

The Herald Of Christ's Kingdom

May/June 2000

Christian Living

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.—John 13:17

Transformation is the essence of the Christian life. Knowledge, service, worship, and praise are only tools to be used to this end.

The process of transformation of character is an individual matter. As no two parts of the human body are exactly alike, and as no two stones for Solomon's Temple were chiseled as duplicates of each other, so each member of the body of Christ, each member of the spiritual temple, is prepared by the Lord for a unique future role.

While there have been hundreds of books written on how to live the Christian life, none of these can serve as a universal "how to" guide. Even the Law which God gave to Moses did not cover every detail of life. Its principles had to be interpreted and applied on an individual basis. The best that can be said is that writings on how to be transformed are only an examination of the principles that each individual needs to adapt to his own life.

It is with this understanding that **THE HERALD** undertakes this current issue on the theme of Christian Living. Each author probes one or another aspect of the application of the Bible to personal experiences.

Love finds its expression, not so much in great deeds of sacrifice, but in little daily manifestations of one's feeling of affection for another. The opening article, *That Which Is Least*, examines the attributes of love listed by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, showing how these can be applied in the small and mundane matters of life.

Of all the characteristics which God desires in his people, perhaps the most important is unquestioning obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice" were God's words through Samuel to Saul, the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 15:22). In *Obedience and Sacrifice*, the author harmonizes these two requirements for those who would be acceptable to God.

The article entitled Prayer looks at the various aspects of how a Christian communicates with God and the advantages received from developing a regular, full, and deep life of

prayer and worship. Few symbols of prayer are more recognizable than Albrecht Dürer's famous etching *The Praying Hands*. The story behind this etching follows the article on prayer.

While the development of character is the prime responsibility, it does not diminish the desire of God for his servants to be active in a life of service as well. *Acceptable Service* gives a number of suggestions of how we can employ our time and talents in spreading the news of our Creator and his glorious plan to those around us.

For a Christian's day to go well, it must start well. If the earliest thoughts of the morning hour are spent in getting our hearts into a spiritual frame of mind, the experiences of the day will be interpreted in line with such morning devotions. *A Quiet Time With God* suggests a seven-minute spiritual warm-up for each day of our lives.

Few chapters in Holy Writ are more specific to the application of Christian principles to daily life than the twelfth chapter of the book of Romans. Our verse-by-verse Bible study feature entitled *The Sanctified Life* examines all the verses of this chapter.

Those who have preceded us into death often have left behind valuable lessons from their Christian lives. Our "Echoes from the Past" feature entitled *Doing God's Will* is taken from notes of Benjamin Barton, a faithful saint who died in 1916.

While there are hundreds of other topics of importance in the process of spiritual transformation, space limits us to just these few. We trust that this admittedly small sampling of the Bible's principles for transforming our lives may encourage us to put them into practice. In the words of David, after all had been provided for building the temple, "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?" (1 Chronicles 29:5).

Love's Characteristics

That Which Is Least

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.—Luke 16:10

Carl Hagensick

Perfection is in the details. Life is shaped, not so much in its eventful moments, but in the common-day ritual. Character is not molded in one complete whole but, rather, formed in tiny parts and assembled during an entire lifetime. A person may steel himself for major trials, but is often eroded by the steady dripping of countless small irritations. In the words of a popular song of a half-century ago, "little things mean a lot."

The apostle Paul speaks of the enduring nature of true character in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." The attribute of charity, or unselfish philanthropic love, is like a ray of purest light which, when viewed through a prism, reveals a spectrum of all the colors of the rainbow. It is these components of love which Paul enumerates in the earlier verses of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Love is patient [NIV]: It is often easier to exercise patience for the long haul than to endure the irritation of small delays. The farmer will plant his fields, knowing full well that the fruitage will not come for many months (James 5:7). A troubled mind, on the other hand, may lay awake all night, impatiently waiting for the morning light (Psalm 130:6). How often we are willing to wait for the fruition of some grand plan to take shape, but are highly irritated when a traffic situation delays us for a few minutes. Impatience breeds frustration, and frustration anger. It is in these situations we need to call to mind the hymnist's words:

My times are in thy hand,
My God, I wish them there.

It is only when we remember that our concept of time is so different from that of our Father, to whom one day is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8), that our perceptions of time change. It is this realization that should help a Christian endure petty irritations from spouse, children, co-workers, classmates, friends and neighbors, and even the strangers that are met in the day-to-day concourse of life.

Love is kind: The words "polite" and "politician" are etymologically related. Yet there is a vast difference between the polished urbanity of the politician and the true kindness that emanates from a heart full of love. The kindness of love is constantly on the alert to supply the needs of his fellow, whether it be a word of encouragement, a helping hand, financial assistance, or just a cheery greeting. Earthquakes, airplane crashes, floods, and

other calamities frequently spawn feats of heroism. Food, money, medical aid, and physical assistance rush in to the troubled area. True Christian kindness does not wait for the calamities, but seeks daily to be of service to one's fellowman. The symbol of service for the Christian is Jesus washing his disciples' feet (John 13:5-14). When he had finished, he said to his disciples, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

Envy is self-love, a desire to gratify self with the things that another has. We live in a world **Love envieth not:** where commercialism uses envy as a tool to incite sales. The final commandment, the only one that governs thoughts instead of actions, is "thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17). Living in a materialistic world, where everything is available to those who sufficiently desire it, envy needs to be stopped at its lowest level. A visit to a friend's house may arouse a desire for such a simple thing as a tablecloth like theirs, or a desire for a piece of furniture they have. Such desires, indulged, lead to wanting a better car or a better home than others. How different is the admonition of the apostle Paul: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11). Envy is not limited to possessions. We may envy another's prominence or desire another's opportunities. Instead the Christian is urged to esteem the other as "better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3). Another form of envy is jealousy, desiring the special friendship of another. We often rationalize that such jealousy is born of our deep love for that person when in fact it manifests a love for ourselves born of our imagined need for the other. It is little wonder that Solomon describes such jealousy as "cruel as the grave" (Song of Solomon 8:6).

Does not boast [NIV]: Boasting is a sign of an inferiority complex. Feeling our own inadequacies, we seek to make up for them by either emphasizing what good we have done or comparing ourselves to others who have even greater lacks in one area or another. Paul's exhortation is direct on this point: "We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:13, NIV). The faithful Christian will rather seek to emphasize and rejoice in the superiority of another and to attribute all of our good works to the grace of Christ working in and through us.

Is not puffed up: Incipient pride is one of the most dangerous of the "little foxes that spoil the vine" (Song of Solomon 2:15). Like an inflated balloon, pride is often composed of more hot air than substance. It manifests itself as much in little matters as in big ones. When one feels his answer is always the best, he often merits the reproof of Job to his comforters: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you" (Job 12:2). It can show itself in claiming a prayer privilege over others (Luke 18:11,12). It is evident when one does good deeds in a public manner (Matthew 6:1, 2). The antidote for pride is to acknowledge and show appreciation to others for their part in our accomplishments and, above all, to express gratitude to the heavenly Father for his enabling us to come off conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:37).

Is not rude [NIV]: Courtesy has been described as love in little things. Courtesy is the attribute of the gentleman, the man who acts gently toward others. The story is told of a man who always gave a word of cheery greeting when purchasing his newspaper from the same vendor, an ill-tempered and grumpy merchant. When asked why he was cheerful to such an ill-tempered person, he responded, "I am not going to let him decide how I will live my life." Rudeness is frequently a reaction to the attitude of another. The biblical remedy for rudeness is found in Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

Is not selfish [Today's English Version]: The New English translation reads "does not demand its own way." It is natural to feel that we are right, but it is wrong to insist that others see it the same way. Our judgments are, at best, subjective. Of Israel's period of the judges, when idolatry brought them frequently into subjection to other nations, we read "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Solomon adds these words of wisdom, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25). Selfishness has been the bane of humanity since the original sin. A wise Christian does well to listen to the words of others and thus seek correction in small matters or large. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22, NIV). Pastor C. T. Russell offers this wise advice, "It will not do to say, 'It is my way,' for all the ways of the fallen nature are bad" (Reprints, page 2204).

Is not easily provoked: It is frequently the small matters that provoke us most deeply. We may be prepared for expected opposition and handle it well. But small irritations may quickly erode our façade of good temper. Someone has well remarked, "where there is hurt, there is pride." If a sudden and unexpected disagreement ruffles our composure or a quick turn of events disrupts our plans, we have found a challenge to be overcome. It is human nature to take our selves too seriously and to bridle when things go wrong. Only by taking the long-range view and recognizing that, no matter which direction our lives take, "all things work together for them that love God," can we successfully fight the adversary's temptations to provoke us to wrong attitudes and negative feelings.

Thinketh no evil: "Faults," it is said, "are thick where love is thin." A person may be trusting with those he likes, yet suspicious of those for whom he has less regard, particularly if he perceives they have wronged him in the past. Yet, while perhaps remaining cautious, it is best to give the benefit of the doubt, making all possible allowances for errors of judgment rather than to impugn the motives of the heart. It may be better for one to suffer a wrong than to develop a critical and fault-finding disposition or to pursue a matter to a judgment (1 Corinthians 6:7). When we judge another, too often we do so only on outward evidence. How wise to remember the Scriptural words, "man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). It is well to recognize that when we point a finger at another, three more point back at us. "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2:1).

Rejoices not in iniquity: We all occasionally hear reports of the misconduct of others. Is it our tendency to believe them, especially if they come from what we consider a reliable source? It may be well to remember the Roman law, "that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him" (Acts 25:16). Proverbs 18:13 delivers similar advice, "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." It is for this reason that Jesus lays down specific rules for the settlement of offences in Matthew 18:15-17, rules that were given for the objective ascertaining of truth and not for the pronouncement of judgment. Rules for the specific purpose of regaining one's brother. "Perfect Love rejoiceth not in iniquity under any circumstances or conditions, and would have no sympathy but only sorrow in the fall of another, even if it should mean his own advancement" (Reprints, page 2204).

But rejoices in the truth: The Christian should be a "truth person," not because he has all truth, but because the obtaining of objective truth is his highest goal in life. It is when we learn a truth that is unfavorable to ourselves that it is most difficult to "rejoice in the truth," for it is then that we are called upon to change our course of action to be in harmony with such a truth. If a rocket bound for the moon were only off course by one degree, it would miss its target by thousands of miles. So the small mid-course maneuvers the Lord calls upon us to make have great significance in reaching our ultimate goal. We must likewise rejoice in the truths held by others, no matter what our predisposition toward them might be. If we truly rejoice in truth, we will also find the telling of an untruth, a lie, repugnant to us. "Little white lies" can create big black sins.

Beareth all things: Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word *stego* (#4722) as "to roof over . . . to cover with silence." On page 407 in *The New Creation*, Pastor Russell writes "Love `covereth all things,' as with a mantle of sympathy—for nothing and nobody is perfect, so as to stand full inspection. Love anticipates and has her mantle of benevolence always ready." Proverbs 17:9 phrases it this way, "He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends." Defending another who is under attack is one of the ways we can "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). It is those who do thus who earn the commendation of the apostle Paul in Hebrews 10:32,33: "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used."

Believeth all things: Love acts on the principle that it is better, if necessary, to be deceived a hundred times, than to go through life soured by a distrustful suspicious mind—far better than to wrongly accuse even one person unjustly. While one may be prone to accept an apology at face value the first time it is offered, it becomes increasingly difficult to do so when the offense reoccurs. It is little wonder that the apostles asked, "Lord, increase our faith" after Jesus told them, "Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee,

saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3-5). A certain amount of naiveté is helpful, though the Christian is not asked to go to the other extreme and be gullible.

Hopeth all things: Even when love must cease to believe an opponent, it may still hope for a change on that person's part. Therefore such love is not easily discouraged. To be faithful in hope is to give the other party another opportunity to do that which is right—to "go the extra mile." If we have such hope in the ultimate reform of another, it will give us the patience to wait for that change of character—"if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Romans 8:25). It is because of this character of hope that love . . .

Endureth all things: It is because love hopes, that love can endure. The list of ingredients of love in 1 Corinthians 13:7 really forms one sentence. It is because love seeks to cover the offenses of another that it is quick to believe an apology, and even where it cannot so believe, it can hope for true reform so that it can endure all manner of reproach. It is because of this enduring quality of love that "it is impossible to fix a limit where it would refuse the truly repentant one" (The New Creation, page 406). The example for the Christian is set by his Lord and Master, "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).

Faithfulness in developing these attributes of love begins with adherence to the small details of life, for if we are not faithful in their small beginnings we shall never achieve their larger fruitage. As Peter wrote of another list of attributes, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:8).

Perfection is in the details. May we pay attention to the details so that, being faithful in that which is least, we may eventually be found faithful in much.

Obedience and Sacrifice

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened . . . Lo, I come . . . I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.—Psalm 40:6-8

Homer Montague

Prior to the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, righteous men such as Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob offered animal sacrifices to God as an expression of appreciation for favors and blessings received. Additionally, these free will burnt-offerings probably were made in recognition that a sacrifice for sin was necessary, although the deeper meaning of this concept could not be understood until the Gospel age, following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the holy spirit at Pentecost.

With the establishment of the Law Covenant, specific regulations from God were given to the Israelites concerning sacrifices associated with the Tabernacle. Mandatory sin offerings and trespass-offerings as well as certain free-will offerings would be acceptable to the heavenly Father, but only through the priesthood.

Samuel

A notable exception to this procedure occurred during the time Samuel served as a judge. Since the Ark of the Covenant had been captured and subsequently had several places of temporary abode, the following account describes what occurred as the Philistines prepared to attack the Israelites. "And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the LORD: and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel; and the LORD heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel" (1 Samuel 7:9,10).

Samuel was not a priest but he was both a Levite and a prophet of God. The people of Israel had been worshipping idols and false gods but in response to Samuel's admonitions they repented from their wickedness. Under these extreme circumstances, it is evident that God approved of this burnt-offering and Samuel's prayers as evidenced by the Philistines' defeat.

A further confirmation that God sanctioned Samuel's actions is given after he anointed Saul as king and provided him encouragement as he prepared to battle against the Philistines. "And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I

come to thee, and show thee what thou shalt do. And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day" (1 Samuel 10:6-9).

As the new king, Saul was aware of the formidable task which lay ahead in overthrowing the Philistines' yoke. He would have to rely upon God implicitly as his source of strength and wisdom in order to gain the victory.

In the face of the enemy's overwhelming size while awaiting Samuel's earlier promise to meet him at Gilgal, Saul observed that his army was in terror and many of his men fled. He could wait no longer in view of these circumstances and on the seventh day he took it upon himself to offer a burnt-offering. Immediately thereafter, Samuel appeared and indicated that Saul had sinned by making an offering which was unlawful for him to do and that furthermore, God would remove him from his kingdom, even though this was not done immediately (1 Samuel 13:6-14).

Saul

Many years later, the LORD decreed that Saul should destroy the Amalekites and all of their possessions. This command had been given before, but either the Israelites were not sufficiently powerful to accomplish this or these enemies had been allowed to continue their existence in order to chasten Israel for its continued waywardness and disobedience (Deuteronomy 25:17-19).

Saul now had an opportunity to demonstrate a reformation of heart but instead, he permitted their king, Agag, to live and he also spared the best flocks and herds, contrary to God's command. Samuel discovered Saul's failure and heard his feeble excuse that a spoil was taken with the intent of offering it as a sacrifice. We read the following words of condemnation and rejection: "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22).

Saul's disobedience underscores a lesson which he failed to internalize. Nothing is more important than obedience to God's will and commands. His lack of appreciation for that concept led him to believe that by making an offering to the heavenly Father his actions would be approved. From Hebrews 10:5-7, it is clear that animal sacrifices had no inherent value since they were merely typical in nature, unlike Christ's sacrifice of his perfect human life which did have intrinsic worth. Although the Old Testament offerings were inferior to the "better sacrifices" of this age, and even though they had no actual merit, if made in the proper way and spirit, God accepted them.

God's children in this age are called to a life of obedience and sacrifice. The terms of discipleship require that the Master's example be followed. As he presented himself in consecration on the banks of the Jordan River, his expressed desire was: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

Jesus

There was no coercion of his will on the Father's part but Jesus willingly yielded his all in deference to God's desires. We are told "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Beginning with his pre-human existence, the Lord forsook his wealth consisting of his spirit nature by leaving the heavenly courts and coming to earth to redeem and ultimately restore humanity back into God's favor. As the Logos, although not possessing immortality at that time, he was the Father's agent in the entire work of creation, thereby making him superior to every being in the universe, Jehovah alone being excepted (Colossians 1:16-19). What an extraordinary act of love and humility he manifested on our behalf.

Additionally, while on earth, Jesus sacrificed his talents, his possessions, his good name and finally, his perfect human life itself in harmony with the divine plan of salvation. He set before us an example of obedience to God and although we, unlike our Lord, possess human imperfections, our sacrifice is accepted in the Beloved as long as our human will is yielded in favor of God's will. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

Compliance with the sentiments of the foregoing text is a goal every true follower of Jesus must attain as a prerequisite for membership in the body of Christ. Some of the ways in which many of the Lord's people are consumed while leading a life of sacrifice include serving as an ecclesia officer, conducting Sunday school lessons at conventions, visiting shut-ins, volunteering for Truth projects, sharing study outlines, circulating convention tapes, creating web pages, translating the volumes, hosting brethren, working at fair booths, corresponding with brethren, praying for others engaged in harvest activities as well as for those who may persecute us, transporting brethren to meetings, writing articles or poetry, visiting brethren in foreign lands, providing financial support to help further spread the truth and assist with humanitarian needs. All of these activities cost us something but, if done from a joyful heart, they demonstrate our spirit of devotion to the Lord and give evidence that we are setting our affections on the things that are above as opposed to seeking earthly pleasures.

Four Lessons

As an aid to our spiritual progress and development we may glean four lessons by examining Saul's conduct and applying correct principles to enhance our Christian walk.

1. Obey the will of God as revealed through divinely inspired or supervised instrumentalities. As a prophet, not only was Samuel selected

by God to seek out and anoint Saul as king but Samuel also was commissioned to pray for him, offer burnt offerings, and provide him with counsel as he prepared for battle with the Philistines. Saul's disobedience in the matter should be a warning for us today to heed the divinely provided instructions found in the Bible instead of acting upon our own initiative. We can make straight paths for our feet if we always rely upon our heavenly Father for guidance. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11,12).

2. Wait patiently upon the LORD. In Saul's case, Samuel promised to come to him at Gilgal in seven days. Saul's impatience demonstrated a lack of faith because Samuel appeared right after the offering was consumed. Had Saul exercised just a little more restraint, he would have incurred divine approval rather than displeasure. As members of Christ's body, the Church in the flesh has seemed to tarry long in the flesh. God keeps time perfectly and therefore we should continue to watch, pray, and cast not away our confidence. If we are faithful unto death, we are assured of a great reward.

3. Strive to overcome the fear of man which brings a snare. Instead of destroying all the Amalekites' flocks and herds, Saul permitted the choicest ones to be spared, probably fearing the people would consider it foolish not to save some for themselves. For the Christian believer to sacrifice honor, pleasures, time, preferences, and money in seeking the unseen things of the spirit also will be deemed foolish by those whom we know. Let us not fear their disesteem but continue to pursue the course of self-denial which God approves.

4. Repentance is the proper fruitage of godly sorrow. Saul falsely told Samuel that he had performed the Lord's commandment when, in fact, he had been disobedient. When Samuel called his attention to the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, Saul tried to justify his course of action. After being told the Lord had rejected him, Saul confessed that he had sinned, not from true repentance but rather out of hypocrisy because he sought honor and power with Israel instead of favor from God. "Then he said, I have sinned: yet honor me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God" (1Samuel 15:30). In the cause of consecrated believers, because of weaknesses in the flesh and temptations, we sometimes stumble into sin unintentionally. Should this occur, we should immediately repent of our conduct, expressing to the heavenly Father deep regret for our failure to be more watchful concerning our words or conduct. Any attempt to justify our actions would further compound the matter and be most displeasing to God. Instead, let us promptly avail

ourselves of the merciful provision at the throne of grace. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1,2).

Saul's life which seemed so promising after his anointing, became a tragic example of how the exercise of self-will can turn one specially chosen by God away from his favor. There are many tests which the heavenly Father permits to come upon the Church now in order to prove her worthiness for future exaltation in the glorious kingdom of righteousness. Let us carefully examine our course to the end that we will be obedient sacrificers whose greatest joy is to do the will of our majestic Creator. May the folly of Israel's first king be a sober reminder of our need to follow God's instructions as revealed in his precious word.

Communicating with God

Prayer

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.—Philippians 4:6, NIV

Tim Thomassen

If this is our way of life, then the following verse describes the result: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (verse 7).

Prayer has to do with entreating, interceding, supplication, and worship. Prayer involves an earnest request to God for something. It is an act or practice or an instance of beseeching, petition, the offering of adoration, confession, and giving thanks to God.

The following quotations emphasize the nature and importance of prayer. They reflect the attitude of many who are endeavoring to worship God in spirit and in truth:

"It is not necessary to dogmatize by saying that prayer is magic, or soliloquy, or communion, or petition for this and that, in order to see that it is the expression of a human need."

"Prayer is the flight of the alone to the Alone, a conversation between creature and Creator."

"My prayers are always answered with a yes, a no, a maybe or a wait."

"I pray for support—and I also pray for results. I pray for victory, and I pray that God will get the glory from it in some way. But above all, I pray that his will be done."

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed; the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast."

"While prayer is a privilege and not a command, yet our condition makes it necessary."

"Prayer is very essential, absolutely indispensable, to Christian growth, yea, to spiritual existence."

"Prayer does not always change things for you. But it does change you for things."

"The wonder of it all is that we are not praying all the time."

The words of Paul in Philippians 4:6 indicate that the Lord's followers are to pray with respect to all of their requests. This includes our wants, afflictions, embarrassments, trials, successes, and everything related to our spiritual condition. There is nothing which pertains to our hopes, desires, conflicts, losses, or fears regarding which we may not go and pour out before the Lord.

Prayer as Communication

Prayer is worshipful communication with the true God. Mere speech to God is not necessarily prayer for prayer involves devotion, trust, respect, and a sense of dependence on the one to whom the prayer is directed.

Petitions and supplications, of course, can be made to men. The original language words are sometimes so used in the Bible (see Genesis 44:18; 50:17; Acts 25:11). But the English word "prayer" used in a religious sense, does not apply to such cases. One might beseech or implore another person to do something, but in so doing, he would not view this individual as his God. He would not, for example, silently petition such a one, as he does in prayer to God.

The entire Scriptural record testifies that God is the one to whom prayer should be directed (Psalm 5:1,2; Matthew 6:9). It also indicates that God is the "hearer of prayer" (Psalm 65:2, 66:19). In Mark 11:24 and Ephesians 3:20, we are told that God has power to act on behalf of the petitioners.

Even during the period that Israel was God's "private property," so to speak, his covenant people, foreigners could approach Jehovah in prayer by recognizing Israel as God's appointed instrument and the temple at Jerusalem as his chosen place for sacrifice (2 Chronicles 6:32,33). Later, by Christ's death, the distinction between Jew and Gentile was eliminated (Ephesians 2:11-16). Peter said, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right" (Acts 10:34,35, NIV).

The determining factor, then, is the heart condition of the individual and what his heart is moving him to do (Psalm 119:145; Lamentations 3:41). Those who observe God's commandments and do "the things that are pleasing in his eyes" have the assurance that his ears are also open to them (1 John 3:22; Psalm 10:17; Proverbs 15:8; 1 Peter 3:12).

Prayers involve confession (2 Chronicles 30:22), petitions or requests (Hebrews 5:7), expressions of praise and thanksgiving (Psalm 34:1; 92:1) and vows (1 Samuel 1:11; Ecclesiastes 5:2-6). The famous prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples, as recorded in Matthew 6, was a model. Jesus himself and his followers did not rigidly adhere to those specific words in praying.

Initially this ideal prayer concentrated on the prime issue: calling for the sanctification of God's name which began to be reproached by the rebellion in Eden, and for the realization of the return of the divine will through the promised kingdom.

Prayers for Kings

In 1 Timothy 2:1,2 the apostle spoke of prayers being made regarding all men, for kings and all those who are in authority. However, on his final night with his disciples, Jesus, in prayer, said that he did not make request concerning the world, but for those whom God had given him, and that these were not of the world but were hated by the world (John 17:9,14).

Therefore, it would seem that prayers regarding the world's leaders are not without limitation. The apostle's further words indicate that such prayers ultimately benefit God's people. Paul said that the outcome would be "that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty."

Nehemiah prayed that God would "give him mercy before King Artaxerxes" (Nehemiah 1:11). God instructed the Israelites to "seek the peace of the city" (Babylon) in which they would be exiled, praying on its behalf, since "in its peace, there will prove to be peace for you yourselves" (Jeremiah 29:7).

Acts 4:23-30 demonstrated that Christians in the early church prayed concerning the threats of rulers in their day. Most likely their prayers on behalf of imprisoned Peter also involved the officials with authority to release him (Acts 12:5). And, following Jesus' teaching, they prayed for those persecuting them (Matthew 5:44; Acts 26:28,29; Romans 10:1-3).

It is probably safe to say that ultimately it is knowledge of God's will that should regulate the essence of one's prayers. If one's prayer is to be granted, it must please God. Knowing that the wicked and those disregarding God's word have no audience with him, the one who prays should not request that which is unrighteous and opposed to God's revealed will, including the teachings of God's son and his inspired apostles (John 15:7,16).

Prayer Requests

Petitions regarding the asking of "anything" (John 16:23) should not be taken too literally. "Anything" does not include things that an individual knows, or has reason to believe, are not pleasing to God. "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:14,15, NIV).

Prayers must be made to God on right matters, those in harmony with his declared purposes. Prayers must also be made in the right manner, through God's appointed way, Christ Jesus. Prayers must be uttered with a right motive and a clean heart (James 4:3-6). Along with this, there is need for persistence. Jesus said to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking, not giving up (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-7).

We must remember that God's concept of time is quite different than ours. The seeming delay on his part in answering some prayers is not due to any inability nor to a lack of willingness, as the Scriptures make clear (Matthew 7:9-11; James 1:5,17). In some cases, the answer must await God's "timetable" (Luke 18:7; 1 Peter 5:6; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 6:9-11).

It is evident that God allows his petitioners to demonstrate the depth of their concern, the intensity of their desire, and the genuineness of their motive (Psalm 55:17; 88:1,13; Romans 1:9-11). At times, they must be like Jacob in his wrestling long to obtain a blessing (Genesis 32:24-26).

Delays are not refusals. Many a prayer is registered, and underneath it the words may read: "My time is not yet come." God has a set time as well as a set purpose, and he who orders the bounds of our habitation orders also the time of our deliverance.

Some men may feel pressured into acting. Although this is not true of God, it does seem that he notices the extent of concern shown among his servants as a body, taking action when they collectively show deep concern and united interest (Exodus 2:23-25). Where a measure of apathy exists, God may withhold action.

Intercessory Prayer

The Bible stresses the power of intercessory prayer, whether by an individual or a group. It was in regard to praying for one another that James said: "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (James 5:16, NIV). Another example of this type of prayer is found in Hebrews 13:18,19, NIV. A very human request that all humble, sincere Christians must often make of their brethren is contained in the following words: "Pray for us. We are sure that we have a pure conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. I particularly urge you to pray so that I may be restored to you soon."

The reference in Philippians 4:6 is to both prayer and supplication, suggesting that there is a similarity between the two. However, the word "supplication" is a stronger term than the word "prayer." It is the mode of prayer which stems from the sense of need or want. Supplication would suggest a pleading or appeal for God's promised, providential care. We further note that our prayers and supplications should be made "with thanksgiving." In Colossians 4:2 it is written: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving should always be connected with prayer. This connection is also shown in 1Thessalonians 5:18: "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." We should always find something to be thankful for, no matter what may be the burden of our wants or the special subject of our petitions. It takes supreme confidence in the wisdom, power, and love of God to give "thanks for all

things." This does not mean that we delight in pain and suffering. We simply cling to God's unchanging attributes.

It is easier to be happy when everything seems to be going our way. We might quickly express thanks to God when we receive the things we desire. But there are times we may have an opposite response when we find ourselves in adverse situations and our heavenly Father does not grant our requests. However, the trusting child of God learns to praise the Lord in every circumstance.

Romans 8:28 has become familiar to many. It is a comforting truth that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose." If we really believe that, then we will give thanks in everything.

"Thanks for thorns as well as roses.
Thanks for weakness and for health.
Thanks for clouds as well as sunshine.
Thanks for poverty and wealth."

It might be well to read and heed these words: "If you do not get everything you want, think of the things you do not get that you do not want."

"'Twas new to me, yet old to some, This thought that to me has become A revelation of the way We all should live throughout the day. For as each day unfolds its light, We'll walk by faith and not by sight. Life will indeed, a blessing bring, If we see God in everything."

In Philippians 4:7 (NIV), Paul spoke of the effect of true prayer. The result is the peace of God which transcends all understanding and which will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Paul had just said that we should think of our special needs and so offer our petitions. Then he declared that God would give us something infinitely better than any benefit we can conceive. He wrote in Ephesians 3:20 of him "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" and there he told the nature of this blessing which surpasses all that we can ourselves imagine. God bestows his peace, the knowledge that he is with us and that we can rest on him.

Prayer is the link that connects us with God. This is the bridge that spans every gulf.

The Supernatural Power of Prayer

Do we know the power of our supernatural communication? Do we dare use it with the authority of a faith that commands as well as asks? God is not wanting great individuals, but he is wanting those who will dare to prove the greatness of their God.

We should beware in our prayer of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by thinking that we know what he can do. Expect unexpected things above all that we ask or think. Each time we pray, we should be quiet first and worship God in his glory. Think of what he can do, and expect great things!

Are you in sorrow? Prayer can make your affliction sweet and strengthening. Are you glad? Prayer can add to your joy a celestial perfume. Are you in extreme danger from outward or inward enemies? Prayer can set at your right hand an angel whose touch could shatter a millstone into smaller dust than the flour it grinds and whose glance could lay an army low. What will prayer do for you? All that God can do for you!

"Wrestling prayer can wonders do,
Bring relief in deepest straits;
Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates."

We are to have the spirit of prayer in all that we say and do. Our hearts should be going out continually to the Lord for guidance in all of life's affairs, that we may do with our might what our hands find to do. We would do well to remember and heed these words of our Lord: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

Watch and Pray

"Some make the mistake of praying without watching; others make the mistake of watching without praying; but the safe and only proper method is that which our Lord directed, to combine the two. We are to watch, and to be on guard against the encroachments of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are to watch for all the encouragement of the Lord's Word, the evidence of their fulfillment, the signs that betoken his presence, and the great changes of dispensation just at hand. We are to watch for everything that will strengthen us in faith and hope and loyalty and love and while watching we are to pray without ceasing. We are to pray together as the Lord's people; we are to pray in our homes, as families; we are to pray in secret, in private."—Reprints, page 2775.

Do you feel guilty because you are not able to spend long periods of time each day in prayer? Perhaps you have a regular but brief time when you read the Bible and pray, but you lack a sense of God's presence in your life. Do you feel that you aren't communicating enough with your heavenly Father? That problem plagues individuals whose lives are constantly busy. Here is some advice from the 17th-century French writer François Fenelon: "Learn to make good use of chance moments. When waiting for someone, when going from place to place, or when in society where to be a good listener is all that is required—at such times it is easy to lift the heart to God and thereby gain fresh strength for further duties. ... One moment will suffice to place yourself in God's presence to love and worship him, to offer all you are doing or bearing, and to spill all your heart's emotions at his feet."

We can train ourselves to maintain an awareness of the Lord's presence with us throughout the day and to talk with him as we are able. That's how we can fulfill the Savior's directive to "abide in me" (John 15:4).

"There is no time of night or day
When God can't hear us as we pray;
There is no time, there is no place,
When we can't draw upon his grace."

"To make the most of your time, take time to pray."

Trusting in Prayer

As Christians, we can certainly trust in the power of prayer. The ways God chooses to answer the sincere requests of his people are his domain, not ours. Sometimes even the timing of God's answers may be the result of activity that occurs in the spiritual realm.

Perhaps it is a good thing that we don't fully understand how prayer works or we would be too overwhelmed or intimidated to come before the throne of heavenly grace. But whatever is happening in the heavenly realm, our Father delights in our prayers.

At one point in his ministry, Jesus "went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when evening was come, he was there alone" (Matthew 14:23). Jesus felt the need of perfect solitude.

We know how much interaction with others draws us away from ourselves and exhausts our powers. The man Christ Jesus knew this too, and felt the need of being by himself, of gathering all his powers, of realizing fully his high destiny, his human weakness, his entire dependence on the Father. How much more does the child of God need this, to be alone with spiritual realities, to be alone with God. If ever there was one who could dispense with special seasons for solitude and fellowship, it was our Lord. But he could not do his work or maintain his fellowship in full power without his quiet time.

Someone once wrote of a secluded walk in his garden where his mother always spent a certain hour of the day, upon which nobody ever dreamed of intruding. It was the holy garden of the Lord to her.

Seek thy private chamber! It is in the solitude that we catch the mystic notes that issue from the soul of things.

Time spent in prayer is not lost with respect to the affairs of life. The happiest men and women in the world are those who pray, and pray regularly, who bow the knee as did Daniel.

The moments thus taken from earthly affairs are well spent and bring more than commensurate blessings upon the worshipper and all with which he has to do. It is impossible to live a consecrated life while neglecting prayer.

What would Daniel have been without his praying time? How would his faith in God have persisted in that heathen land? How would his loyalty to principle have maintained itself in the midst of corruption had it not been for his communion with his maker?

To the Christian this privilege is enhanced by a realization that "we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1John 2:1). It is in his all-prevailing name that we may approach with courage the throne of heavenly grace, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in every time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

"Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer!
That calls me from a world of care.
And bids me at my Father's throne,
Make all my wants and wishes known!

In seasons of distress and grief,
My soul has often found relief.
And oft escaped the tempter's snare,
By thy return, sweet hour of prayer."

Harvest Work

Acceptable Service

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.—Hebrews 12:28

All nature, animate and inanimate, is made to praise and serve God. To honor and serve their creator is written within the being of all God's creatures. But today, after many centuries of being steeped in sin, man's moral and mental sensibilities have been diminished and thus he serves self and not God. The result has been gross darkness that has caused untold unhappiness and misery. True happiness depends on serving God acceptably. Ultimately all who will be given eternal life must understand that to serve and love God is to attain supreme happiness and peace (Proverbs 3:1,2).

The Scriptures are replete with the concept that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). When the people of earth ultimately learn this lesson, even a future life of eternity will not be sufficient time to extol their God for his graciousness on their behalf. How can hearts that truly love God with their entire being keep from showing their love and appreciation? No one can ever repay God. He is the great giver and therefore the pattern to follow. The spirit of true giving is in passing the blessing on to another. As God loves us, so should we love and serve our fellow man.

One of the best examples of this concept is seen in Revelation 22:17. The work of Christ and his church will be to bestow the blessing of the Millennial kingdom on the world. Those of mankind who catch the spirit of the kingdom will also delight in doing the same to their fellow man: "And let him that heareth say, Come." All will be blessed with the privilege of dispensing God's blessings.

Acceptable Service Now Limited

At the present time, the choice of acceptable service is limited to those called of God according to his purpose (Romans. 8:28). The work of this Gospel age is to gather the body of Christ, those who will ultimately have the privilege of apportioning the blessings God has in store for ALL mankind. Among those who call themselves his children at the present time, there are various ideas of what God's will is for them and how God wants them to serve. Some believe that today's church is the instrument used of God to save the masses of unbelievers. To achieve this, much time and money are expended in sending missionaries to foreign lands. Others believe that they must help God improve the plight of the poor and downtrodden, both at home and abroad. Still others believe that it is a Christian's duty to improve the world through involvement in government and politics and thus we see such movements as the Moral Majority and the Religious Right.

What do the Scriptures teach concerning the will of God for his church today? If as many Christians claim, the work of the hour is to convert mankind and improve their lot on

earth physically and morally, failure appears to be the result. At the moment, Christianity is a minority religion in the world and daily the poor and hungry increase. Did Christ attempt to save all the poor and feed all the hungry? When Judas protested regarding the precious perfume that Mary poured on Jesus' head just before his death, he said, "It may have been sold and given to the poor." Jesus responded with, "the poor you have with you always" (John 12:8), indicating that he did not consider ministering to the needs of the poor to be the work of the hour. Christ certainly healed many people in his short life on earth, but in proportion to all the sick and dying, the number was very small, and then those he did help ultimately died. And his work was limited to Israel only (Matthew 10:5,6). The works he did while on earth obviously served another purpose. It seems evident that they were simply a picture of the greater works that would take place in his Millennial kingdom.

What Is Acceptable Service?

Three areas of service for the present time are delineated in Scripture: the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. Service to these three are so intertwined that it is often difficult to separate them. We cannot serve one without serving the other. An example of this is found in 1 John 4:20,21: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

God is love and all his doings are permeated with this quality. When we come to God to give him our life in consecration, it is to love him with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37).

This is God's law and God's will for us. The outworking of this love for God seeks expression and it is to be found in love for our neighbor. The Golden Rule has its greatest application to our brethren, those who have also covenanted to serve the Lord. Jesus elaborates on this in John 15:13: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And who are the friends? "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14). We have this counsel in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Verse 39 of Matthew 22 is linked to verse 38 as cause is to effect. The practical aspect of our supreme love for him will be to "love our neighbor as ourselves," and thus to lay down our lives as he laid down his life for us.

The Example of Paul

The apostle Paul exemplified the true Christian life in one statement: "This one thing I do" (Philippians 3:13). He advises us to "Be ye followers [imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ"(1 Corinthians 11:1). Paul spent every effort for the Lord, the truth, and the brethren. It is true that Paul worked as a tentmaker to support himself, but this was often done for a period of time to accumulate sufficient funds to be in "full time service." When

he was not working at his trade, the rest of his time was totally dedicated to the Lord's service. In 2Corinthians 11:28 he talks about having the care of all the Gentile churches; in Acts 20:19, 20 he writes about expending his energy on behalf of the truth and the brethren, teaching them publicly and going from home to home, establishing them in the knowledge and love of the truth. He tirelessly worked on behalf of the truth, even though often in danger from false brethren and others who opposed him and his work. All of his pilgrim trips were to establish churches and to teach and encourage the brethren in Europe and Asia.

Our consecration should be like that of Paul's—everything totally devoted to the Lord: our hopes, aims, goals, ambitions, possessions, talents, our all. As stewards, it is our job to learn how to use and distribute these. The Scriptures tell us that the work at this time in the age is one of harvest—reaping the results of the work done by those who sowed throughout this present Gospel age (John 4:34-38; Matthew 13:30-39; Revelation 14:14). Those to be reaped or harvested are also mentioned under different names and pictures: the wheat, the seed that fell on good ground (Matthew 13:8, 30), the brethren, the Lord's sheep, the Lord's jewels (Malachi 3:16,17). The time is short and the wheat must all be gathered into the barn before blessings can flow to the remainder of mankind.

Our chief work therefore is to serve the Lord by serving our brethren and the truth. It is true that we can serve them temporally and we should always be alert to the needs of our brethren (1 John 3:16,17; James 2:15,16), but it is even better to serve them spiritually. Our faith must be demonstrated by works. Our continual concern must be the needs of the brethren. This implies more than the intellectual study of the word; we must apply it. We must also study ourselves to know our abilities and weak points. We must study the leading of the Lord and his directions to know how to act aright. We must study the brethren to know how to provoke them unto love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). We must study to make ourselves and our brethren approved of the Lord (2 Timothy 2:15), so that we may be judged as more than conquerors.

All Else Is Loss and Dross

Our lives should evidence the fact that the truth is of paramount importance and that we "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and that we are willing to "suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung," that we may win Christ and "attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Philippians 3:8,11). Nothing we may ever do or say is more persuasive than to keep our lives afire with the love of our Lord and the truth and that our entire life be dedicated to its service. How many will be led to more fully follow in the footsteps of Christ by such an example no one will ever know until we meet Christ face to face on the other side of the veil. And what a baneful effect the opposite example may have. It is our duty to thus lay down our lives for our brethren by being totally immersed in doing God's will.

In living such a life ultimately all other things will lose their allurements and glamour. We will curtail the obligations of the home, work, and our own desires wherever possible, buying back time to spend in prayer, study, the spread of the truth, and gathering with our

brethren. Every waking hour can and should be filled with thoughts of service and how we can increase our opportunities. It has truly been asked, "If we were accused of being a Christian, would there be sufficient evidence to convict us?"

Daily we can find countless opportunities in which to serve the Lord. It may be true that we will never direct any great work for the Lord, or convert any to the way of the Lord. It may often seem to us that our efforts are in vain, but this is the way that leads to life eternal; this is our sanctification.

The man who is acceptable to God is a man of prayer. "Pray one for another . . . the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Many things can be wrought by prayer (Acts 10:31; 12:5; 16:13; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18). Become one who is always instant in prayer.

Study

Our personal study is a very important component of service to the brethren. When one begins to study the Word, it shortly becomes evident that one lifetime is not sufficient to mine the gold contained in the Scriptures. There is truly food for all and more than can ever be digested even were we to study 24 hours a day. This will be proof in itself that there is no time for any earthly pursuits or endeavors beyond what is necessary to maintain life. It is good to become known as one whose words and thoughts are in the language of the Scriptures. Always have a word of Scriptural encouragement, a question to stir the minds of others, and a gem from the mine to encourage others in the narrow way.

In conjunction with personal study is linked the meeting with brethren. Many Scriptural admonitions are given along this line: "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" (Malachi 3:16), and "let us consider one another to provoke [stir up] unto love and to good works. . . . not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24,25). Our task is to transform our minds, our characters, to sharpen our swords (our understanding of the truth) and to assist each other in the embroidery of our bridal robes (Psalm 45). Meetings, whether with one or many, is a time when we are re-energized in our zeal and dedication for the Lord and the truth. This is only possible when the fires of love and zeal are stoked by the precious promises found in the Scriptures.

Spreading God's Word

There is much work to do in the harvest. We need to not only encourage those of our brethren that we know, but those not known to us. It involves sending the word out to all our brethren that are still searching. We must spread the word far and wide and tell the glad tidings to all. There are still many in Zion longing to hear the offer of the Lord to make a sacrifice of their all to run for the great prize of the high calling in Christ. We should never slack our efforts in casting our bread upon the waters and in sowing seed, for we never know how far our efforts will reach (Ecclesiastes 11:1,6).

There are time-honored methods that are still used to reach our brethren wherever they are. We can tract with various pieces of literature. We can go from house to house, from city to city, or even within the sphere of our daily activities. How much truth could be spread if every day each one gave out just three tracts? They can be left in the many places we frequent—in phone booths, doctors' offices, in the mail while paying our bills, in response to a question asked by a person in a store line. Books and videos can be placed in libraries, video stores, waiting rooms, colleges and so forth. Ads, often at very low cost, offering literature can be placed in newspapers. The newspapers daily reflect the sufferings of a world gone mad. Letters to the editor can give hope and comfort to many, and at no cost. The opportunities are limitless; the influence will be astronomical.

Letters of comfort can be sent to the grieving, whether the names are found in the obituary columns of the newspapers, on the radio, or on the TV news. There is work to be done to encourage new interest: visits, phone calls, personal letters, meetings. Our work does not stop once a little one finds the truth.

New technology is an exciting tool that can be used to promulgate the truth. Users can create web sites on various topics. E-mails can be sent to encourage the brethren around the world. Letters can be sent to sites that are out of harmony with God's word. Offers of literature can be posted on various advertising sections of the Internet.

Once efforts are made to serve the Lord, the truth, and the brethren in the proper manner, the one engaged in such services will find that there will be no time to become engaged in any extra secular work or pleasures. We will surely not know where to cease our efforts. The following quotation will apply to every consecrated child of God and the truthfulness of it will be found in the living of its advice:

"The Lord's people spend and are being spent in his service—by volunteer work, by attending meetings, by holding meetings and in various ways, according to opportunity. They are living separate from the world—distinct lives, lives of consecration. The world now has an eight-hour day. The Lord's faithful people would, on the contrary, make theirs a sixteen-hour day. But all these present-day conditions constitute perils. For us to do what others do, and to devote to the Lord's service only what the world considers a reasonable day's work, would not be fulfilling our covenant of sacrifice at all. Those who seek merely to do right, and to put in eight hours or so a day faithfully, after the manner of the world, will be judged from this standpoint. They are not whole-heartedly fulfilling the conditions of the covenant of sacrifice.

"But the Little Flock will serve the Lord with such delight that they will scarcely know how to cease their efforts. They recognize that their bodies are fully consecrated to the Lord, and they are daily putting them to death in a reasonable, rational manner. In view of these perilous times, let us each ask himself the question, To which class do I belong?"—Reprints, page 5413.

"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits unto me?" A totally dedicated life of service is the answer.

Dealing with a Worldly Environment

A Quiet Time With God

My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed.—Psalm 57:7

Richard Doctor

As darkness that could be felt closed in around the Western Roman Empire's ruins in the fifth century, pious Christians sought out monastic cloisters. The dangers were real. Massive migrations of economically dispossessed peoples poured forth out of central Asia seeking new homes. Marauding bands of "Vandals," answerable to no one, left misery in their wake. Even sixteen centuries later their name echoes in the English tongue as a description for wanton, senseless, and reckless destruction.

Monasteries provided protection, sustenance, and spiritual solace. There the "elect," as they considered themselves, sought separation both from their nominal Christian brethren and from their uncertain world. Within was a life of order and meaning. The day with its honest work was punctuated by set periods to focus on worship and reflection. If the food was plain and the life was one of voluntary poverty and chastity, there was a sense of certainty that by God's grace, Christ would triumph. Such was their prayer.

History Repeated

Sadly, these are not merely lessons of history. Today, we need to especially bear up in prayer our brethren living in lands beyond the frontiers of interest to the economic and political powers that dominate the world. For these dear brethren daily existence is eked out despite the meltdown of political and economic order. Marauding bands and gangs may appear in the middle of any night to pillage and murder, or worse. Every man's sword is indeed against his brother (Ezekiel 38:21) and daily life is closer to fifth century Europe than to today's Y2K-compliant European Union. Yet for those of us not in physical danger, the spiritual danger is no less real. Our adversary may not threaten our physical life, but he is determined to kill our spiritual life (Matthew 10:28). Despite God's every provision for spiritual armor we may fail to put on Christ in our daily life. We need a quiet time with God to do this.

This thread of a set devotional life and a quiet time with God connects us to our brethren across the centuries. Our earliest thought should be: "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12). One practical account of how this prayer can become a reality for us begins a world away from the fears of a society in anarchy with two young men at Cambridge University in 1882 who thought up the encouraging slogan: "Remember the morning watch." These students—Hooper and Thornton—found their days "loaded" with studies, lectures, games, and bull sessions. Enthusiasm and activity were the order of the day. These dedicated men soon discovered a flaw in their spiritual armor, a small crack that if not soon closed, would bring disaster. They sought

an answer and came up with a scheme they called the morning watch, a plan to spend the first minutes of a new day alone with God, praying and reading the Bible.

The morning watch sealed the crack. It enshrined a truth so often obscured by the pressure of ceaseless activity that it needs daily rediscovery: To know God, it is necessary to spend consistent time with him. The idea caught fire. "A remarkable period of religious blessing" followed, and culminated in the departure of the "Cambridge Seven," a band of prominent athletes and men of wealth and education, for missionary service. They gave up everything to go out to China for Christ.

But these men found that getting out of bed in time for the morning watch was as difficult as it was vital. Thornton was determined to turn indolence into discipline. He invented an automatic foolproof cure for laziness. It was a contraption set up by his bed: "The vibration of an alarm clock set fishing tackle in motion, and the sheets, clipped to the line, moved swiftly into the air off the sleeper's body." Thornton wanted to get up to meet his God!

The Quiet of Morning

The intimacy of communion with Christ must be recaptured in the morning quiet time. Call it what you want—the quiet time, personal devotions, the morning watch, or individual worship—these holy minutes at the start of each day explain the inner secret of Christianity. It's the golden thread that ties every great heart for God together—rich and poor, businessmen and housewives. Every man who ever became somebody for God has this at the core of his priorities: time alone with God! David says in Psalm 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." A fixed and established heart produces stability in life. Few in the Christian community have this heart and life. One of the missing links has been a workable plan on how to begin and maintain a morning watch.

How May We Start?

To get under way, a seven-minute commitment may be a good beginning. Perhaps you could call it a daily "Seven-Up." Five minutes may be too short, and ten minutes for some is a little too long at first.

Are you willing to take seven minutes every morning? Not five mornings out of seven, but seven days out of seven? Ask God to help you: "Lord, I want to meet you the first thing in the morning for at least seven minutes. Tomorrow when the alarm clock goes off at 6:15 a.m., I have an appointment with you."

Your prayer might be, "Morning by morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation" (Psalm 5:3). How do you spend these seven minutes? After getting out of bed and taking care of your personal needs, you will want to find a quiet place and there with your Bible enjoy the solitude of seven minutes with God.

Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. Find a quiet place away from the radio and television. Thank God for the good night of sleep and the opportunities of this new day. "Lord, cleanse my heart so I may feed on your word. Open my heart. Fill my heart. Make my mind alert, my soul active, and my heart responsive. Lord, surround me with your presence during this time. Amen."

Now take four minutes to read a portion of the Bible. You may hold your devotionals until breakfast. Your greatest need is to hear some word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the author! One of the gospels is a good place to begin reading. Start with the gospel of Mark. Read consecutively—verse after verse, chapter after chapter. Do not race, but avoid stopping to do a Bible study on some word, thought, or theological problem that presents itself. Read for the pure joy of reading and allow God to speak. Read perhaps just 20 verses, or maybe a complete chapter. When you have finished Mark, start the gospel of John. Soon you'll want to read the entire New Testament. After God has spoken to you through his book, then speak to him—in prayer. You now have two and a half minutes left for fellowship with him in four areas of prayer that you can remember by the word **ACTS**.

Adoration. This is the purest kind of prayer because it's all for God—there's nothing in it for you. You don't barge into the presence of royalty. You begin with the proper salutation. Worship him. Tell the Lord you love him. Reflect on his greatness, his power, his majesty, and sovereignty!

Confession follows. Having seen him you now want to be sure every sin is cleansed and forsaken. Confession comes from a root word meaning "to agree together with." Apply this to prayer. It means to agree with God. Something happened yesterday you called a slight exaggeration; God calls it a lie! You call it telling the truth about someone in the church; God calls it gossip. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

Thanksgiving. Express your gratitude to God. Think of several specific things for which to give him thanks, "count your blessings, name them one-by-one," and even thank him for hardships. "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1Thessalonians 5:18).

Supplication. This means to "ask for, earnestly and humbly." This is the part of your prayer life where you make your petitions known to him. Ask for others, then for yourself. Why not include other brethren around the world and the neighbors you are commanded to love? Why not the whole groaning creation? Let's put these seven minutes together:

1 minute—Prayer for guidance (Psalm 143:8)

4 minutes—Reading the Bible (Psalm 119:18)

21 minutes—Prayer: Adoration (1 Chronicles 29:11);
Confession (1 John 1:9); Thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:20);
and Supplication (Matthew 7:7)

This is simply a guide. Soon you will discover that it is impossible to spend only seven minutes with the Lord. An amazing thing happens: seven minutes becomes 20, and it's not long before you're spending 30 precious minutes with him. Do not become devoted to the habit, but to the Savior. God has granted the priceless privilege of fellowship with him. Covenant with him now to guard, nourish, and maintain your morning watch of seven minutes. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" Luke 16:10.

The Sanctified Life

*But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.—2 Thessalonians 2:13**

A verse by verse study in Romans 12

In chapter six of his letter to the church in Rome, Paul describes the purpose and process of dedicating one's life to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the need to symbolize that consecration by total water immersion. In chapter twelve, Paul describes the results in the lives of true believers who fully open their lives to the transforming and sanctifying power of the holy spirit. Let us look carefully at this twelfth chapter of Romans.

Responding to God—Verse 1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual worship.

The word therefore is clearly intended to connect what Paul had previously said with what he is about to say. God having torn down the partition between Jew and Gentile and demonstrated his immense love and mercy by having "bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have mercy on them all" (Romans 11:32), what should be our logical response? "In view of God's mercy," and as a fitting response, Paul urges us to offer, or yield ourselves (Romans 6:13,19), not as dead sacrifices, but as "living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." The contrast is clear. Whereas Israel under the Law presented dead sacrifices to God in order to obtain mercy, spiritual Israelites, having freely received mercy and grace, should respond to the immensity of God's divine love by presenting themselves (a total yielding of body, mind, and spirit) to God as living sacrifices. Finally, Paul equates the yielding of ourselves to God as living sacrifices as our "spiritual worship." The Greek work *latreia*, translated "worship" in the NIV, clearly implies more. When we yield ourselves to God as living sacrifices, we do so not only because we love and adore him (worship), but because we also desire to be used by him (service). Hence, presenting ourselves as living monuments of redeemed mercy and as divine property in the highest sense is worship and, the logical sequel, is our priestly service (Hebrews 13:15,16).

Transformation—Verse 2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

In dedicating our lives to God, we no longer belong to ourselves: "You were bought at a price; therefore honor God with your body" (1Corinthians 6:19,20). We are in the world,

not to be conformed to the pattern of this world, but as a witness to God's divine mercy and grace. Once we have taken our consecration vows, have died to self, and have been resurrected to a new life in Christ—symbolized by our baptism into Christ—we must allow God's workmanship to begin in our lives so he can transform us into the image and glory of his blessed son (Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 8:29). Clearly, God's transforming work through the power of the holy spirit is a work of metamorphosis—a change from the inside out. It begins with the renewing of our minds, by God revealing to us through his word and instilling in us new perspectives, priorities, motives, and desires.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV). The "renewed mind" is manifested externally in altered attitudes, behavior, and deeds. As the process of transformation proceeds, the "new creation" in Christ finds the lure of the world, the flesh, and the devil more and more abhorrent, and the will of God more and more appealing. To such a sanctified mind, God not only reveals his "good, pleasing, and perfect will," he also provides the power to do his will (see Ephesians 1:17-21). Paul reminds the saints in Philippi as well as us that "it is God who is at work in you to put into you the will to desire, and the power to achieve what his purpose has pleased for you" (Philippians 2:13, Barclay). This, truly, is the amazing grace of God.

The Mind of Christ—Verse 3

For by the grace given to me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

A part of God's transforming work "by the renewing of our minds" is to convert the human self-centered ego—a part of our human inheritance—into a Christ-centered desire and will. This is what Paul describes as the "mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5-8, KJV). Having the mind of Christ is having a servant-spirit which, in deep humility, seeks only the will of God and never self-will (John 6:38). Clearly one aspect of the will of God is identical for every member of the body of Christ which is holiness of life and completeness of dedication (1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 12:14,15). Conversely, God's will for each member of the body of Christ with respect to service within the household of faith will be quite diverse. Our position within the body of Christ must be determined by God and not by ourselves (1 Corinthians 12:18).

Unity with Diversity—Verses 4–8

Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If one's gift is prophesying, let it be used in proportion to his faith; if it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Paul is addressing every member of every ecclesia—the body of Christ. (In verse 3 he writes, "I say to every one of you.") The analogy of the structure and function of the human body to the structure and function of the body of Christ (see also 1 Corinthians 12:12-27) immediately sets forth three fundamental truths: 1) the unity of the body; 2) the diversity of the parts that make up the whole; and 3) the mutuality of interdependence of the parts. (Verse 5 states "each member belongs to all the others.") For the body to be healthy and function harmoniously, it is imperative that every part fully carry out its responsibilities. Every member of the body of Christ has at least one special ability imparted by the grace of God. Each of these gifts must be used for the benefit of the body and for the ultimate praise and glory of our loving heavenly Father. Paul proceeds to list seven gifts (*charismata*—gracious gifts) that might typically be found among members of an ecclesia. The list is neither meant to be exhaustive nor exclusive. It includes:

1. Prophesying: communicating revealed truth that will both convict and build up the hearers; truth that will edify and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3).
2. Serving (*diakonian*): providing any type of service that meets the physical, emotional, or spiritual needs of others (Galatians 5:13; 6:1,2).
3. Teaching (*didaskalian*): validating, clarifying, and conveying Bible doctrine.
4. Encouraging (*paraklesis*): exhorting others to stimulate faith and promote spiritual growth (Hebrews 3:12,13).
5. Contributing: carrying out deeds of benevolence—meeting physical and material needs of others (Matthew 25:34-40; James 2:14-17).
6. Leadership (*proistamenos*): "one who stands before others," i.e., organizing and motivating others to serve, either by example or by delegating responsibility (1 Thessalonians 5:11-13).
7. Showing mercy: ministering cheerfully to the physically or spiritually sick and needy; able not only to show loving sympathy, but to show empathy when necessary (Matthew 5:7).

As we review these seven gifts, we see that as we grow in spirit, we are more fully enabled by the holy spirit to serve in several of these areas. But Paul is also saying that each of us, by the grace of God, excels in one or more of these gifts. It is only as we encourage each other to use fully our God-given abilities for the edification of the body that the church will be in its most healthy state, spiritually speaking, and more fully able to glorify God who deserves and expects our very best.

Attitude Toward Believers—Verses 9–16

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Don't be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Don't be conceited.

In verses 9 to 16, the apostle Paul describes what our attitude and conduct must be toward members of the body of Christ. Clearly, this pattern of behavior is not typical of human behavior, but of those who are indeed a part of God's new creation—those who have truly yielded their lives to God as living sacrifices and are, therefore, expecting the transforming and sanctifying power of the holy spirit to work within them. As God's children we will:

Verses 9 and 10: Express sincere, brotherly un hypocritical agape love, a love that is always willing to give and expects nothing in return. Failure to love our brethren casts doubt on our love for God (1 John 4:19-21).

Hate what is evil and cling to what is good (Psalm 97:10).

Be devoted to one another in love (Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22).

Honor others above self (Philippians 2:3).

Verses 11 and 12: Keep rekindling our spiritual zeal by faithfully serving the Lord. One of the greatest dangers facing the church today is the "Laodicean spirit," an attitude of apathy and complacency, rather than a fervent zeal in running for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Revelation 3:14-19; Colossians 3:1-4).

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Our Lord Jesus instills confidence in those who serve him; though he remains invisible, he is wonderfully real to the eye of faith. This results in the joyful hope of seeing him face to face and sharing in his glory (1 Peter 1:6-9; Romans 15:13). This hope leads to patience in trials, knowing the temporary nature of this life in contrast to the hope of eternity (Romans 5:3-5). We will continue to receive the strength and grace we need to meet each experience in life as

we daily feast on the word of God and remain in constant communion with him through prayer.

Verse 13: Share with saints who are in need. Even when undergoing difficult experiences, we should never allow ourselves to become so preoccupied that we become insensitive to the needs of others (Philippians 4:15-19; Hebrews 6:10; 13:16; 1 John 3:16-18).

Practice or pursue hospitality. Paul uses the Greek word *dioko*, which means to pursue or "chase after" opportunities for hospitality. It is when we share our homes with God's people that we truly come to know one another with an intimacy that cannot be achieved in any other way. Indeed, when we entertain brethren, we entertain our Lord Jesus Christ and our heavenly Father (Matthew 10:11,40; see also Hebrews 13:1,2 and 1 Peter 4:9).

Verses 14-16: Bless those who persecute us, bless and curse not. Again, from the human perspective, this is virtually impossible. But from God's perspective and by his grace, it not only is possible, it is something we must do (Philippians 4:13; see Matthew 5:43-48).

Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. We are to share one another's joys and sorrows (1 Corinthians 12:25-27).

Live in harmony with one another; do not be proud or conceited; be willing to associate with the lowly. Because of the diversity within the body of Christ, high self-esteem due to the lack of humility will lead to pride which results in discord rather than unity and harmony within the body. This clearly displeases our heavenly Father who "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5-9). Indeed, all of us must be clothed with the humility of our Lord and Master (Philippians 2:5-11) that God might exalt us in his due time. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4,5 and Philippians 2:1-4.)

Attitude Toward Unbelievers—Verses 17–21

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the sight of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The presupposition in this closing passage is the consecrated, sanctified life. Whereas verses 9 to 16 concern the attitudes and conduct of true believers within the body of Christ, verses 17 to 21 are concerned with our attitudes and conduct toward unbelievers.

Verse 17: Do not repay evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the sight of everybody. The inclination of the flesh is not only to repay evil for evil but to try to go one better against the perpetrator. Our conduct among unbelievers, whether at work, in school, or in our interaction with our neighbors, must never betray the high standards of

God's holy word. Peter says, "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3:9). How do we "inherit a blessing" when we "do what is right" after having evil and insults hurled at us? Clearly, such occasions hold the prospect for witnessing to the love, mercy, and grace of God. It is an opportunity to ask the profoundly important question that we should be asking in all of life's experiences: What would Jesus do? God "calls us" to pattern our lives, our attitudes and conduct, to the example set by his beloved son. This is clearly set out for us in 1 Peter 2:21-25: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that he might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls."

Verse 18: The admonition to "live at peace with everybody" is accompanied by two conditions: 1) "as far as possible," and 2) "as much as it depends on you." The lives of some individuals are so filled with conflict and disharmony that it is impossible for them to be at peace. We need to be certain that we are not contributing in any way to this condition. If the peace of Christ and of God is in us (John 14:27; Philippians 4:5,6), we will always seek to be peacemakers wherever we are (Matthew 5:9). We are further admonished by Paul to "pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled" (Hebrews 12:14,15, NKJV).

Verse 19: Clearly, some will take advantage of a Christian's peace-loving attitude. Even so, we are never to retaliate because vengeance belongs to God. He will take care of it.

Verses 20 and 21: Rather than take revenge, we are to respond as Christ would. If our enemy is hungry, we must feed him; if thirsty, we must give him drink. In so doing, the apostle says, we will "heap burning coals on his head." The Greek word for "heap" has the implication of "to weigh down," that is, to become a weighty matter of thought. The intent of returning good for evil is not to condemn, but to cause the person to think about his inappropriate behavior and hopefully cause regret and contrition—if not now, then in God's due time (1 Peter 2:12).

Brethren, as we examine this most incredible and profound checklist of what our lives must be, what our attitudes and conduct must be both within and outside of the household of faith, we must be careful not to become disheartened because we fall short of our Father's expectation. When our Master described this dedicated walk in the narrow way, the response of his disciples was, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Herein lies the secret of spiritual success: the workmanship is God's, NOT ours! (Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:13). Transformation, sanctification, growth, and development of the fruit of the spirit, are processes that occur through the power of the holy spirit over our lifetime. They are not

events that occur overnight. However, it is absolutely imperative that we know what God's ultimate destiny is for each of his children: to be conformed to the glorious character-likeness of Jesus (Romans 8:29). Knowing what his goal is for each of us, we must submit to his workmanship willingly and joyfully, having the blessed assurance and full confidence that "he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). Praise and glory be to his holy name!

So let our daily lives express,
The beauties of true holiness,
So let the Christian graces shine,
That all may know the power divine.

Let love and faith and hope and joy,
Be pure and free from sin's alloy;
Let Christ's sweet spirit reign within,
And grace subdue the power of sin.

Our Father, God, to thee we raise,
Our prayer for help to tread thy ways—
For wisdom, patience, love, and light,
For grace to speak and act aright.

* All Scripture citations, unless otherwise noted are from the New International Version.

Echoes from the Past

Doing God's Will

And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.— Exodus 12:1,2

Benjamin Barton (excerpted from Pilgrim Echoes, pp. 479-482)

The change in the beginning of the year had a typical meaning. When the children of Israel left Egypt they began the year a new time. Previously the year beginning in the fall was followed by unpleasant months, but the new year was followed by pleasant months. It is the same with the children of God; they begin all things new, and it was followed by pleasant months; whereas previously following the old way, they had unpleasant months. The old way was followed by cold, fleshly experiences; from the new standpoint we have joy and peace following the new year.

Our constant tendency, as the entire world looks at things from the old viewpoint, is to forget to look at things from the new standpoint. The standpoint of the world is to seek wealth, ease, popularity; from God's standpoint we must seek God's will, God's viewpoint, that which makes for the edification of the brethren. Wealth does not bring joy—the rich man is called on to eat crabs, lobster, etc., things which he should never put into the stomach; the poor man eats beans, etc., which are good for him.

When we are determined to do God's will, we will crush selfishness, then we begin to find joy and the blessings of summer come. We learn that God's ways are the best ways.

The world seeks to have as many people work for them as possible. The teachings of the Word are just the opposite. We are to see how many people we can work for. It must not be selfishness, but unselfishness. The greatest is the one who serves most. "If I wash your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." Above everything else he was a servant. Our place is going to depend on our heart's desire to serve the people of God.

Three Aspects of the Body of Christ

1. The membership in the body is pictured chronologically—Christ the head; the apostles, the neck; and the shoulders, the early church. "The plowers plowed upon my back"—the time when the Church suffered persecution (Psalm 129:3). The legs are the Church in the Middle Ages and the feet are the Church in the present time.

2. Another viewpoint—The standpoint of their ability to serve. The head is the most able member. Some represent the hands—their work is so

important. The feet are a responsible place; it is theirs to guide and assist the children to walk.

3. The body from the standpoint of humble service. Jesus was the one who served more than anyone else. Our position in the body depends on our service. The anointing oil ran down; if you are seeking to serve, God is permitting the oil to run down over you to them, thus you are in a more important place.

The more we are served by others, the more they speak kind words of us, the more they pray for us the more they are blessed. To the degree we help them, the more we are blessed. During the coming year let us determine we are going to serve. Often a little service is most important. If we hear of a trial of a brother or sister make it a special time of prayer for them. Then you get more of the holy spirit. Let us not only be more faithful, but let us economize more, so we can have more time. Make a program. If you wake before it is time to get up, put in a few minutes in prayer for others. Make every moment count; if we lay awake in the night, make it count. If we read, have a fixed hour, so it will become a system—thus we accomplish more.

Let your light shine. Keep your tracts wrapped up in paper so they will not get soiled. Use every opportunity! Make opportunity! Let us determine not only to use those within our reach, but those beyond our reach. If we have faith these will become within our reach.

Faith Requires No Signs

Faith is misunderstood. It takes more faith when there are as yet no supernatural occurrences. Noah had faith. There had been no rain; there was as yet no supernatural occurrence, no miracle. Noah believed a simple statement from God. When the water fell, it did not require faith—faith is believing when there is nothing supernatural about it. Hezekiah wanted a sign; the sun dial went back; it did not take faith with such a sign.

In Jesus' day the centurion's child died; the centurion said: "Master, speak only the word." Jesus said, "I have not found such faith; no, not in Israel" (Matthew 8:10). He did not have to have the sun go back. We want the confidence that does not need a sign or miracle. Elijah fled to the wilderness, ravens fed him; nothing miraculous. The word raven is the same word as Arab, some think God put it into the heart of an Arab to feed him. God arranged for a widow to provide for him. God's hand is in our case, but we think we must see God's hand working miracles.

If we pray for our need, then do our part and if it comes naturally, give God the credit. If our heart is right, we will see God's hand in back of it, at the same time not experiencing a miracle, though sometimes God does work a miracle.

The Hebrew children said: "Our God is able to deliver us, if not we will not fall down and worship the image" (Daniel 3:17,18). Let us have that spirit! Let us have faith even if beyond our reach.

Many are not blessed with many opportunities because so many of the opportunities they had in the past they did not reach for. If we have the proper spirit, we will want to reach for every opportunity. Let us examine ourselves, spur ourselves on.

Be lenient to others; do not judge them by your standards. We cannot see their hearts. Our consciences differ. I see many do things I could not do, yet I know they are just as conscientious as I am. We hinder our way by judging others. We injure ourselves. Pass it by. Learn to leave the brother to his own due rights. Make allowances. He also sees us do what he would not do. We are to build up one another, not tear one another down. We are to assist and help, even the world. The man of the world may never see things as I see them, nevertheless I want that man to get the proper influence from what I believe. We may make it harder for him in the future to believe. We want to walk ever the more circumspectly.

We are living in the closing period of this age. This last year has had experiences which, if I had not have had, I would never have gotten into the kingdom. No doubt it is so with all, so let us be glad that there still is time. The longer the time, the more opportunities and the more joy we will have if we continue to progress.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Pastoral Bible Institute News

PBI Directors Elected

The members of the Pastoral Bible Institute have elected these seven individuals to serve as directors for the next 12 months:

Francis Earl
Len Griehs
Carl Hagensick
Michael Nekora
Andrew Polychronis
George Tabac
Tim Thomassen
Letters

I wish to express my profound gratitude to Jehovah God and his beloved son Jesus Christ as one of your subscribers and also for your constant commitment to the publication of this Bible-truth journal. Please keep it up. I was greatly encouraged by your generosity to issue this journal free of charge to me. I take delight to read this journal every night for my spiritual progress and am determined to continue with you as long as you endure.

My knowledge and understanding in some Bible matters has increased due to your truth-enlightened magazines and booklets. Once again I appreciate your kind gesture and love in endeavoring to educate me with Bible truths, traditions, history, and the customs of the Jews in the Bible.

—A reader in Nigeria

Around the World

Last week Richard Holbrooke devoted the U.N. Security Council's first session in the new century to an unprecedented discussion of AIDS. It was the first time the Security Council has discussed a health issue. Holbrooke argued forcefully that the pandemic, which infects 33.6 million people worldwide, 23.3 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa, constitutes as great a threat to international security as any military conflict. [Acting Security Council president Al] Gore warned that AIDS will probably kill as many people in the next decade as all the wars in the 20th century combined.

—Time, 1/24/2000

By any measure, communism was a seismic presence in human affairs in the 20th century, turning the world on its head, shaking it violently and creating an unparalleled amount of suffering. By exterminating as many as 100 million people, it raised immensely troubling questions about human nature and especially our capacity to murder and maim in the pursuit of utopia. Communism was also a colossal economic blunder. One statistic makes the point: In 1987, Singapore—a nation-state of only 2 million residents—exported 20% more machinery to the West than did all of Eastern Europe. No wonder in 1989 as many as 5 million of East Germany's 16.5 million citizens indicated that they would abandon their country if possible.

—Los Angeles Times, 1/25/2000

Nearly 3 million people in Kenya's arid northern and eastern regions desperately need food to avoid starvation, the United Nations said Wednesday. The Kenyans are going hungry after three successive crop failures caused by drought in some areas and flooding in others.

—Los Angeles Times, 2/3/2000

Israel

Ultra-Orthodox rabbis in Israel have banned the Internet. The chief rabbi of the Belz Hasidic sect decreed in October that followers couldn't use the World Wide Web because of the easy accessibility to pornography. Almost every other leading ultra-Orthodox leader has endorsed the ban, the Associated Press said. The rabbis considered banning computers altogether, but backed off because they are useful for teaching the Scriptures and running businesses. They decided that the real threat is the Internet. The ruling affects more than 500,000 ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel.

—Religion Today, 1/11/2000

The taboo against public debate on Israel's nuclear policies was broken when the issue was placed on the Knesset agenda by Hadash MK Issam Mahoul, who blamed Israel for nuclear proliferation in the region and endangering the public by keeping outside inspectors away from the reactor in Dimona. Mahoul said that since the Sunday Times published its story on Mordechai Vanunu in 1986, the number of atomic bombs in Israel's arsenal grew from 100 to "an insane number of between 200 and 300 bombs." "Israel won't be the first to introduce nuclear weapons to the Middle East," he said. He added that "Israel supports the principle of nuclear nonproliferation, but at the same time the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, with all of its global importance, does not provide a fitting solution for our region as proved in the case of Iran and Iraq."

—Jerusalem Post, 2/3/2000

Foreign-equity investment into Israel reached a record net \$3.51 billion last year and actually accounted for more than half of total equity investment. All told, foreign-equity

investment—a figure that includes any financial or direct investment done by buying shares—grew by 84 percent from 1998's \$1.91b. and surpassed the previous record set in 1997 of \$3.34b., the Bank of Israel said. Overseas investors accounted for 53% of all investment in Israeli equities, up from 40% last year and just 16% in 1994. Foreign financial investors, however, focused their attention on Israeli shares traded overseas, mainly in New York. They put a net \$2.76b. into foreign-listed Israeli stocks, up from \$1.3b. in 1998.

—Jerusalem Post, 1/20/2000

On Monday Syria became the world's first Holocaust-denier state. An editorial in the official Damascus newspaper, Tishreen, proclaimed that Zionists "created the Holocaust myth to blackmail the world and terrorize its intellectuals and politicians." The editorial, written by Tishreen's editor, Mohammed Khair al Wadi, labeled Israel "the plague of the third millennium" and added that "what Israel is doing today against the Arab states is worse than the Nazi system." The logic is classic totalitarian: Israel's crimes outdo the Holocaust, which never happened. Israel Prime Minister Ehud Barak hasn't said a word about the Tishreen editorial. He is afraid of reminding the Israeli public about the nature of the regime to which he proposes yielding the strategic Golan Heights in exchange for a peace likely to be as trustworthy as Tishreen's sense of history.

—Los Angeles Times, 2/3/2000

Islam

Islamism may still be the most potent opposition in almost every Moslem country but it is declining, and it owes that decline to its own inherent shortcomings as well as to state oppression. Almost everywhere the same pattern of strong initial gains was followed by a decline. The loss of popularity grows partly out of the way Islam in opposition conducted its struggle. A mainstream leader like Abbas Madani, of Algeria's FIS, simply cannot comprehend the savagery perpetrated in Islamism's name, or so he claims. We must not even deny that Islam is responsible, he said, because to deny is to acknowledge that Islam is so much as accused. But after all due allowance is made for the provocations it suffered at the hands of brutal regimes, it is hardly surprising that, with the [militant Koranic] Verses of the Sword always there for the invoking, Islamism has a tendency to gravitate toward extremism. Hence those climactic horrors, the massacre of tourists in Luxor, and the mass, throat-cutting barbarities of Algeria. If, said a letter in the [Egyptian] Al-Ahram newspaper after Luxor, this is what they do to get to power, what will they do when they achieve it? It has become clear to many Egyptians that, in power, they would just as readily betray their natural socioeconomic constituency as the Iranian mullahs. A global movement which came to reform others is now in itself in need of reform. Without it, Islamism in power will self-destruct; and Islam in opposition will never achieve power in the first place.

—The [Beirut] Daily Star, 2/4/2000

Hundreds of Muslims have died, some in mosques, in religious violence in the Moluccas islands. Scores of charred corpses reportedly were recovered from burned-out mosques on the chain of islands 1,550 miles northeast of Jakarta, Indonesia, CNN said. "It's very difficult to count the bodies [which were] torched and burned by unidentified people," said Mursal Amal Tomagola of Medical Emergency, an aid group. Authorities believe nearly 1,000 people have died in the past two weeks after a Christian bus driver accidentally killed a Muslim boy. At least 1,500 have died in similar outbursts of violence since last January, CNN said. The Moluccas are traditionally Christian.

—Religion Today, 1/12/2000

Nigeria is approximately 50% Muslim and 40% Christian. The remaining 10% follow Aboriginal and other faiths. Muslims are concentrated in the northern part of the country; Christians are largely in the south. Even though Nigeria is a secular country, the state of Xamfara adopted Sharia (Muslim law) in Sept. 1999. Since then, seven or more states have nearly completed the process of adopting Sharia; all are in the north. Riots broke out in Kaduna state on Feb. 21 over imposition of Sharia there. By Feb. 24, 50 deaths were reported and many churches and mosques have been destroyed. In practical terms, Sharia prohibits the consumption of alcohol, allows caning and amputation of limbs for certain crimes, requires girls and boys to be educated separately, and requires separate public transportation for men and women. Although Sharia violates the federal constitution, there has been no move by the federal government to cancel its implementation.

—Reuters, 2/23/2000

Christendom

Authorities in central Russia are trying to shut down 13 religious communities in accord with the country's new law on religion, the Keston News Service reports. The Voronezh regional department of justice initiated suits in local courts demanding liquidation of the groups which include Baptist, Pentecostal, and Lutheran churches, and a Jewish community. Russia's Lower House of parliament, the State Duma, voted to extend the re-registration deadline, but Keston says that the impact of that vote on the Vorenzh lawsuits remains to be seen. Kryuchov said that other regions in Russia have not taken such action in compliance with the law because they have some 200 organizations to handle while Vorenzh has only 13.

—Reuters, 2/22/2000

The Vatican and the Palestine Liberation Organization agreed to open holy sites and strengthen and clarify their relations. In his ninth meeting with PLO leader Yasser Arafat, Pope John Paul II "newly expressed the Holy See's solidarity with the Palestinian people who are still waiting to see their legitimate aspirations realized," a Vatican statement said. The two sides signed a document recognizing the PLO as the representative for Arafat's Palestinian Authority that administers parts of the West Bank and Gaza.

—Washington Post, 2/13/2000

Economics

Thousands of farmers, burdened by debt and unable to keep up with the relentless pressure to cut costs and expand production, are giving up on agriculture. Farmers forced out of business in Iowa during the 1980s wound up with higher incomes than their neighbors who stayed in agriculture and showed less evidence of stress and depression, according to a study published in February's issue of *Rural Sociology*. Families who left farming in the middle to late 1980s saw their income rise from \$5,670 to \$9,820 per person from 1989 to 1992, according to the study. At the same time average per capita earnings for families still in agriculture dropped from \$10,870 to \$7,950 per person. Symptoms of depression dropped sharply among both men and women who left farming. Some 350 Iowa families took part in the study that was conducted at Iowa State University and the University of North Carolina. Some 67,000 farmers leave the business each year.

—Associated Press, 2/26/2000

US companies and consumers have built up record levels of risky debt that could threaten banks' financial health if the economy slows, warns McKinsey, the management consultancy. Wolfgang Hammes, a senior manager in McKinsey's banking practice said: "There is a substantial amount of hidden credit risk at US financial institutions that could potentially lead to serious loan losses. Most banks' risk management systems are not sufficient to identify and quantify these risks." Hammes says that, in spite of a nine-year economic boom, US consumers and companies are more indebted than ever. The borrowings of the average US household now exceed a year's disposable income, according to Federal Reserve figures. The consultancy is even more concerned at the rapid growth of riskier types of credit on bank balance sheets. Volumes of sub-prime lending have grown by 80 percent a year since 1995. Margin debt (borrowed against the value of securities) now exceeds \$200 billion. The growing inter-relatedness of domestic and international credit markets, combined with debt leverage of banks, could intensify the credit swing, leaving many market participants with large and sudden credit losses.

—Financial Times, 2/22/2000

Science

Global warming is not only real but it is accelerating, U.S. government researchers say. In the past 25 years alone, average global temperatures have started zooming up at a rate that works out to two degrees Celsius (four degrees Fahrenheit) per century, the team at the National Climate Data Center, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said. Writing in the March 1 issue of *Geophysical Research Letters*, Thomas Karl, director of the center, said there was only a one-in-20 chance that the record high temperatures in 1997 and 1998 were simply unusual events—as opposed to being a turning point in global climate. They found that 1999 was the fifth warmest year

on record, even though it should have been a cool year because of the La Niña ocean current phenomenon.

—Reuters, 2/24/2000

Seasoning rice with daffodil and bacteria genes, scientists have boosted the vitamin A content of the developing world's most widely consumed grain in the hope of ending a common dietary deficiency that kills one million poor children every year, according to research made public Thursday. The researchers deliberately developed the genetically modified rice without commercial support so that they could give the seed away to farmers—free of the patent or licensing restrictions that so often limit the distribution of genetically engineered crops. In Southeast Asia alone a quarter of a million children go blind every year because of vitamin A deficiency. The new transgenic vitamin A rice may be the first to actually improve a crop's nutritional value to make it a better food, several experts said. Most commercial transgenic plants are designed to make crops cheaper and more efficient to cultivate, not make them more beneficial to eat.

—Los Angeles Times, 1/14/2000

Medicine will get better and keep people alive longer in the next ten years, but the behavior of Americans will worsen as they exercise less, put on more weight and fall victim to preventable chronic diseases, according to an authoritative forecast of national health released Wednesday. Lifestyles go halfway toward determining an individual's health, says a report funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [the nation's largest philanthropic research group devoted exclusively to health care]. A stubborn 24% of the population smokes, alcohol abuse is persistent, and the incidence of obesity is rising, according to the report. More health dollars should be spent in persuading people to eat right and exercise "so we can spend less money curing diseases we could prevent if we behaved better," Wendy Everett, director of health programs for the institute, said at a news conference where the report was presented. The factors that determine whether an individual is healthy are: 50% for lifestyle, 20% for environment, 20% for genetics, and 10% for access to medical care.

—Los Angeles Times, 2/24/2000

Book Review

Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love, Dava Sobel, Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 1999, 448 pages.

This book is readable history based around 124 surviving letters written by Galileo's daughter and confidante, a cloistered nun. The interest to the Bible Student is the enlightenment the book provides about the early struggle of modern science to emerge in spite of the suppression of Christendom.

The book reveals life in the 17th century: Papal Rome, the fledging age of reason, and Italy's place in Europe where Luther had nailed his theses to the church door. The bubonic plague, monastic life, and the human mind awakening from the dark ages are viewed against the backdrop of the mathematician who laid the foundation of modern science. Galileo's observations and discoveries in the heavens contradicted church dogma. He fought to resolve the apparent contradiction between science, established religion, and his personal belief and relationship with God. Galileo contended that God's universe is written in the language of mathematics, and he made elementary steps in extending the principles to biblical interpretations. That reasoning led him to conclude that no controversy existed between a careful observation of God's world and the Bible. In fact, the "new discoveries" could enlighten man's understanding and appreciation of God.

In Galileo's day, the Church said that the Bible taught that the earth was the center of a stagnate, yet perfect universe. Galileo fashioned telescopes to look at the wonder of God's universe and found observable evidence that the earth was rotating around a sun which had variable "spots" blemishing its surface. Galileo's telescope only strengthened his reverence for God, but the Church saw it as a challenge to its authority, bringing attention to matters forbidden to be considered. Interestingly, Galileo initially was labeled a loyal friend of the Catholic Church and worked under its sanction.

The second half of the book focuses on Galileo's trial before the Inquisition. He was officially branded as a heretic through the efforts of jealous enemies within the Church. Galileo recanted and was banished beyond Rome, put under house arrest in Florence but discreetly continued to fashion the "new world." Friends and supporters within and without the Church never deserted him. A new age was dawning and the Church lacked the power to silence Galileo regardless of the fact that he submitted to the condemning sentence. As Bible Students know, when God's time clock strikes, no power on earth can resist God's onward march to enlighten the world and free man from Christendom. This book portrays one such time in history.

—Debbie Moss

Poems and Features

Great Truths

Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth,
Such as men give and take from day to day,
Comes in the common walk of easy life,
Blown by the careless wind across our way.

Truth springs like harvest from the well-ploughed fields,
Rewarding patient toil, and faith, and zeal.
To those thus seeking her, she ever yields
Her richest treasures for their lasting weal.

Convention Report Sermons, p. 44

Serving the Lord in Little Things

In proportion as your heart, and my heart, and the hearts of all of God's people are right with Him, and your intention to serve Him is that of a single eye, etc., in proportion as you are loyal to the Lord and are not minding the things of the earth, but setting your affections upon the things that are above, in that proportion He will grant you and me and any others the opportunity of such service, and He tells us not to wait on great opportunities for great service. If I were to tell you that you had the opportunity of doing some great service, I presume nearly every one of you would get up immediately. Everybody is ready to do great things, but you will notice that very few people do great things, because great things are not so done. The Lord wants you to look at the little things, and to look for the little opportunities, and to use these and your time, and He tells us in so many words that, "He that is faithful in that which is least would be faithful also in the things which are great." Also that he who would be unfaithful in the things which are least would likewise be unfaithful in the things which are great. But the Lord is taking the matter in the reverse order, and is testing us in the little things of our lives.

"Address to Harvest Workers," *Convention Report Sermons*, p. 63

A Prayer

My Lord, in the midst of life's discords, make me an influence for the promotion of thy spirit of peace.

Help me faithfully to hold up the redeeming sacrifice as the way back to God and unto eternal life.

Where there is bitterness of spirit, let me sow thy words of love and radiate the beauty of thy forgiving spirit.

Where hearts are growing impatient and doubting thy loving care, may my steadfast faith in thy power and unchanging character encourage unwavering trust.

Where the darkening shadows seem to grow deeper across a fellow traveler's pathway, let me be the bringer of thy word, "Be of good cheer."

Where the warfare seems beyond strength to endure, make me a Barnabas, a comforter of the brethren.

Lord, so let me be henceforth an instrument to spread the benediction of thy peace, a vessel filled with thy joy and overflowing.

And in all the relations that go to make up the round of life's experience, let me be an example of thy gentleness, that it may be seen that I have been with thee, learning the perfect ways of God.

Amen.

Songs of the Nightingale, p. 101

The Praying Hands

Back in the fifteenth century, in a tiny village near Nuremberg, lived a family with eighteen children. Eighteen! In order merely to keep food on the table for this mob, the father and head of the household, a goldsmith by profession, worked almost eighteen hours a day at his trade and any other paying chore he could find in the neighborhood. Despite their seemingly hopeless condition, two of the children had a dream. They both wanted to pursue their talent for art, but they knew full well that their father would never be financially able to send either of them to Nuremberg to study at the Academy.

After many long discussions at night in their crowded bed, the two boys finally worked out a pact. They would toss a coin. The loser would go down into the nearby mines and, with his earnings, support his brother while he attended the academy. Then, when that brother who won the toss completed his studies, in four years, he would support the other brother at the academy, either with sales of his artwork or, if necessary, also by laboring in the mines.

They tossed a coin on a Sunday morning after church. Albrecht Durer won the toss and went off to Nuremberg. Albert went down into the dangerous mines and, for the next four years, financed his brother, whose work at the academy was almost an immediate sensation. Albrecht's etchings, his woodcuts, and his oils were far better than those of most of his professors, and by the time he graduated, he was beginning to earn considerable fees for his commissioned works.

When the young artist returned to his village, the Durer family held a festive dinner on their lawn to celebrate Albrecht's triumphant homecoming. After a long and memorable meal, punctuated with music and laughter, Albrecht rose from his honored position at the head of the table to drink a toast to his beloved brother for the years of sacrifice that had enabled Albrecht to fulfill his ambition. His closing words were, "And now, Albert, blessed brother of mine, now it is your turn. Now you can go to Nuremberg to pursue your dream, and I will take care of you."

All heads turned in eager expectation to the far end of the table where Albert sat, tears streaming down his pale face, shaking his lowered head from side to side while he sobbed and repeated, over and over, "No...no...no."

Finally, Albert rose and wiped the tears from his cheeks. He glanced down the long table at the faces he loved, and then, holding his hands close to his right cheek, he said softly, "No, brother, I cannot go to Nuremberg. It is too late for me. Look, look what four years in the mines have done to my hands! The bones in every finger have been smashed at least once, and lately I have been suffering from arthritis so badly in my right hand that I cannot even hold a glass to return your toast, much less make delicate lines on parchment or canvas with a pen or a brush. No, brother, for me it is too late."

More than 450 years have passed. By now, Albrecht Durer's hundreds of masterful portraits, pen and silver-point sketches, watercolors, charcoals, wood-cuts, and copper

engravings hang in every great museum in the world, but the odds are great that you, like most people, are familiar with only one of Albrecht Durer's works. More than merely being familiar with it, you very well may have a reproduction hanging in your home or office.

One day, to pay homage to Albert for all that he had sacrificed, Albrecht Durer painstakingly drew his brother's abused hands with palms together and thin fingers stretched skyward. He called his powerful drawing simply "Hands," but the entire world almost immediately opened their hearts to his great masterpiece and renamed his tribute of love "The Praying Hands."

The next time you see a copy of that touching creation, take a second look. Let it be your reminder, if you still need one, that no one--no one--ever makes it alone!

Motivational Knowledge

To obtain the knowledge and this strength, which God proposes to supply to each runner for the heavenly prize, will surely test the sincerity of one's consecration vows. Having consecrated all our time, all our talents, to the Lord; now the question is, How much of it are we giving? Are we still willing, according to our covenant of consecration, to give up all?--to give up our own plans and methods, and our own theories and others, to accept of God's plan and way and time of doing his great work? Are we willing to do this at the cost of earthly friendships and social ties? And are we willing to give up time from other things for the investigation of these glorious themes so heart-cheering to the truly consecrated, with the certain knowledge that it will cost us this self-denial? If all is not consecrated, or if we only half meant it when we gave all to the Lord, then we will begrudge the time and effort needful to search his Word as for hid treasure, to obtain thus the strength needful for all the trials of faith incident to the present (the dawn of the Millennium) above other times.

The Divine Plan of the Ages, pp. 346, 347

Profitable Daily Tithing

If Christians allow the rush and crush of selfish ambition to deprive them of their daily portion of heavenly food, they must not be surprised, if they grow spiritually leaner day by day, and if "the peace of God" gives place in their hearts to the discontent which is growing in the world, notwithstanding the multiplication of our comforts and privileges. Let us remember the exhortation, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:6). . . . Surely the little tithing of time daily spent in partaking of its morsels of heavenly counsel cannot fail to profit all who partake. The day opened with such meditations is sure to be the better spent and more profitable. The heart thus turned to holy thoughts is much less likely to go aside from right paths than otherwise. The wisdom that cometh from above is thus gradually and easily assimilable, and cannot fail to bear some good fruit in the hearts of the saints, and to awaken reverence in the worldly.

Original preface to *Daily Heavenly Manna*

The Blessings of Solitude

The most eminent divine favors that the saints obtained, that we read of in Scripture, were in their retirement. The principal manifestations that God made of himself, and his covenant mercy to Abraham, were when he was alone, apart from his numerous family; as anyone will judge that carefully reads his history. Isaac received that special gift of God to him, Rebekah, who was so great a comfort to him, and by whom he obtained the promised seed, walking alone meditating in the field. Jacob was retired for secret prayer, when Christ came to him, and he wrestled with him, and obtained the blessing. God revealed himself to Moses in the bush, when he was in a solitary place in the desert, in Mount Horeb. . . . Afterwards, when God showed him his glory, and he was admitted to the highest degree of communion with God that ever he enjoyed, he was alone, in the same mountain, and continued there forty days and forty nights, and then came down with his face shining. God came to those great prophets, Elijah and Elisha, and conversed freely with them, chiefly in their retirement. Elijah conversed alone with God at Mount Sinai, as Moses did. And when Jesus Christ had his greatest pre-libation of his future glory, when he was transfigured, it was not when he was with the multitude, or with the twelve disciples, but retired into a solitary place in a mountain, with only three select disciples, charging them that they should tell no man until he was risen from the dead. . . . She that first partook of the joy of Christ's resurrection, was alone with Christ at the sepulcher, John 20. And when the beloved disciple was favored with those wonderful visions of Christ and his future dispensations towards the church and the world, he was alone in the isle of Patmos.

Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, p. 274

A Solitary Way

**Psalm 107:1-9; Proverbs 14:10;
1 Corinthians 2:11**

There is a mystery in human hearts,
And though we be encircled by a host
Of those who love us well, and are beloved,
To every one of us, from time to time,
There comes a sense of utter loneliness.
Our dearest friend is "stranger" to our joy,
And cannot realize our bitterness.
"There is not one who really understands,
Not one to enter into all I feel;"
Such is the cry of each of us in turn.
We wander in a "solitary way,"
No matter what or where our lot may be,
Each heart, mysterious even to itself,
Must live its inner life of solitude.

Job 7:17; Matthew 10:37

And would you know the reason why this is?
It is because the Lord desires our love.
In every heart he wishes to be first.
He therefore keeps the secret-key himself,
To open all its chambers, and to bless
With perfect sympathy and holy peace
Each solitary soul which comes to him.
So when we feel this loneliness, it is
The voice of Jesus saying, "Come to Me";
And every time we are "not understood,"
It is a call to us to come again;
For Christ alone can satisfy the soul,
And those who walk with him from day to day
Can never have "a solitary way."

Isaiah 48:16; Psalm 34:22

And when beneath some heavy cross you faint,
And say, "I cannot bear this load alone,"
You say the truth. Christ made it purposely
So heavy that you must return to him.
The bitter grief, which "no one understands,"
Conveys a secret message from the King,
Entreating you to come to him again.
The Man of Sorrows understands it well.
In all points tempted, he can feel with you.
You cannot come too often, or too near.
The Son of God is infinite in grace;
His presence satisfies the longing soul;
And those who walk with him from day to day
Can never have "a solitary way."

Poems of Dawn, pp. 48-50

Trusting When We Do Not Know

I have no miraculous insight to know God's will. My judgment is not sufficient, I am not to tax my mind that way, it is out of the power of my mind. I will leave it to the Lord. If He wishes me to go this way or that way, He can direct the course. So, my mind and heart are satisfied, if, at the beginning of the day, I say, Lord, here am I; I thank Thee for the privilege of another day and what I hope will be full of opportunities for serving the Truth and the brethren. I ask you to direct all of my thoughts, words and conduct, that I may serve Thee. Then I go forth and use my best judgment. If the Lord wants to lead me in one way or another, that is His part, not my part. I have solicited His guidance. My eye is alert to know and to do His will at any cost. I rest easy in this yoke, knowing that God is able and willing to overrule all things for His glory and for my profit.

What Pastor Russell Said, p. 267

Not Understood

Not understood, we move along asunder
Our paths grow wider as the seasons creep
Along the years; we marvel and we wonder
Why life is so,--and then we fall asleep--
Not understood.

Not understood. We gather false impressions
And hug them closer as the years go by,
Till virtue often seems to us transgression;
And thus men rise and fall and live and die--
Not understood.

Not understood. Poor souls with stunted vision
Oft measure giants with their narrow gauge.
The poisoned shafts of falsehood and derision
Are oft impelled 'gainst those who mold the age--
Not understood.

Not understood; the secret springs of action
Which lie beneath the surface and the show,
Are disregarded, with self satisfaction
We judge our neighbors, and they often go--
Not understood.

Not understood. How trifles often change us!
The thoughtless sentences or fancied slight,
Destroy long years of friendship and estrange us,
And on our souls there falls a freezing blight--
Not understood.

Not understood. How many breasts are aching
For lack of sympathy? Ah, day by day
How many cheerless, lonely hearts are breaking,
How many noble spirits pass away--
Not understood.

Oh, God! That men would see a little clearer,
Or judge less harshly, where they cannot see.
Oh, God, that men would draw a little nearer
To one another. They'd be nearer thee--
And understood.

Thomas Bracken, *Poems of the Way*, p. 118