a whale were sighted on a Sunday; ought he to have the boats lowered in pursuit?" The Bible says, "*In it thou shalt not do any work,*" and he must do what it says. David felt his duty was plain, but he was anxious and disturbed. What would the attitude of the crew be? They were not paid by wages, but according to the amount of whale oil that they captured. Perhaps the crew would refuse to obey him. After a great deal of conflict in his mind, David decided that he would pray that no whale would appear on a Sunday; but he was quite resolved as to what his duty would be.

The ship finally reached her selected site in the fishing grounds, but many weeks passed without the appearance of a whale. Then, suddenly, late on a Sunday afternoon, there was a great shout from the look-out – a whale had been sighted! Instantly, the men rushed to their stations to lower the boats. Captain Morgan was as excited as the rest and sprang to his feet. Suddenly, he seemed to hear a voice saying, "*Remember the*

Sabbath day to keep it holy." His voice rang out in command, forbidding any boat to leave the ship that day!

All of the officers and crew were furious. At first, it seemed as if they would take matters into their own hands and disobey him outright. The calmness and determination of the captain prevailed, although he felt obliged to promise that he would make up for the loss to them out of his own future shares.

The mate, as resentful as the crew, followed David into his cabin. He said, "I'd like to see that agreement in black and white, if you please. What do you suppose the owner will think of your losing that whale? He'll never give you another ship to command, you may be sure of that!"

David answered mildly, promising to draw up an agreement without fail the next day. He felt worn out by the struggle through which he had passed, and he wished he could be alone. The mate had known David since he was a boy, and something in his depressed attitude aroused his pity. "It's like this, Captain Morgan," he said, less harshly. "I've got a wife and five children to keep; and to my mind, if providence sends us a whale on a Sunday, well, providence surely means us to catch that whale!"

The mate suddenly stopped talking, as if arrested in the midst of his speech. His eyes were fixed on the barometer in front of him; at the same moment, he called excitedly to the captain to come quickly and see! Before their eyes, the mercury was rapidly dropping. It was a danger signal that the two seamen well understood. With one impulse, they dashed up on deck to call the crew. A hurricane was on its way, and every man on board was needed to fight the storm! It was well indeed that nobody had left the ship in pursuit of the whale!

For three days, they were driven before the hurricane, but there was no damage to either ship or men. When the awful rage of the wind had calmed, the ship was found to be hundreds of miles from the usual fishing grounds. As captain and crew breathed with relief after the ordeal, they found to their delight that they were in the midst of a school of sperm whales. No sooner had two been secured and turned into oil, than others

were found. Instead of needing more than two years to fill the ship, Captain Morgan was able to take her back to Australia, filled to capacity, in ten months!

Owners and crew alike were delighted. David told his employer of his rule never to lower boats on a Sunday; but the owner was so pleased with the rich cargo, that he told the captain that he could do just as he pleased.

David Morgan always stuck to his rule, and his crew learned to respect him for it. He lost many whales, but in the end, he brought more wealth to the ship's owners than any of the other skippers. The Lord was pleased to prosper His loyal servant's work, for the promise in 1 Samuel 2 verse 30 still holds good: *"Them that honour Me I will honour."*

Adapted from A Link in the Chain

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES

THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

"Temperance"

The last fruit of the Spirit set forth in Galatians chapter 5 is temperance. The basic meaning of temperance is self-control. Sometimes people lose their tempers and behave in a very irrational way. It is a good thing when we are helped to control our tempers, especially after we have been provoked or blamed for something we did not do. Yet, the temperance spoken of in this chapter is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and it cannot be produced by nature. Another way in which we might set forth temperance as the work of the Spirit in the Lord's people is in the context of 1 Peter chapter 1 verse 5: *"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."* The Lord constantly teaches His people of their need to be kept in so many ways. If they are not kept by God, then they are certain to fall under the power of sin. They may try to resist sin by their own strategy and wisdom, but they cannot hate and abhor it without grace.

There are many instances in the Bible where the Lord's people have manifested this fruit of temperance. It would appear that David was blessed with the fear of God in his heart from a young age. When he slew the Philistine giant Goliath, David became a well-known name in Israel; he was given great honour by many. Sadly, King Saul became jealous of David, as the people were giving more praise to David than to him. Then King Saul's jealousy turned to hatred. He sought to kill David, because he saw him as a threat to his position as king. David fled when he realised that his life was in danger. King Saul was determined to get rid of David and chased after him with his army. There were two occasions, when Saul was pursuing him, that David had the opportunity to slay him. When David was in the wilderness of Engedi, we read: *"And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily"* (1 Samuel 24.3,4). David very soon regretted doing this, as he felt he had stretched forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. Again, when David fled to the wilderness of Ziph, King Saul pursued after him and slept in a trench with his men around him. As he slept, David and Abishai went down to where they were all sleeping. *"Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time"* (1 Samuel 26.8). It seemed to be another perfect opportunity for David to take matters into his own hands and deal with King Saul once and for all. Yet, he refused to kill Saul. That was temperance! That was self-control given by the grace of God in restraining him from doing it. There must have been a strong, natural temptation, and those with David could not

understand why he did not slay his persecutor. But David knew that he must leave King Saul for God to deal with.

Nehemiah is another example of one who displayed this grace of temperance. When he was the governor in Judah, he would have been entitled to many privileges. Even today, some people in positions of authority have special privileges, such as chauffeur-driven cars, private jets and the very best of food. They might say that they are entitled to these things because they are so important. Yet, we see such a different spirit in Nehemiah: *“Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year, even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God”* (Nehemiah 5.14,15). That was a wonderful display of grace, since Nehemiah, being the governor, would have been entitled to those privileges; but he felt that before God, he could not accept them.

We see how the fear of God in the hearts of His people has such a gracious influence over them, that they walk humbly before Him. They do not dare to do anything that would grieve the Lord. Their life, walk and conversation are “tempered” by the grace of God.

In writing to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul stated, *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (Philippians 4.11). Also, in writing to Timothy, he said, *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content”* (1 Timothy 6.6-8). Here, the Apostle Paul is explaining what temperance is – to be content with such things as we have and not to lust after (carnally desire) what others have, or what we may desperately

long to have for our own pleasure. The apostle stated, *"I have learned..."* No doubt, he had learned by his trials, losses and tribulations being sanctified to his soul; only the grace of God in his heart enabled him to be content with the will of God. That is the fruit of temperance.

Temperance also has the meaning of restraint; not indulging or overindulging in things that are unprofitable for our souls. We live in days when the internet has such a great hold upon people. In many ways, the internet is useful in obtaining information, but we need to be given much temperance to be kept from spending too much time using it. Often, one thing leads to another, and before we know it, hours have been wasted in viewing all sorts of frivolous and unprofitable things. Before the internet, a lot of information was gained from books. There was a forced restraint, because the book offered nothing beyond its pages; whereas, the internet is an open place with no restraints. When grace is in exercise, people will not want to waste time in amusing themselves with carnal things. Sadly, the internet has a very strong power, with subtle, forceful temptations. We need the grace of God to keep from being entangled. When a poor sinner is helped to resist this power, he will bear the fruit of temperance.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about GOD'S JUDGMENT AGAINST SIN. Younger children need only do five questions. Please give references for questions 9 & 10 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 242 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. God spoke of four things which He would bring upon Jerusalem in judgment. What were they? (Ezekiel 14.21)
2. When King David sinned in numbering the people, God sent the prophet Gad to ask him to choose one of three of these

- judgments. Which did God send? (1 Chronicles 21.11-14)
3. In the days of Noah, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." What judgment did God send? (Genesis 6.17)
 4. God said concerning Sodom and Gomorrah, "Their sin is very grievous." What judgment did God send upon them? (Genesis 19.24,25)
 5. What will be the last judgment that God will bring upon the earth? (2 Peter 3.7, 10, 12)
 6. God's judgments against sin are rarely executed quickly. Write out a verse in Ecclesiastes 8 which mentions this and the hardening effect of sin as a result.
 7. With His people, God judges sin solemnly, but in mercy. To whom was it said, after he had deeply sinned, "The sword shall never depart from thine house"? (2 Samuel 12)
 8. It is solemn when God leaves the wicked to go on unaffected by His judgments. Which king of Judah, after suffering severely from his enemies, turned unto their idol gods and brought further ruin? (2 Chronicles 28)
 9. Jonah prophesied, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Forty days later Nineveh had been overthrown, in that the city was very different from before. God's threatened judgments were averted. What had happened? (Jonah 3)
 10. One judgment was referred to in question 1, but not question 2. God sent this judgment among the children of Israel in the wilderness and "much people of Israel died." What was it, why was it sent, and what remedy was provided? (Numbers)

ANSWERS TO OCTOBER QUESTIONS

1. A man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife.
2. God's house should be a house of prayer for all people, but it had become a den of thieves.
3. The Queen of Sheba had heard of the wisdom of Solomon and came to prove him with hard questions.
4. The flood, which was long prophesied and warned about, but everything went on as usual until the day that it came and destroyed all men except Noah's household.
5. Jesus said he would be buried for three days and three nights just as Jonah had been three days and nights in the whale.

6. The resurrection of the dead.
7. Lot and his wife were brought out of Sodom by angels, but his wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.
8. The Pharisees honoured God with their words, but their heart was not in it, and they taught the commandments of men in preference to God's Word.
9. Elijah (Elias) and Elisha (Eliseus). The Jews were angry at God's sovereignty in using those of foreign nations for His own glory.
10. "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8.3). "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 6.16). "Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave." (Deuteronomy 10.20)

BE STILL

Sit thou still, thy Saviour knows,
Life's increasing weight of woes,
His sweet word He will not break,
Thee He never will forsake.

Sit thou still, He led thee here,
He thy hedged-up path will clear,
Watch His providential hand,
Working what His wisdom planned.

He who bought thee with His blood,
Worketh all things for thy good.
Wait His time and thou shalt see,
Wondrous things wrought out for thee.

Author unknown

The Friendly Companion



Gold nugget from Australia

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

(1 Peter 1.7)

December 2020

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Front cover picture: Gold nugget from Australia (public display, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois, USA). Taken by James St. John.

OUR MONTHLY MESSAGE

Dear Children and Young People,

Each year brings certain changes by which it is remembered and which distinguish it from other years. That is especially true for older friends. For those who are young, years may seem to be much the same, with little difference between them. The usual changes for young people, such as changing grade levels at school, or making new friends, may not necessarily distinguish one year from another.

Some years are etched in our memory because of a momentous event. The death of a dear family member, such as a father, mother, brother or sister, or the death of a national leader, causes a certain year to be remembered. For older friends, the years of World War II can never be forgotten. The destruction of cities, the loss of many lives, the deprivation of daily necessities and the fear of hostile takeover by enemy forces have made those years a dark memory.

The year 2020 will, no doubt, stand out in the minds of many of our young readers because of the worldwide epidemic which caused schools to close, businesses to shut down and many people to work from home. Many chapels were forced to keep their doors shut, weddings were postponed, funerals were held without mourners and families were cut off from each other. International travel was halted so quickly that many travellers were stranded in foreign countries. The epidemic has dominated the conversation of people everywhere for nearly the entire year. All other newsworthy events have been dwarfed in comparison. Even natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and fires, have received very little attention.

The epidemic has changed the way of life for young and old. It has changed the behaviour of many toward those around them. It has caused them to be suspicious of others and to avoid close contact. Now, there are changes in school and the workplace. What a lot of changes have taken place all around us!

However much these things have changed our lives outwardly, there is an important change that we all need in our

lives. It is a change that is brought about by grace; a change that comes by the fear of God as one is taught by the Holy Spirit. The things you once loved in the world, its pleasures and sins, you will no longer love. You will begin to desire heavenly things. Although they are things that are unseen, they will become very real. You will want to be blessed by God, to have the light of life in your soul and to feel the love of Christ in your heart.

There will also be a change in your behaviour; not like David's change of behaviour before Achish, the king of Gath, when he pretended to be a mad man. It will be a change like the mad Gadarene. He could not be tamed until Jesus came and cast out the devils. Jesus caused him to sit at His feet. What a good change of behaviour was wrought in him! It was a season to be remembered.

There will be a change in the way you pray and the things you pray for. There will be a change in the way you go up to the Lord's house and worship, and in the way you approach unto God. There will be a change in your friends. There will be a change in your taste. Whatever can that mean? By nature, we are in the place that Solomon wrote of, *"Bread of deceit is sweet to a man; but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel"* (Proverbs 20.17). How disgusting it is to get gravel or sand in our mouth! How hard it is to get it all out. The sins we love, the disobedience we practise and the lies we speak, are all breads of deceit. It was said of Moab that his taste was never changed. David speaks to those whose taste is changed: *"O taste and see that the LORD is good"* (Psalm 34.8).

May all the changes we have witnessed this year remind us of the Lord who changes not. Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 3.18). What a wonderful change; from the image of sin and death, to the image of the glory of Jesus Christ!

With loving wishes from the Editor.

OUR FRONT COVER PICTURE

What do you think of when you look at the picture on the front cover? It is, of course, a picture of gold. Gold was one of the first known metals. It has become the standard of real value all over the world. Gold is deemed very valuable because it is very scarce. Its physical properties such as softness, resistance to corrosion and lovely yellow colour, make it desirable for many uses. Its softness makes it easy to work with.

Gold is often used to make jewellery. Because it is so soft, it has to be melted together with another metal to obtain a measure of hardness. Thus, jewellery is measured by carat. A carat equals one twenty-fourth part, meaning twenty-four carats is pure gold. You may see a piece of jewellery labelled eighteen-carat gold, which means it has eighteen parts of pure gold and six parts of another metal. Gold mining has been a vital industry to the nations of the world. The leading producer of gold today is South Africa, followed by Russia.

The first mention of gold in the Bible is in the account of creation in Genesis chapter 2. We are told of the land of Havilah and its gold, which was called "*good*." When Joseph was exalted by Pharaoh, he was clothed with a beautiful garment and a gold chain was put about his neck. It was a sign of great honour and power.

When the tabernacle was made, its boards were overlaid with gold; likewise, some of its furniture, all of which were overlaid with gold. Others, such as the golden candlestick and the mercy seat with its cherubims were made of pure gold. The breast plate and the mitre that were put upon the high priest were also made of pure gold.

Solomon made shields of gold, a sign of wealth and power. Years later, when Israel had become weak, the shields of gold had to be replaced with shields of brass.

One of the things that Achan coveted in the ruins of Jericho was a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels. How powerful was that temptation! It would have made him very rich. It proved to be his destruction.

David wrote in Psalm 19 that the Word of God and the fear of God are more to be desired than gold. In Psalm 119 verse 72, he wrote that *"The law (word) of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."* In the Book of Proverbs, Solomon wrote: *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."* When Job asked where wisdom was to be found and for what price it could be valued, he declared that pure gold was not to be compared to it.

The Scriptures have many references to gold and its value; none more so than in Isaiah 13 verse 12, *"I will make a Man more precious than fine gold; even a Man than the golden wedge of Ophir."* The gold of Ophir was considered to be the purest of all gold. But who is the Man that is made more precious than the costliest gold? None but Jesus!

His great work of salvation is more precious than gold. His position as a "Kinsman," wherein He stands between sinners and His holy Father, is very precious. He is very precious in His perfect obedience and sin-atonement death. How precious He is as "the Friend of sinners!" He is precious to the souls that desire Him and wait for Him. Jesus means more to them than the value of all gold.

When the bride speaks of her Beloved in the Song of Solomon, she uses gold to describe some of His beauty. She said that His head is as the most fine gold, His hands as gold rings, His legs set upon sockets of fine gold; He was indeed more precious to her than fine gold.

When He appeared to John in the Revelation, He was clothed with a golden girdle. How brightly He must have shone! As the Revelation unfolded, John saw Him sitting on a white cloud, having on His head a golden crown. All of these declare His worth, honour, power and glory.

THE WIDOW'S WEALTH

Those who have fled for refuge to Jesus Christ possess in Him, not only a refuge, but the fulness of His blessings. *"For it*

pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Colossians 1.19).

A chaplain in the East Indies became acquainted with a widowed Christian lady. She told him that in the year 1848, she had been left very poor by the death of her husband. However, they had a little property, consisting of land in Australia. She wrote to a friend out there, asking him to sell it for her. He did his best to carry out her wish, but there was one little, miserable field that he could not sell. Thus, the widow had to retain ownership of that little piece of land which could not be sold.

Then, in the year 1851, gold was discovered very near that field. In the widow's small field, there was a gold mine, and for the rest of her life, it gave her a steady source of income. In one sense, she had possessed that land with the gold all along, but she had not benefited from it until the first gold nuggets were drawn up.

Dear friends, we have often lived as if we had nothing to support us but the alms of the beggar. But, in the covenant of God, there is all fulness in the Lord Jesus Christ – not for our imagined needs or covetous desires, but for that which is the will of God for us to have. *"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4.19).

*Adapted from The Gospel Echo 1913
(From an address by Dr. H.C.G. Moule, bishop of Durham)*

SOMETHING TO DIE WITH

John Brown of Haddington, whose Bible is still in many homes in his native land of Scotland, has left us a weighty word. He felt it and said it when near the end of his life: "I see now, more and more, that nothing less than real, real Christianity is fit to die with, and make an appearance before God." When we come to die, may that real Christianity be ours; and as we know not when we are to die, may it be ours now. Only those who love Christ will find that death is gain.

Little Gleaner

FOR THE VERY LITTLE ONES**JOASH, THE YOUNG KING**

Ahaziah had been king of Judah for only one year when he was killed by Jehu. His mother, Athaliah, wanted to reign as queen, and she killed all the children of the royal family. But Joash, the baby, was not killed because his aunt hid him. She was the sister of Ahaziah and the wife of Jehoiada the high priest. They hid Joash in the house of the Lord for six years.

Then Jehoiada secretly called the rulers, captains and guards to come to the house of the Lord. He showed them the king's son, and they made him king. The people rejoiced and blew trumpets, saying, "*God save the king.*" Joash was seven years old when he began to reign.

The people hated Athaliah because she was very wicked and not of the royal line of David. When Athaliah heard the shouting and the trumpets, she came into the temple to see what was happening. She saw the young king standing by a pillar with guards all around him. She tore her clothes and cried, "*Treason,*" meaning "a conspiracy." The captains took her away and slew her.

QUESTIONS:

1. What was the name of the baby who was hidden?
2. Where did they hide him?
3. How old was he when he began to reign?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses.) Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Jehu.
2. Joram and Ahaziah.
3. Jezebel.

*“And all
the people
of the land
rejoiced”*

1 Kings 11.20

2 Chronicles 23.21

BIBLE LESSONS**ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF AND GOD'S JUDGMENT**

Making the golden calf was a most sinful act by the people of Israel and an abomination to the Lord God. Their refusal to enter Canaan and take possession of it was no less of a sin. The ten spies had convinced the people that their wives and children would become a prey to the powerful nations in the land of Canaan.

The anger of the Lord burned against the people of Israel. He said to Moses, *"How long will this people provoke Me? and how long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they."*

What a temptation for Moses! Yet Moses was not concerned about his own glory; no indeed! He answered the Lord, *"Then the Egyptians shall bear it, (for Thou broughtest up this people in Thy might from among them;) And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that Thou LORD art among this people, ... and that Thy cloud standeth over them, and that Thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night."* If the Lord should kill all the Israelites, then all the nations in Canaan would boast saying, *"Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which He swore unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness."* Moses was concerned for the glory of God. The nations of Canaan would boast that their idol gods were greater than the God of Israel.

Did Moses think that the unbelief of the children of Israel was a small thing? Surely not! Moses prayed to God, *"I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression ... Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy."*

The Lord heard the prayer of Moses and did not destroy all the Israelites. However, He pronounced a judgment upon them

because they had said, *“Would God we had died in this wilderness!”* They had pronounced their own judgment by their words. Now they must turn back into the wilderness for forty years, one year for each day they had spied out the land. During the forty years, all those who were twenty years old and upward would perish. Only Joshua and Caleb would be spared to go into the land of Canaan after the forty years, because they gave a good report. Likewise, all their children, whom they thought would be a prey to the Canaanites, would one day enter the land and take possession of it.

When Moses repeated God’s word unto the people, they soon realised their fault. The thought of forty years in the wilderness filled them with fear and dread, and caused them to mourn bitterly. The next morning, they rose early and went up to the top of the mountain in defiance of God. They did not want to go back into the wilderness. The men who were trained for battle armed themselves and prepared to go against the Canaanites. They said to Moses, *“Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned.”* However, to go up now would be a transgression of God’s commandment. Moses told them that they could not prosper because the Lord was not among them. When the Lord was not with them, Israel was weaker than all the other nations. Just as Samson, some years later, knew not that the Lord had departed from him and was quickly subdued by the Philistines, so the men of Israel went up at this time without the Lord. They presumed to go up, even though Moses and the ark of the covenant of the Lord remained in the camp.

Without their leader Moses to direct the battle, they were soon defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites, and many of Israel were killed.

Their sin of unbelief was set as a warning to the people of God in all ages. They had come so far, they were brought so near, yet they could not enter into the promised land because of unbelief.

You can read about this in Numbers chapter 14.

QUESTIONS:

1. What two things did God say He would do to Israel because of their unbelief? (8 words)
2. Moses prayed to God, saying that the power of the Lord is great in what three things? (9 words)
3. For how many years did Israel have to turn back into the wilderness?
4. What would happen to all those twenty years old and upward?
5. Who would be spared to enter Canaan after the forty years, and why?

Please send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. Twelve.
2. Caleb. Joshua.
3. Forty.
4. A new captain. Egypt.
5. Their defence.

EDITOR'S POSTBAG

Just a note to those of you who have sent in answers to the questions during the past year. We understand that many of you have been very diligent in answering them each month, while others have done most of the months. We would encourage those who have not been quite so regular to do them each month. The questions are meant for your benefit. They are one of many ways to help you learn the Scriptures. You may not perceive that you are obtaining such knowledge at the time, but we feel sure that in years to come you will prove that you have indeed gained some knowledge of Scriptural passages.

The questions found at the back of each issue are meant to be a challenge for you. The dear friend who prepares them has

been wonderfully helped in labouring month by month. May each of you be helped in labouring to answer them.

For the little ones who have sent answers in for the first time this year, may the Lord help you to be diligent in continuing. Throughout our lives, there are many things that we start, but the important point is to press on and continue.

For all those who have answered the questions, we hope to send you calendars for the year 2021.

THE FIRST PRAYER

A woman attended the church where Rowland Hill was the pastor. She was married to a kind-hearted man, but he had no concern about religion. He was addicted to drinking alcohol, and conditions in the home gradually grew worse and worse. After a while, the house rent could not be paid, and the owner seized all of their furniture.

Now what should they do? They were in great trouble, for they needed furniture and other necessities. At last the woman thought, "I will go to our pastor, Mr. Hill, and see if he will help us." With a prayer in her heart, she went and made known the condition of her family.

The minister quietly listened, and then he asked how much money she would need to get the furniture back again. With a fearful heart, she told him that eighteen pounds (about ninety dollars) would be enough.

"I will loan you twenty pounds," he said. "You can return the money when it is possible for you. Send your husband for the money, for I would rather give it to him."

The woman felt a sense of relief as she left the minister. She told her husband about the conversation she had with him. At once, he went to see Rowland Hill and was kindly received.

Mr. Hill pointed to a table and said, "There is the money. Take it, and when it is possible, you may return it to me." The man thanked the minister and expressed the wish that they

would soon be able to pay it back. He was about to put the money into his pocket, when the minister called out, "Halt! Wait a moment! Lay the money back down until I have asked a blessing for you."

The man obeyed, and the minister prayed aloud, "O Lord, Thou Fountain of all grace, Giver of all good and perfect gifts; we pray Thee in humbleness of heart, bless the money which the man, who stands here before Thy countenance has received, that it may serve for his temporal and eternal welfare, through Jesus Christ. Amen."

After this short prayer, Rowland Hill said, "Now you may put away the money." For the second time, the man took the money and was about to put it into his pocket, when the minister called out again. "Halt! I have forgotten something."

You can imagine the perplexity of the man, and it became greater yet, when Mr. Hill added, "Good friend, you have not yourself asked a blessing in prayer upon the money. Do this first."

"Pastor!" stammered the astonished man, "I cannot pray. I have never prayed in my life."

"Then, it is more than time to begin," said the minister in an earnest tone.

"I cannot; I do not know what so say."

"Try it, nevertheless. Thank God and pray for a blessing, even if it is only with a few words."

"I cannot, Pastor; I cannot think of anything to say."

"Then, I cannot give you money. I cannot loan twenty pounds to someone who cannot pray."

"The man hesitated for a moment. Then he closed his eyes, folded his hands, and called with great emotion, "Lord! I must pray to Thee, and I cannot ... teach me to do it."

"That is a precious prayer for the beginning," said Rowland Hill, "because it came from the heart. Keep on doing this, and you will get there. Now take the money quickly, and may God's blessing rest upon it."

Totally dumbfounded, the man put the money into his pocket, and with a handshake, he left the minister. The family was filled with gladness. The mother was very thankful that the Lord had heard her prayer in a wonderful way.

Gradually, a great change came in the family, both naturally and also spiritually. By the grace of God, this event made such a deep impression upon the man that it became a turning point in his life. It was the beginning of a true conversion.

Wonderful and holy are God's ways.

Adapted from Religious Stories for Young and Old, Volume 2

“TRUST IN THE LORD ... AND THOU SHALT BE FED”

The small fishing village where Michael O'Harran (often called Red Mike) lived was situated at one of the most barren and rugged points on the whole Irish coast.

As winter came on and Christmas approached, the weather had become bitterly cold and stormy – so stormy that it was impossible to put their boats out to sea. For a week before Christmas, no fish had been caught, and the supply of food in the village was almost entirely gone.

On the day before Christmas, two of the men went to a neighbouring town to try and get provisions for the poverty-stricken villagers, but they returned empty-handed; they had no money to pay, and the food suppliers had refused to give them credit. They brought news, however, that made the ears of the people to tingle and their hearts to throb.

A schooner, laden with meal and corn, was on its way north. That very night, it might be expected to pass the promontory a mile away. It was a place that in former days had been the scene of many a wreck. Since then, a lighthouse had been built to warn mariners against coming too near the shore. If they could prevent that light from shining forth its warning, they might, by hoisting another light farther on, entice the schooner onto the rocks. In that way, they might bring to themselves a plentiful supply of food, so desperately needed.

Among those consulted about this plan was Red Mike. He was as badly off as any of his neighbours, but he steadfastly spoke against it. "Look here, boys," he said; "We shall never gain any good by wrong-doing; if any of the poor fellows were drowned, would you like to have that on your conscience all your lives, let alone the stealing?"

"But Mike, we are nearly starving, and here is a real godsend for us," argued one.

"Not a godsend," answered Mike. "God would never send us a vessel to wreck. Maybe He will send us help, but not the way you are thinking of."

"And how can He send us food for tomorrow?" asked one of the men.

"I don't know how," Mike answered; "but if He sees, well – He can do it, and He will."

It was a long time before Red Mike could prevail upon the others to give up their idea, but he did so at length. He went home happy that he had used his influence in the right direction.

Upon reaching his cottage, Mike's wife was standing at the door. She knew nothing about the proposed scheme for obtaining the much-needed supply of food. As she gazed toward the sea, she said, "Look Mike. There is a vessel coming this way; where can she be headed for?"

On looking round, her husband saw the lights of a vessel which was evidently coming as close to shore as possible. It must be the very schooner they had heard about, the fate of which had been discussed by the men half an hour before. Yet, he did not answer the question put to him.

For some time, they watched the approaching lights. At last, the lights ceased to move and became stationary close to the shore. Then, across the water, he could hear the sound of voices and the splash of oars. Soon, a shout was heard, which was answered by some of the fishermen who lived nearer the sea than himself.

"I'll just go down and see what it is," he said. "There are none of our boats out tonight." When he arrived at the beach, the boat had just reached the little jetty where the fisherman landed their fish.

"Lend us a hand, men, as quick as you can!" shouted one of the rowers. "Here's something that will make your hearts rejoice."

"What is it you have?" asked several voices.

"Never mind what it is; haul them up." In a few moments, the boat was unloaded. Cask after cask of meal and other provisions stood before the wondering men. "Is Michael O'Harran among you?" asked the skipper of the boat, as soon as the last package was on the jetty.

"Yes," answered Mike, "I'm here."

"Well, then, here's a letter for you, and there is another load to come ashore yet. Lend a hand, lads, we must be off again."

With a wondering look, Mike took the letter that had been handed to him, and he quickly read its contents. It explained that the gentleman who owned nearly all of the houses in the little village had heard of the distress among his tenants. He had sent, by a schooner going north, a present of food and other things to be divided amongst them. Knowing that Mike would do it fairly, he had deputed him to divide the food and goods among his neighbours.

Need it be said that the Christmas dinner eaten on the morrow was especially sweet because of the way it had been provided for them? It had not been obtained by an act of wickedness, the consequences of which might have been ruinous to them all. Whether that night's experience taught a lesson of faith to any of the other fishermen, we cannot say, but Red Mike's trust was strengthened. Ever afterwards, he would say with confidence, "*Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed*" (Psalm 37.3).

Adapted from *The Little Gleaner* 1934

GIVE AND IT SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO YOU

Many years ago, I was walking across some fields to visit a lonely cottage, where an aged Christian woman lived. She was sadly afflicted in her body, but in spite of pain and weariness, her soul rejoiced in her Saviour. She loved to talk of His loving-kindness and tender mercy. She loved to think of the time when there would be no more pain, and she often used to say, "Oh, what must it be to be there!" Now she is enjoying His presence in the heavenly home, and her sufferings are over.

But, to return to the little incident which I desire to record, that God may be glorified. On my way to see that dear child of God, it suddenly came into my mind, "Give her something." At once, I opened my purse to see what it contained. In it was half a crown. Looking at it, I thought, "That is too much for me to give; it would not be right, for I am poor, and it is really more than I can afford." But walking on, my mind was uneasy. It was strange that the thought of giving to her had not occurred before leaving home; then the half-crown might have been changed for a shilling. Then the question came, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Please teach me Thy will." After that silent prayer, my mind was soon made up. The half-crown must be given to her instead of buying a new pair of gloves for myself. My visit was a very happy one. The gift of the half-crown brought such an outburst of praise and thanksgiving to God that not a shadow of doubt remained that it had been right to give it to her. The Lord Jesus must have put it into my heart. No one else knew it but the Lord.

My birthday came a few weeks after this, and on opening a little parcel sent by post, I found a beautiful pair of kid gloves, lined with fur. Never could any gift have come with more sweetness to my heart. How tenderly the Lord had given me back the tiny self-sacrifice, and in such a loving way! The gloves were far, far better than I should have bought for myself.

Although this incident occurred many, many years ago, since that time, gloves have always kept coming to me, sometimes two or three pairs at a time. There was not only an ample supply for

myself, but also sufficient to give away to others. It seemed as though my gracious Saviour took special care that I should never lack gloves. Oh, what gratitude of heart this instance of our heavenly Father's minute care called forth! *"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth's sake"* (Psalm 115.1). It also ought to encourage us to do what the Holy Spirit directs, feeling sure that when He inclines the heart, it must be right. We may not think so at the time, but afterwards, we can trace the Lord's leading and prove His blessing. Therefore, *"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it"* (John 2.5).

When we think of all the Saviour has done, surely, we ought to feel it a privilege and delight to do anything for Him. How ashamed I felt for hesitating to part with a relatively small sum of money for one of His chosen ones. He has shown me that He is able and willing to repay a hundredfold what is given to Him. He is faithful to His promise, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again"* (Luke 6.38).

Young People's Treasury 1902

A FRIEND NIGH AT HAND

Friends live apart; those whom we have known and loved are taken home. There may be few opportunities for union and communion amongst Christian friends. But the Lord is ever nigh, ready of access by night and by day, full of pity and compassion to poor, sin-sick souls, and *"able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him"* (Hebrews 7.25). He never disappoints any who trust in Him, is more willing to hear than we to pray, and more willing to give than we to ask. The great, the only real grief of the soul is that it should sin against Him, be denied His presence, not get a word from His lips, a smile from His face, or a touch from His hand.

By J.C. Philpot, Adapted from Friendly Companion 1956

BIBLE STUDY FOR THE OLDER ONES**PROPHECIES OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST**

At this season of the year, many people are intent on carnal pleasures and the sacred event of the birth of Christ is used as an excuse for much frivolity. It is very solemn to consider that the real reason for the Lord Jesus Christ's coming into this sinful world was to be a sacrifice for sin. How merciful of God to send His only begotten Son into this world to save His people from their sins and from the dominion of Satan! May the Lord help us to remember why Jesus became a Man, and may He keep us from the worldly entertainments that must be so grieving to God.

The very first prophecy of the Lord Jesus coming into this world is found in Genesis chapter 3. It follows the tragic fall of man, when Adam and Eve sinned against God by yielding to the tempter and eating of the forbidden fruit. They proved that God's words were truth: *"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2.17). The actual words of the prophecy were spoken to Satan, who had tempted Adam and Eve to sin. *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel"* (Genesis 3.15). The seed of Satan is fallen mankind, but the seed of the woman is the Saviour of mankind, the Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful that as soon as man fell and destroyed himself, God spoke of a coming Saviour!

Another remarkable prophecy of the coming Saviour was spoken by Abraham when he was taking his son Isaac up the mountain to offer him as a sacrifice unto God as God had commanded him. Isaac noticed that something was missing. They had the fire (flint stones) and the wood, but nothing (as he thought) to offer for a sacrifice. Isaac questioned his father about this, and Abraham answered, *"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering"* (Genesis 22.8). This would prove to be a most wonderful prophecy. At the time, Abraham may not have seen the fulness of his saying, until the Lord

showed him the ram caught in the thicket. Faith was given him to believe in the coming Saviour. *“Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad”* (John 8.56).

There are a number of prophecies in Isaiah of the coming Saviour. The first one sets forth that He would be God Himself. *“Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel”* (Isaiah 7.14). A virgin, who had never known a man, would be with child. Immanuel simply means “God with us.” The Saviour would be born of a woman as a tiny Baby, and yet He would be God Himself. When Mary was told by the angel that she would be with child, she questioned how it could be, as she knew not a man. The angel answered her, *“The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”* (Luke 1.35); or as we read in Timothy, *“God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3.16). The Lord gives His people faith to believe this wonderful, amazing truth. As Gadsby’s hymn 40 expresses it: “Bow down, sense and reason, faith only reign here.” The Saviour, then, would be both God and Man.

Also, in Isaiah the Lord showed that the Saviour would be of the house of David, the son of Jesse, who was directly descended from Abraham. *“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD”* (Isaiah 11.1,2). Both Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 3 give the lineage from Adam to Abraham, to David, and right down to the Lord Jesus Christ – the Saviour. This is further proved when Joseph, with Mary, had to leave Nazareth to go to Bethlehem in Judea to pay the taxes, because he was of the house and lineage of David. The Lord’s timing was perfect, even using a worldly king to issue a decree that would affect so many people. It meant that Joseph

had to travel all the way down to Bethlehem exactly at the time when the Lord Jesus would be born.

The very place where the Saviour was to be born was also prophesied. It was not the royal city of David, Jerusalem. *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5.2). When the wise men came from the east, they assumed that the King of the Jews would be born in Jerusalem. It is remarkable that the scribes at Jerusalem could quote the above text from the Scriptures, but they never went to Bethlehem themselves to see if it was so. They had no faith! Because they had no faith, they never went to seek the Lord. It is a very solemn thing to have a head knowledge of the Bible, but no real faith to believe what it says. Thus, it had no effect in their hearts and lives. *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]: 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).

May the Lord be pleased to grant each of us that true faith that believes in the Word of God. May He help us by faith to see the fulfilment of the prophecies of the birth, life, death, resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, and bring us to know Him as our Saviour.

A.T. Pickett

BIBLE QUESTIONS

This month the questions are about WHY JESUS CAME. Younger children need only do three questions. Please give references for questions 4 - 7 and send your answers to the Editor or Mr. Baker, either by post or by e-mail. (See page 266 for the addresses). Remember to give your name and address and to write the word ANSWERS on the envelope.

1. What did the Apostle Paul say was "a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance"? (1 Timothy 1.15)

2. What did the angel tell Joseph that Jesus would do? (Matthew 1.21)
3. Write out four texts where Jesus said, "I came ... not to ... but ..." (Matthew 10.34, Luke 5.32, John 6.38, John 12.47)
4. Find three other texts where Jesus said why He had come. (Luke 19, John 9, John 10). In the third text, who does the word "they" refer to?
5. What did Jesus tell Pilate that He had come for? (John 18)
6. What did Jesus come to fulfil (Matthew 5) – or as it is prophesied of Him in Isaiah 42, "magnify"?
7. What three words did Jesus utter on the cross to show that the purpose of His coming was accomplished? (John 19)

ANSWERS TO NOVEMBER QUESTIONS

1. The sword, famine, pestilence and noisome beasts.
2. Three day's pestilence.
3. A global flood which destroyed all except those in the ark.
4. God rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed Sodom, Gomorrah and all the cities of the plain.
5. The destruction of the world by fire.
6. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecclesiastes 8.11)
7. King David. (2 Samuel 12.10)
8. Ahaz. (2 Chronicles 28.23)
9. The Ninevites, believing God's prophecy through Jonah, turned from their evil ways and repented, and God turned from the evil He had threatened them with. (Jonah 3.5-10)
10. Because of their murmuring and rebellion, God sent fiery serpents among the children of Israel, many of whom were bitten and died. God told Moses to make a serpent of brass and to put it upon a pole. Whoever was bitten, when they looked on the brazen serpent, they were cured. (Numbers 21.5-9)

STILLING THE TEMPEST

Loud was the wind, and wild the tide;
The ship her course delayed:
The Lord came to their help and cried,
"Tis I; be not afraid."

Who walks the waves in wondrous guise,
By nature's laws unstayed?
"Tis I," a well-known voice replies;
"Tis I; be not afraid!"

He mounts the deck; down lulls the sea;
The tempest is allayed;
The prostrate crew adore; and He
Exclaims, "Be not afraid!"

Thus, when the storm of life is high,
Come, Saviour to my aid!
Come, when no other help is nigh,
And say, "Be not afraid."

Speak, and my griefs no more are heard;
Speak, and my fears are laid;
Speak, and my soul shall bless the word,
"Tis I; be not afraid!"

When on the bed of death I lie,
And stretch my hands for aid,
Stand Thou before my glazing eye,
And say, "Be not afraid!"

Before Thy judgment seat above,
When nature sinks dismayed,
Oh, cheer me with a word of love,
"Tis I; be not afraid."

Henry Francis Lyte

THE FRIENDLY COMPANION

*A Monthly Magazine for Children
and Young People*

Editor: G.L. TenBroeke

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OUR MAGAZINES

As we come to the last month of the year, we would humbly acknowledge the Lord's goodness and mercy in supplying our needs through another year: "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." We would commit our way and cast all our care upon Him.

We thank God for those who help in putting the magazine together. They are the silent ones who do so much behind the scenes. While some contribute articles, others contribute counsel and corrections, all of which are highly valued.

With everything rapidly changing around us, may we find our hope stayed on Him who changes not, and with whom there is no shadow of turning.

Brethren pray for us.

G.L. TenBroeke