

WITH OPEN FACE

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Compiled and Edited by George E. Failing

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FOREWORD

When I first heard of the proposed devotional book, my immediate response was, "What? Another one? We already have them for Christians in general, for students, for the disconsolate, for the suffering, for men, for women, for the young, for senior citizens, and on and on."

However, when I saw the copy of *With Open Face*, compiled and edited by Dr. George E. Failing, I forgot my impetuous self-query. I found it to be a rich, rewarding, and recreating addition to the devotional holiness library that will be spiritually refreshing and rejuvenating to whomever will read it. The short, one- to two-page meditations written by five eminent editors of our denominational magazine give practical and readable counsel, comfort, and guidance to the growing Christian. With such magnetic titles as "Life Without a Wrinkle," "A Morning Without Clouds," "Set the Sails for God's Breeze," "Restitution - the Authenticating Seal," each written in the individualistic, inimitable style of the respective author, the book is a valuable daily devotional guide, or a book for the unoccupied three-minute interval in a busy schedule. Each succinct devotional enriched my life and drew my spirit Godward.

Furthermore, since the writers - George E. Failing, Robert W. McIntyre, Armor D. Peisker, Paul W. Thomas, and Oliver G. Wilson - have been contemporaries and friends of mine, *With Open Face* is a nostalgic remembrance of pleasurable experiences that have contributed to my pilgrimage through life.

You may find it so intriguing that you will want to rush through the book. Please don't do that. Rather, take time for the truth in each editorial to be assimilated into your thought and life.

Robert N. Lytle
October 1983

PREFACE

These editorials are not printed to command praise nor to exhibit talent. They have been collected to foster communion, "open face" communion between God and His friends. Only as readers "see" God will this book fulfill its purpose.

"With open face" is the very phrase (in the KJV) appearing in II Corinthians 3:18. In that chapter Paul contrasts the dispensation of Moses with the dispensation of Jesus Christ. That first dispensation was glorious, for even on Mt. Sinai as Moses communed with God, "the skin of his face shone as he talked with [God]." The radiance of God's beauty imprinted itself on Moses' face. But Moses' shining face was too much for Israel to see, so Moses put a veil upon his face. When communing with God, Moses removed the veil; when appearing before people, he put it on.

When we commune with God we must also unveil our face, or take off the mask. My friend Festo Kivengere, Bishop of the Church of Uganda, has observed that Christians commonly wear masks. What you see is the mask, not the person. So a person wearing a mask talks to another who also wears a mask. These "Christians" may not be hypocrites, but they are not Spirit-filled. One mark of the Spirit's fullness is openness, boldness. "When you pray," said Jesus, "enter into your closet, shut your door, and pray to your Father who is in secret." I suppose this may be one reason why secret prayer is so difficult: it is hard to wear a mask before God. If we mask our faces in the closet, we may find God also wearing a mask! If we will not "look full in His wonderful face," He cannot reveal to us His glory, His grace, His holiness.

With open face we are also to communicate and worship with other Christians. In gathering together these editorials, I have found each editor, in one editorial perhaps more than another, looking at me without a mask. While their eyes pierced with discernment, they are also warm with love.

The several editors have found great delight in the fact that "the light of God's countenance" is the Christian's greatest reward. Only occasionally, and when necessary, does God hide His face from His friends. Even God's veiled face does not necessarily mean His disapproval, much less His departure. He who plants His footsteps on the sea and rides upon the storm is really gathering together a great company of emigrants so He can colonize heaven. He is supremely interested in their spiritual development now and in their safe arrival then.

Reading these editorials will rekindle love and faith and hope, I trust. They will expose our shallowness and provoke us to depths of personal concern, concern for higher degrees of experienced holi-

ness and concern for the happiness and usefulness of our comrades in faith.

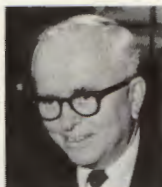
The ultimate experience is that one which is "face to face." So God spoke to Adam and Eve in the Garden, before they sinned. God also spoke to unworthy Jacob "face to face": "My life is preserved," testified Jacob. More than once Moses was "face to face" with God. In fact, the inspired writer testified that Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Heb. 11:27).

We must believe that every believer sees God, to some degree, at some time. Not to have that vision would seriously impair assurance. But in a truer sense we are still living with partial vision in an unfriendly world. We see God most often through reflectors: His creation, His providence, His Holy Word, and His saints. The day without a cloud awaits us and then we shall see "face to face." As we truly are, redeemed by Jesus' blood, we shall truly and gloriously see Jesus as He is.

Perhaps the last promise of God to believers is this: "His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face" (Rev. 22:3-4). In the light of that glorious countenance we shall be forever blessed.

Until then, we remember that "the path of the just is as the dawning light." These editorials, it is believed, will bring fresh glimpses of truth and new aspirations for that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

I would be first to acknowledge the blessing I have derived from the heart-to-heart messages from O. G. Wilson, A. D. Peisker, P. W. Thomas, and R. W. McIntyre. At one point of the journey or another, each has been my colleague. To each I owe much. And I must add a strong personal statement of appreciation to Alberta Metz, my editorial assistant, who has researched widely and finally prepared the book in manuscript form.



OLIVER G. WILSON (1891-1959)

Born to Wesleyan parents in Oak Hill, Kansas, July 21, 1891, O. G. Wilson was converted at the age of 13 but sensed a call to the ministry even earlier. He spent seven years at Miltonvale Wesleyan College preparing for his life's work, graduating from the academy in 1913 and from the theological department in 1916. While at Miltonvale he entered into the experience of entire sanctification.

His pastoral work began at New Hope, Kansas. Subsequently, he served at Willis, Kansas. He married Marian Wilson in 1917. From 1921 to 1927 he was pastor at Enid, Oklahoma, and from 1927 to 1929 at Alva, Oklahoma. Concurrently, he served as president of the Oklahoma Conference for six years.

Beginning in 1929 Mr. Wilson taught in the theological department at Miltonvale Wesleyan College. During his 14 years as teacher and head of the department, he exerted a great influence over many young men and women who later filled important positions in the Church.

The 1943 General Conference elected O. G. Wilson as Sunday school secretary and editor. After four years of service in this capacity, he was elected editor of *The Wesleyan Methodist*. His Spirit-anointed writing inspired and instructed the Church for 12 years. A number of his editorials were reprinted in the volume, *Boundless Horizons* (Wesley Press, 1960). He was honored by Houghton College with a Doctor of Divinity degree in 1949.

The General Conference, meeting in 1959 at Houghton, New York, elected Dr. Wilson as the first of three general superintendents. Two days later, just prior to the installation service, Dr. Wilson suffered a fatal heart attack and went to be with the Lord on June 28, 1959.



PAUL WESTPHAL THOMAS (1894-1972)

Born September 28, 1894, in Stockton, California, Mr. Thomas was converted at Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1912 and sanctified the following year. Affiliated with the People's Mission Church, Mr. Thomas was superintendent of that denomination from 1919 until its merger with the Pilgrim Holiness Church in 1925. He married Alice Howard in 1918. She passed away in 1943.

After four years as president of the Colorado Springs Bible Training School, Mr. Thomas was elected general secretary of the Pilgrim Holiness Church, serving also as general treasurer from 1931 to 1933. From 1934 to 1946 he was general secretary of the Department of Foreign Missions. He visited the various mission fields and was instrumental in opening up several new ones. He married Kathryn Bufkin in 1945.

Mr. Thomas served as editor of *The Pilgrim Holiness Advocate* from 1946 to 1962. During those years he also pastored the Rees Memorial Church in Pasadena, California (1947-48) and was superintendent of the California-Arizona District (1948-50). He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Olivet Nazarene College in 1962. The 1962 General Conference elected Mr. Thomas as general superintendent, a position he held for four years. He

retired in 1966 after 37 years of service on the general board. He passed away March 1, 1972, in Baywood, California.



ARMOR D. PEISKER (1907—)

Armor D. Peisker was born in Colorado October 31, 1907. He was converted in 1919 at the People's Mission Church in Center, Colorado, under the preaching of Paul W. Thomas. In 1924 he experienced entire sanctification. He attended Colorado Springs Bible Training School and Pilgrim Bible College in Pasadena, California, and graduated with an A.B. degree in education from Colorado College. He studied journalism and magazine writing at Christian Workers' Institute in Chicago. Later he received the M.A. degree from the School of Religion, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana. He married Cora May Pezoldt in 1929.

Mr. Peisker served on the staff of Colorado Springs Bible Training School from 1928 to 1932, on the faculty from 1932 to 1934, and as its president from 1936 to 1939. He worked at the Pilgrim Holiness Church Headquarters in Indianapolis as secretary and office manager for the Department of Foreign Missions from 1934 to 1936 and from 1939 to 1954. A long-time writer of Sunday school curriculum, Mr. Peisker became editor of Sunday school literature in 1954 and held that position until 1962 when he was elected editor of *The Pilgrim Holiness Advocate*, a position he held for six years.

After merger in 1968 Mr. Peisker served as executive editor of Sunday school curriculum for ten years. He was director of educational ministries from 1978 to 1980. Now retired, he gave over 50 years of service to the Church.



GEORGE E. FAILING (1912—)

George Failing was born November 25, 1912, in Kingston, Ontario. The Failings moved in 1915 to Dover, Delaware, where they attended an independent holiness mission. Later they became part of a Pilgrim Holiness congregation. Converted at age six, Mr. Failing entered the Beulah Park Academy in Allentown, Pennsylvania, at age 16, graduating in 1930. He then graduated from Beulah Park Bible School in 1932.

Experiencing entire sanctification in 1934, Mr. Failing joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church that same year and took a pastorate in Mt. Airy, North Carolina. He attended Houghton College from 1935 to 1940 and graduated with a B.A. degree. During his student years at Houghton he served as pastor of the Wesleyan Methodist church in Fillmore, New York, closing his pastorate there in 1941. During that time (1939) he married Phyllis Ogden.

After a three-year pastorate in Louisville, Kentucky, Mr. Failing taught Bible and Greek at Central Wesleyan College for three years, pastoring the college church there for two of those years.

Receiving the M.A. degree from Duke University in 1947, he spent the next six years at Houghton College, serving as director of public relations and professor of theology. The years 1953 to 1956 were spent as pastor

of the College Church in Marion, Indiana. He then edited Sunday school literature for three years.

The 1959 General Conference elected George Failing as editor of *The Wesleyan Methodist*, to succeed O. G. Wilson, a position he held until 1968. Houghton College awarded him a Doctor of Letters degree in 1960.

After the merging conference in 1968 Dr. Failing accepted the position of chancellor of Satellite Christian Institute in San Diego, California, and served there for five years. In 1973 he went to United Wesleyan College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, to teach. From there he was called by the General Board in November 1973 to return to general Church service as editor of *The Wesleyan Advocate*, a position he has filled since that time.



ROBERT W. MCINTYRE (1922--)

Robert W. McIntyre was born June 20, 1922, to a Pilgrim Holiness pastor's family in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The family moved to South Dakota in 1935 and Robert was converted that same year, at the age of 13. After graduating from high school in Redfield, South Dakota, in 1939, he attended Miltonvale Wesleyan College where he completed work in the theological department, graduating in 1943. While in Miltonvale he experienced the work of entire sanctification. In 1944 he graduated from Marion College with a degree in religion and the same year married Edith Jones. Mr. McIntyre took work in the Ohio Conference of The Wesleyan Methodist Church, serving churches in Marengo, Columbus, and Coshocton, where his wife passed away at the age of 30. In 1953 he married Elizabeth Norman. In addition to his pastoral duties, he was district secretary for two years.

After the General Conference of 1955 Mr. McIntyre was assistant to the general secretary of Wesleyan Youth. The death of a general officer a few months after general conference occasioned a sudden shift in duties. Robert McIntyre became general secretary of Wesleyan Youth in the fall of 1955, a position he held until 1968.

At the merging conference in 1968 Mr. McIntyre was elected as editor of *The Wesleyan Advocate*, serving for five years. In 1973 the General Board of Administration elected him general superintendent to succeed Dr. B. H. Phaup, who retired. He has served as general superintendent to the present time and was awarded the doctor of laws degree by Houghton College in 1976. In 1983 he was elected to the position of First Vice-President of the National Association of Evangelicals.

FORGIVENESS

CHAPTER ONE

Forgiveness

by Oliver G. Wilson

NOTHING IN our world is so Godlike as forgiveness.

What the world needs most of all is not a court of international justice, or a League of Nations, or the United Nations, important as they may be as steps toward peace. At best these are but expanded imitations of theories that are as old as the race and have proved futile, times without number.

The world needs to be taught to forgive. Harshness, bitterness, hatred flame up over a multitude of issues – Jews and Gentiles, white people and black, labor and management, neighbors on the same street. These terrify in their sweep of potential destruction.

What this age needs is to kneel before the cross of Calvary and look into the face of Him who, though God in the flesh, defended not His rights but reclaimed the rights of every fallen member of the race.

From the cross of infinite love come the words: "Father, forgive them." Some eminent Bible scholars affirm that the tense of the verb in the original means that Christ kept saying, "Father, forgive them." When the centurion spiked Him to the crude cross: "Father, forgive them." When the soldiers parted His garments and gambled for His seamless robe: "Father, forgive them."

This is the example He left us. Dare we be unforgiving though grievously wronged? Dare we hold hatred in our heart while we speak His name in prayer? "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15).

We discover a positive command in the words of our Lord, found nowhere else in all sacred literature. Under the old dispensation it was "an eye for an eye," but under redeeming grace it is "love

your enemies and pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you." This is the "new commandment" given by our Lord to the church.

You say, "Impossible!" You are wrong. The explanation is "Christ is our life." "Not I, but Christ lives in me." As we were steeped in sin, so must we be impregnated with righteousness. The whole fabric of the character is made over and renovated. We have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Forgive Me

by George E. Failing

"FORGIVE ME" is just as hard to say as "I was wrong."

To admit wrong is to back up on myself, to stab my pride. To ask forgiveness is to seek another's favor and love.

Jesus teaches that my brother may become my adversary (see Matt. 5:23-26). Thoughtlessly, or with intention, I may hurt him. It is only human that he holds against me that wrong. It is also a fact that God is hurt when my brother is hurt. I cannot wound him without grieving the Lord. So there is no peace or reconciliation with God unless I make peace with my brother.

How can I have peace with my brother? It is very simple, yet extremely difficult. I ask his forgiveness. If that outrages my sense of justice in the matter, then I have indeed forgotten that I have made many more errors than I will ever discover. That fact ought to make it easier for me to admit those blunders that hurt another.

I must remember that peace between me and my brother is my responsibility, not his. And there is almost always a way to gain his favor, if I am willing to be little enough in my own eyes. If I refuse to seek his favor, to gain his good will, then he becomes my legal opponent who directs against me the full force of the law. Then I become a prisoner and must sweat out the full exactions of a penalty.

The only way I can save myself from my brother's outraged sense of justice is to cast myself upon his mercy. What of his wrong against me? Ah, I have already forgiven him when I ask him to forgive me.

All of this is for brothers only. Sinners, unless repentant, are

too proud to ask forgiveness, and only invoke the penalties of broken law when such "justice" humbles or imprisons another.

It's a solemn rule of the kingdom of God: only the merciful will obtain mercy. Only those who ask forgiveness will themselves be forgiven.

Save me, O Lord, from that frozen and self-righteous piety which prevents me from seeing my own wrongs, and hinders me from seeking my brother's forgiveness and restored fellowship.

Forgiveness Demands Forgiveness

by Armor D. Peisker

TWO YOUNG men were convicted of stealing sheep. In accordance with the severe practices of their day, the letters S T were burned on their foreheads. Each thus was branded as "Sheep Thief" for the rest of his life.

Embittered and unable to bear the disgrace, one of the men left. He wandered from place to place until at last he was buried in a distant, lonely grave. But the other, genuinely contrite, remained. He resolved to live right and do his best to regain the respect and confidence that he had lost. His efforts were rewarded. With the passing of time he was forgiven and again came to be held in high regard.

Many years after this man had been branded, a stranger visiting in the community noticed the unusual scar on the man's forehead. Curious, he asked one of the residents what the S T stood for. The local man was silent for a moment, trying to recall the original circumstances. Then he replied that it had happened so long ago he had forgotten the particulars. "But," said he, "I think the letters S T are an abbreviation for saint."

Similarly, no matter how deeply a man may be scarred by wrongdoing and evil, with the moral courage and strength available to him through Christ, he can turn from the corrupt way and receive forgiveness and a new life from God. But he receives even more. God will forget the guilt of the past, never again to taunt him with it. The divine promise to the contrite is: "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12).

Divine forgiveness obligates us in turn to forgive any who wrong

us. Jesus said as much when He taught His disciples to pray, "Forgive us . . . as we forgive" (Matt. 6:12). It is therefore a mark of the true Christian always to be free from resentment and revenge.

An incident from the life of Robert E. Lee gives an inspiring example of this magnanimous spirit. An officer, hearing Lee speak in the highest terms to President Davis about another officer, exclaimed, "General, do you not know that the man of whom you spoke so highly to the President is one of your bitterest enemies, that he misses no opportunity of maligning you?"

"Yes," replied General Lee, "but the President asked my opinion of him. He did not ask for his opinion of me."

Forgiveness Is a Gift, but . . .

by George E. Failing

FORGIVENESS is a gift, but respect and confidence must be earned.

Many of life's finest blessings are gifts. Life itself is a gift, in fact; not one of us "earned" it! Native abilities are gifts. Musical and scientific insights cannot be imparted or earned.

Friendships are gifts. Love is not a commodity for sale on the open market. None but a "loveless" soul could possibly be bought!

Some advantages come to us as gifts. Man needs forgiveness more than he needs anything else — though forgiveness is meant to lead us to holiness. Yet forgiveness cannot be earned or purchased. In Christ God freely forgave our sins. No compulsion lay in His heart, none but love. God gave commandments, but He did not expect them to transform men. He offered forgiveness, and He knew that this could be the beginning of man's transformation.

Our forgiveness must be given. No one earns it — or deserves it, any more than we deserve theirs. But few of us can give any greater gift than forgiveness. Think what happiness could be brought to those husbands or wives who would only forgive. I did not say "receive forgiveness," but "forgive."

Forgiveness is a gift, sovereignly bestowed to be humbly received. Then both giver and gift are blessed.

But forgiveness, of itself, does not establish confidence or earn respect. Everyday living is based upon confidence and mutual respect. I can neither give nor receive these. They must be earned and recognized.

That person is mistaken who believes that a forgiven person automatically qualifies for boundless confidence. Only character can establish respect. A person does not merit respect until, by study and consistent character, he earns it. And to place too strong confidence in a person who has not yet developed character is to ruin his own chances for future growth and success.

Let's give – and receive graciously – forgiveness.

Let's earn – and deserve honestly – confidence.

PRAYER

CHAPTER TWO

Beyond Our Reach?

by Robert W. McIntyre

KNOWN ONLY to parents is the sense of achievement and pride mingled with concern and uneasiness which accompanies a maturing child's first semi-permanent departure from home.

Care, shelter, protection, guidance, counsel, support – for nearly two decades a parent may make these investments in the life of his offspring to awaken one morning to the awareness that the day brings entrance into college, the military, or independent employment.

The doors of home open outward, the departing form merges into the crowd, and a tremulous inner voice says, "He is virtually on his own. Will he stand true? Is he prepared to face the tensions and pressures without me? Have I done all I could? If I have not until now, it is too late to do it now. He is beyond my reach."

Beyond your reach. Too late now to counsel carefulness with the car, to tactfully screen and approve new friends, to warn of a midnight curfew, to gently but constantly cultivate spiritual sensitivity, to buffer the shocks and bumps.

Beyond your reach. All you can do now is hope – and pray – and trust. Isn't it strange, when we come right to the issue, how slow we are to recognize that when he is in the hands of the Holy Spirit he is in more capable hands than ours?

Beyond your reach. But is he?

He is not beyond the reach of your prayers. Where is he – on a college campus 200 miles away? In a Sin City base 5,000 miles from home? In a steaming jungle that seems a million miles away from those who love him? He is as near as a prayer. Your bedside or church pew takes you there, and God's Spirit does what even

you could not do with your own presence. Your prayers can do what you could not.

He is not beyond the reach of your earlier commitments. Didn't you place him in the minister's arms, giving him to the Lord? In your heart, doesn't he remain there? Don't you remind God of this commitment – God who knows exactly where he is and reaches him there? If you gave him to God, trust God to preserve what is His.

He is not beyond the reach of early instruction and training. Can Bible verses be forgotten? Can songs come unlearned? Can years of regularity in devotional habits be discarded effortlessly? A voice in the night, a thought in a quiet hour, a song on the radio, the sound of bells on Sunday morning, the habit of dropping at the bedside before retiring, the word of a buddy, a paragraph in a letter, a line in a magazine – has not the Holy Spirit a thousand means of ministering to a gnawing, aching hunger, and reminding that the "means of grace," public and private, are still there?

Ah, that's the secret. He is not out of the reach of God and His Spirit. Where in the world – or space – can he go and not come face to face with Him? What clangor can override the still, small voice? In the after-dark hours, alone with naught but his thoughts, what barracks or dormitory wall can keep out the ever-present Friend, pleading His own cause?

Beyond our reach? Well, yes – but not really.

He Withdrew . . . and Prayed

by George E. Failing

IN THE midst of an urgent teaching and healing ministry Jesus felt another constraint upon Him, the constraint to pray. This constraint to prayer seldom, if ever, comes like the crashing thunder of a call to duty; it comes as gentle as an evening zephyr but as clear as an evening bell. It is the spiritual drive of the soul to satisfy its craving for communion with God – this fundamentally, not praying primarily because we want things from God. Ah, no; we want God himself.

But he who would maintain his prayer communion must learn the prayer initiative. "He withdrew himself." No one can really be shut in with God until he has first withdrawn himself. From things? Yes, but also withdrawn from people. And this is much harder. Even

among Christians he who withdraws himself from society to pray is sometimes considered too zealous.

Not only is it true that the world is too much with us; we are too much with men – not enough with God. No wonder we have weak Christians, weak churches, weak offensives against sin. We have not yet withdrawn often enough from men to prevail over men. Prevailing with men is the secret learned only in the prayer room with God.

“The wilderness” is a good place to pray. For the wilderness is normally destitute of things that so satisfy men as to make them forget God. Sometimes, doubtless, God drives us into the wilderness that He might teach us to pray. Do we then accept the wilderness as a challenge to prayer?

But further, should not Christians choose the wilderness in which to pray? Jesus did. What is there so soft and ease-loving about us that makes us fear the rigor of wilderness praying? Oh, that God may baptize us again with a fearless love of the wilderness, a holy recklessness that shall count it joy to enter the wilderness and to prove God there!

But after the constraint to prayer is felt and the wilderness reached, be sure that then you are not finally defeated. For after all these preliminaries you may yet fail to really pray. It is in the act of prayer where so many suffer spiritual losses. How often do we go to pray and then fail to pray.

Forgive us, O Lord, in our failures at the place of prayer. Replace our weakness with Thy strength. Closet us with thyself and teach us Thy secret of victory, and the true way of soul-winning. We pray believing and in Jesus' name. Amen.

Alone With God

by Oliver G. Wilson

WHEN WE go into our closet and shut the door, no one sees us, no one hears us but God. No one is present before whom to make a display of our devotion. No one is present to see our zeal, or compliment us on our well-rounded sentences. God is present, but not as a faultfinder always looking for a thing to condemn in us. God is present, as unlimited goodness, love, poise, peace, wisdom, strength. So all parade and self-applause, or self-vindication, should be left outside the closed door.

Prayer must never be mere speech exercise. Prayer must be a living thing, born of conviction and enthusiasm. Every word must be white-hot with sincerity. Anyone who has really closed the door will feel that he is looking into the eyes of the infinite Christ, that He sees us and knows us thoroughly. Yes, it is a searching spot – alone in the presence of God.

From a syndicated column were gathered these words: "I don't like those minute-of-prayer ideas. You never hear of any minute-of-business, minute-of-fun, or minute-of-sports ideas. If time will bring us to our knees in hard praying, in the patient, unhurried manner of our parents, it will be a great thing for our country."

The Master offers two cautions. First, caution against ostentation in prayer, as for instance, by those who in public or social prayer assume affected tones or try in any way to give an impression of earnestness beyond what they really feel. The other caution is directed, not against pretense, but against superstition – heard for their much speaking.

What is the sin of the formalist? His heart is not in his worship. What is the folly of the vain repetitionist? It is the same – his heart is not in his words. There is no discouragement of repetition, if it be prompted by genuine earnestness. Our Lord again and again encouraged even importunate prayer, and He himself in the garden offered the same prayer three times in close succession. It is not then repetition, but vain repetition – empty of heart, of desire, of hope – that is here rebuked.

When you pray, enter your closet. When you have shut the door, shut out insincerity, shut out formality, shut out self and selfish interests. Then hear what God has to say.

The words of God are creative, powerful, energizing, illuminating, and he who comes from the closet, having heard God's words, will go out to confound the forces of wickedness and promote the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Pray in Secret

by George E. Failing

SECRET PRAYER is honest prayer. It's hard to put on a show of piety, to be a hypocrite, in private devotions.

Only by an exposure of the soul to God in private prayer will

a person get a true revelation of himself. Isaiah was alone with God in the temple when he saw his sinfulness — *I am a man of unclean lips*. He had lived with godly people, he had studied the Scriptures, he had preached. But there was something of himself he had never seen or known until he got alone with God.

Our primary problem is the sin problem. The only way of knowing how real and personal is the problem, and the only way to find a remedy for it is to get alone with God.

A single session with God often will not suffice. There is too much earthly clutter, sometimes too many selfish ambitions and views, to easily or quickly discover God's answer. It may require many sessions of Bible reading, many hours of quiet prayer and soul-searching, to hear from God.

But once the revelation from God breaks upon the soul, the atmosphere is cleared as a thunderstorm clears the air. We see clearly. We feel strongly. The will is ready to yield to God; and life is ready to consecrate to His purposes.

Out of the secret closet comes an honest man and a whole man. His fundamental problem is solved. Now he can be straightforward in his dealings with others. Double motives do not clutter his talk or action. He has a *single eye*, a *pure heart*.

The secondary problems can then be solved. There are no back-handed approaches, no studied efforts to confuse issues or to gain eminence. In public worship it is God and not some performance to be considered first. In committee and conference, comments will be simple and honest. The real issues will be allowed to come to the top for brotherly consideration and solution.

Perhaps greater than our need for group prayer services, regular or all-night, is the need for praying in secret. He who truly prays in secret will be an honest man and a saint. God can bless him *openly*.

Wait Upon the Lord

by Paul W. Thomas

BLESSED IS that man who, early in his Christian life, learns to wait upon the Lord.

The psalmist said, "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those

who watch for the morning" (Ps. 130:5-6). In another place he gives us a heartening word of encouragement: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. 27:14).

Everywhere we go, we find discouraged people who have given up the struggle. Some of them have openly returned to the world. Others follow along "afar off" from the warmth and comfort of true faith and salvation. Ask them what the trouble is and there are almost as many excuses as there are backsliders. But to get right down to the truth of the matter, in nearly every case their trouble can be traced back to this: They failed to wait upon God.

Waiting on God means more than a few brief formal prayers. It means to pray until the soul lays hold of God and comes away with a blessing. This may be a matter of minutes or even hours; but it means to seek until we find, knock until it is opened unto us, ask until we receive.

There is a waiting upon God, a pleading of the promises, a heart searching, a holding on in the determination of love and faith, that puts the resources of heaven at our command. Here is the great difference between defeat and victory.

How different might have been the attitude and action of the disciples on the night of the Savior's betrayal, had they watched with him in prayer during the hour of agony!

Isaiah said, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

Set the Sails for God's Breeze

by Armor D. Peisker

PRAYER DOES not change things. What can prayer do then?

A minister who was asked a similar question replied: "Not a thing. But God through prayer can work miracles in your life and the lives of others. Prayer is not an end but a means – a means of communication with God. It is more than a spiritual exercise, but it is never more than a method. It has no power in itself."

Prayer is not a magical, quick, easy way to get what we want, or even what we need. Nevertheless, the saying of a prayer is much more than a mere psychic therapy to rid us of our fears.

But prayer changes things only as it moves God to act. It is He and His grace, not the praying, that bring the change. And not all prayers move God. The prayers God answers spring from right motives and are expressed fervently with faith.

A heartbroken father came to Jesus seeking deliverance for his terribly afflicted son. Earnestly he besought the Lord, "If You can do any thing." Jesus reversed his plea, saying to him, "If you can." The deliverance was largely up to the father. God's power was sufficient, but its application to his particular need depended upon the father. "If you can believe," Jesus said (Mk. 9:14-29).

Hudson Taylor, the well-known English missionary to China, made his first journey to the field in a sailing vessel. En route their ship was becalmed near a cannibal island and was slowly but surely drifting shoreward.

In great distress of mind the captain came to Mr. Taylor begging him to pray to God for help. Taylor said that he would if the captain would set the sails to catch the breeze.

The captain declined, unwilling to make himself a laughingstock to all on board by unfurling in a dead calm. But Mr. Taylor emphatically declared, "I will not undertake to pray for the vessel unless you will prepare the sails."

Finally the captain spread the sails. Taylor began to pray. While praying, he heard a knock on his cabin door. The captain had come to ask that he stop praying, for they already had more wind than they could well manage! When the vessel had been only a hundred yards from the fateful shore, a strong wind had struck the sails driving the ship safely out to sea.

Regardless of what our need is, when we pray we must, as the Word teaches, expectantly set the sails of our soul to catch God's answering breeze.

Cast, Then Rest

by Robert W. McIntyre

IT MAY have been my first agricultural endeavor. Somewhere I had found a handful of corn and now I was planting my own garden. Since the dimensions of city yards rarely commend them for such endeavors, my corn garden was close to the house under a window.

With the corn planted, covered firmly, and watered, I waited and watched for the first green shoot. None appeared the first day.

Nor the second day.

Such tender, loving care a garden never had. Weeds were carefully given not a chance. Water was applied in abundance. Every day I watched, and at least once daily I carefully dug up and examined each kernel to see what progress was being made. End of garden story.

Since then I have tried to learn about praying. Sometimes my prayers have been frenzied and frustrated, demanding and dictatorial – but not answered. In fact they weren't really prayers. They were the impatient expressions of a fretful heart.

Sometimes the very massiveness of prayer concerns nearly overwhelmed me. How could I possibly pray as hard as I should as long as I should and as often as I should for as much as I should? All were legitimate concerns. All depended on prayer to succeed. All were kingdom interests. But even if I gave all my waking moments to the task, how could I ever cover the field?

Then came the words – His words. Cast. And rest (Ps. 55:22; 37:7).

Even if I prayed with a list, I might leave something off the list – but I can cast my whole burden on the Lord. Is His power limited to what I can remember – or voice? Not so.

Frenzy is for heathen armies, Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel, high priests planning the death of Jesus – even for disciples in a storm-driven boat. But not for the believer whose burden is cast on the Lord.

Rest. Frustration is for those who have no God. The Christian has no dead-end streets. With the altar repaired Elijah prays – and rests. Gideon's army breaks its pitchers, blows its trumpets, and rests – while the enemy destroys itself. The disciples call on Christ and rest – while He stills the storm.

Don't dig up in unbelief what you have sown in faith.

Be faithful to your prayer burden: Cast. Then rest.

Overcoming Faith

by Paul W. Thomas

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it (Num. 13:30).

THE HISTORIC incident from which these words are taken is one of the most stirring in all the Scriptures – stirring, yet keenly disappointing. The children of Israel had come to the borders of the Promised Land. Twelve men were selected and sent ahead as spies. They went and then returned to make their report. The two reports – the majority and the minority report – mark two trends in the thinking of the people.

All twelve of the spies saw the land with its wealth and charm. All of them knew how miraculously God had led them out of Egypt. They all realized that they were still under His mighty leadership and protection. And, what is more, they knew that He wanted them to enter and take possession. But ten of the spies were fearful and drew back from the venture of faith. The two, Caleb and Joshua, saw the obstacles ahead, but found courage and hope in the presence and power of Jehovah. The report of the ten filled the camp with dismay and confusion, while the two saw the path of obedience and faith leading on to certain victory.

What a lesson for the church today! We, too, face a promised land. To the land of spiritual possession and achievement the Great Commission calls us.

The commission of our heaven-ascended Lord is truly great because it is worldwide in its scope. It includes all peoples, in every land and circumstance. It leaves no one out; it bypasses no human need. It is great because it is intensive and calls for the full devotion of every follower of our Leader, our heavenly Moses. Too often the work of God is left to a mere handful, but the call comes to every

one of us to be in our place in the line of march and press on boldly for the Lord.

Shall we linger at the borders of the promised land and allow unbelief and fear to spread dismay through our ranks, or shall we heed the counsels of faith, the voice that says, "We are well able to overcome"?

You Live What You Believe

by George E. Failing

DO YOU KNOW that you are truly a Christian? Is your faith in God a sure, Bible-validated faith? "Do you have faith?" (Rom. 14:22).

There is no clearer teaching in God's Word than the teaching that a person may presently have the knowledge of sins forgiven. He may have present assurance of being right with God. That assurance, however, comes only by faith.

On what is this faith based? First, on the plain statement of the Bible (John 20:31; I John 1:9; 2:3; 5:1). Second, on the inward assurance of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16; I John 4:13). Third, on the outward evidences – equally manifest to ourselves and to others – of a transformed life (John 13:35; Rom. 12:1; Rev. 7:14).

Is it true that "judging by the way they act, it's hard to tell the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian?" Is it not true rather, that how a man acts is the truest and only (humanly) certain evidence of a man's faith?

Though faith itself is unseen, its presence and operation are clearly manifest, for faith is known by what it does. This is the great emphasis of James – "Faith without works is dead." A true believer will obey Christ openly and unmistakably.

Hebrews 11 is replete with proofs of faith. Abel declared his faith by the offering of a sacrifice. When Noah prepared an ark, it became visible evidence of his faith in God – even though others mocked.

Because of true faith, Abraham left Ur and settled in Canaan and was content to live in tents because he looked for a heavenly city.

It was courageous faith that prompted Moses to spurn the title to Egypt's throne. Casting his lot joyously with the people of God,

utterly disdaining earthly glory, Moses declared his faith in "the recompense of the reward."

Faith does not always make gains. Faith knows how to lose. "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might have a better resurrection."

Faith is manifest both by what a person does and by what he refuses to do. It is not certified merely by a desire or feeling.

In a true sense, therefore, how you live is what you believe. The life you live is the faith you have.

That Other Faith

by Robert W. McIntyre

FAITH FINDS great encouragement in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. There the twin lists of faith achievements and faith heroes mount higher and higher. Marvelous things happen. After all, faith is "the confident assurance that something we want is going to happen. It is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us, even though we cannot see it up ahead" (Heb. 11:1, LB).

Enoch escapes death, Noah floats to safety, Abraham sees the promises fulfilled, Sarah becomes a mother in spite of her old age, the forbidding walls of Jericho tumble down, kingdoms crumble, lions get lockjaw, armies achieve conquest, the dead live again — all by faith. One could assume that faith always means a better feeling, a lighter load and the end of illness and pain.

But several verses at the close of this remarkable chapter too often escape attention. They could even sound like they are in the wrong place, but there they are. Immediately after the victorious "women received their dead raised to life again" the passage begins to bristle with words like "tortured," "mockings," "stoned," and "slain." And this, too, in the name of faith.

"But others trusted God and were beaten to death." So the *Living Bible* begins this section.

This is "that other faith" — faith that digs in its heels; faith that ties a knot when it gets to the end of its rope and holds on; faith that shouts defiantly up from the abyss of trouble and loss, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him."

This is faith, too, and because of that it is not defeat. It is the

end that matters. Though we place the premium on producing the miraculous, God puts His approval on perseverance. It may not be as ecstatic, but in the long run that other faith will see you through.

HOPE

CHAPTER FOUR

My Hope

by George E. Failing

HOPE IS as much a part of human life as love and food and housing. Man's soul has needs as real and demanding as his body.

Children and youth are typically full of hope. They do not judge life by its present, by its past, or even by its predictable future. They judge life by their dreams, and their dreams are built on hope. Hope for security in employment, hope for security in companionship, hope for security in health, hope for security in achievement. If a youth did not have these hopes, he would find life worthless. When adults lose these hopes, life becomes a burden.

We have lived long enough, some of us, to know that many of our hopes will never be realized. We have bidden good-bye to more than one fond hope. But some hope remains. So we work on, trying still to realize some of the aims we have not yet achieved.

But life is fragile and opportunities turn out to be quicksand. It may be hard to admit, but since sin entered the world, God has purposely allowed disappointment and frustration to stalk the earth. Sin has so desperate a clutch on us that we will hardly let it go, or renounce it, until it has deceived us. God has to dash our false hopes in order to make necessary the true hope that He only can offer.

Hope means two things for the Christian. For the present, it means that the believer always has God. He may be poorly fed, clothed, housed, educated, and employed, but he has now in God resources that more than compensate for any or all temporal deprivations. This is no self-deluding philosophy. Man simply cannot live by bread alone, whether he is interested in Christ or not. Man must have an inward source of inspiration and comfort. Wealth or health

or privilege does not guarantee this. God does. When his family was gone, his wealth lost, and his health a memory, Job had a present comfort: "I know that my Redeemer is living."

Hope also speaks of the future prospect in God. Spiritually, his best days are still ahead for the Christian. The "dawning light" is rising toward its zenith glory. Walking with God is an ever-increasing joy. And this walk does not terminate on earth. No present condition or prospect can dull the Christian's anticipation of eternal raptures. "Pie in the sky" is the world's slogan of ridicule. The Christian is undaunted, knowing that these light afflictions work for him an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Christ's return is not my last hope. It is my first hope, my best hope, my full hope. In Christ I am sure of a destiny which can never be realized on earth.

If any of earth's pleasures or riches or philosophies rob me of this hope, I am no longer a Christian. I have lost the faith. I have lost hope. I have lost my soul.

The Invisible Certainty

by Robert W. McIntyre

STRANGE THAT the grace most often overlooked should be the one which is the believer's certainty.

Of the trinity of cardinal Christian graces, faith, hope, and love, faith is the glamor-child, showing up at unusual places and accomplishing astounding feats. Love, or something that passes for it, is currently and popularly "in." But hope, long neglected, is only now edging into the theological limelight.

Yet everyone who is born again is "begotten . . . again to a living hope" (I Pet. 1:3), which is an invisible certainty, "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?" (Rom. 8:24). Yet hope, far from being inadequate, or inferior to faith or love, "does not disappoint" (Rom. 5:5).

Perhaps it is time, then, for someone to say a kind word in behalf of the overlooked grace, which is the believer's certainty.

The writer to the Hebrews is clear in his emphasis of the grace of hope. Describing it as an anchor, he surrounds it with words of strength, positiveness, and perseverance: "heirs of promise, immuta-

bility of his counsel, confirmed by an oath, impossible for God to lie, sure and steadfast." In fact, it is the figure of the anchor of the soul, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (6:19-20) which offers some of the most helpful insights into the nature and functions of hope.

It is the anchor which secures against uncontrolled, perhaps unnoticed drift, whether in gentle breeze and slight current or in severe storm. The huge mass of metal at the bow, arms already reaching eagerly for a purchase, gives the sailor confidence and is a constant reminder of the means provided for his security. Little wonder the Hebrew writer exhorts, "Lay hold on the hope," calling it "an anchor . . . both sure and steadfast." In the figure one readily envisions that massive anchor secure in a crevice in the ocean bed or holding fast to a huge rock, while the buffeted ship on the surface strains at its cable but rides out the storm.

However, the anchor of the soul is not fastened to a rock on the ocean bed, but "enters into that within the veil." Here the picture is of a cable passing out of sight, not through fathoms of sea water, but through the veil into the most holy place (a figure from the tabernacle in the wilderness). And what is it within the veil that secures the anchor of the soul? There the two tablets of stone speak of God's moral law. The two cherubim, wings touching over the mercy seat, convey the message of God's mercy. The pot of manna, miraculously preserved, testifies to God's ample provision. Aaron's rod, the one that budded and bore fruit overnight, is witness to God's power over death. The sprinkled blood heralds Christ's atonement. And now, in the New Testament, Christ himself is there, making intercession for the believer (whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus").

With resources like these at the end of that anchor cable, there is no need for anyone to make shipwreck, and the overlooked grace has indeed become the invisible certainty.

A Morning Without Clouds

by George E. Failing

He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain (II Sam. 23:4).

IN HEAVEN there is no night; in hell there is no light; on earth night and light alternate.

Just as solar light blesses the earth, spiritual light blesses earth's people. "God is light," and God causes some light to penetrate every man's conscience – as that conscience is exposed to truth. Sadly, man often acts as if there was no light, or as if he had no conscience.

Sinners are called children of the night (as believers are called children of the day). Sin and ignorance, from which proceed pride and prejudice, maintain a popular sovereignty over men on earth. The truth inherent in the order of the universe and the atom should convince men that God's truth extends to man's heart and will. Man can ignore the truth in the universe and the atom, but only at his peril – finally to his destruction.

How long and how lovely have been the days during which God has let His light shine into our hearts. What words of assurance these are: "The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory" (Isa. 60:19).

However, man can choose "the dark age" and dance in the light of his own fire. "Look, all you who kindle a fire, who encircle yourselves with sparks: Walk in the light of your fire and in the sparks you have kindled – this you shall have from My hand: You shall lie down in torment" (Isa. 50:11). But sinful man's dance will end, and earth's dark days (and ages) will end in that "morning without a cloud."

The Dayspring from on high has visited us. The Morning Star always shines serenely in earth's darkest nights. Nights of guilt, nights of penitence, nights of suffering, nights of bereavement, nights of loneliness, nights of shattered hopes and dreams – that morning will banish these nights forever.

"There is no night" in heaven, not even a cloud in the sky to suggest a changing day. During that eternal nightless day, "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" and any darkness in the universe will be contained in that world of "outer darkness," forever isolated from God and His people.

Just as it happened before His first coming, so before His second, "darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the people." What shall we do? "Look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." And when we finally close our eyes on earth's darkness, we shall open them on God's eternal day. The clouds shall pass; that divinely decreed day without clouds is about to break!

Hope for a Tree

by George E. Failing

"THERE IS hope for a tree" (Job 14:7). Is there no hope for a man? What a strange thing it would be if there were hope for a tree and no hope for a man!

Job is pleading his cause before God. His "comforters" had accused him of sin and hypocrisy. If Job had been truly a good man, said they, he would not have been deprived of wealth, of home, of health. And Satan had predicted that when Job was destitute of all these he would curse God to His face! But Job didn't. In fact, he couldn't. No fact of his life had been more certain to Job than his intimate relationship to God. Job had the undimmed testimony of a clear conscience – and "comforters" could not rob him of his clear conscience.

But in his painful and protracted sickness Job did wonder about the certainty of a life beyond death. Like many others have done, he looked to nature for an analogy. "A tree has hope; if it is cut down, it will sprout again." So actually the old tree does not die. The roots persist and push up new sprouts and thus produce another plant. If God has made such a provision for a tree, has He forgotten man? Is not a man worth more than many trees?

Job did not live in an age in which the doctrine of a personal and bodily resurrection was clearly taught. Only after Jesus Christ abolished death were life and immortality "brought to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10).

But even in those pre-dawn days, some glimmers of hope got through. Through the agony of his sickness and loneliness Job's heart never deserted God. And in the midst of his longing for healing and comfort came a conviction that we continue to sing as the Christian statement of faith: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself" (Job. 19:25-27).

A Christian can hardly prevent a "hallelujah" from rising to his lips. "For now is Christ risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept." He lives to guarantee that the entire harvest will be gathered in. At the head of the group will be the immortal and resurrected Christ, then will follow Abraham, Job, David, Isaiah – and millions more. By the grace of God I expect to be gathered in that harvest, and what a Feast of Tabernacles we will enjoy forever and forever!

After This

(Revelation 4:1)

by George E. Failing

ONE OF the marks of the believer in Jesus Christ is his utter faith in God's tomorrow.

The demonstrative pronoun "this" is often used in the Scriptures to denote the disordered world that we know. Paul speaks of it as "this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). David speaks with pity of "men of the world which have their portion in this life" (Ps. 17:14).

The world was not evil in its beginning: "He made everything beautiful in his time" (Eccl. 3:11). No one can carefully view the "ruins" of the earth without wondering how glorious it must have been in its pristine grandeur.

But evil invaded the earth. It has planted its miasmic infection everywhere. The stamp of death has been placed on every living thing, so it is literally true that we live to die. The earth itself seems to recoil from the currents of evil that rage upon it. Earthquakes and volcanoes exhibit the distress within the earth itself, while over its surface range devastating tornadoes and hurricanes. Days of sunshine and beauty seem to be the reminders of the earth as it was and prophetic promises of the earth that shall be.

The human race itself is in the throes of endless turmoil. Whether fascist or Communist, someone always seems to be ready to enlist men in a cause of agitation, a cause that pits man against man. The title "United Nations" is a title of hope, certainly not of reality. Sinful man does not admit the ancient truth: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt" (Isa. 57:20).

But the Christian is a redeemed man. He enjoys peace with God and strives to follow peace with all men. He is earth's good Samaritan, and because of his compassion all society has been elevated.

Still, this world is not the believer's permanent home, and this life does not enclose all his joys and triumphs. He, like Abraham, is a stranger and a pilgrim, seeking a city to come. Like Moses, he sees the Invisible One and has respect unto the recompense of reward. So in love and patience he labors on through life's short day.

Then — "after this." Who can begin to tell the glories of the inheritance of the saints in light? The raptures of resurrection bliss, the banishment forever of death, pain, sorrow, disease, poverty, sin?

LOVE

CHAPTER FIVE

Don't Lose Your Love

by Oliver G. Wilson

IT IS good to be on guard against liberalism in all its forms, against careless conduct no matter what cloak it wears, and against compromise though it may come with the garb of respectability.

However, let us not be blind to the peril of loss of love. In this commercial age the fierce demon of selfishness pounds on the door of every man's soul. He will blow his hellish breath through every crack and by unimaginable arguments he will seek admittance.

Loss of love begins in loss of love for God's people, for God's cause, and then our hearts are filled with questions and often with murmurings.

It is possible to sing the same songs, pray the same prayers, attend the same number of church services, to fast, to tithe, to work for an enlarged Sunday school, and yet to be salt without savor, to serve without love.

There is a great difference between reading I Corinthians 13 and experiencing its glowing stimulant when all the world is twisted out of order.

Hold on to your love. Under all circumstances let love rule.

Love will control your tongue.

Love will stiffen your resistance to temptation.

Love will temper your criticism.

Love will widen the gap between your soul and the world.

Love will lubricate life's hard places.

Love will make you gracious to those who differ with you and cause you to treat kindly those who oppose and misrepresent you.

Ever say yes to God and no to Satan. Walk the path of holy devotion, holy ethics, holy aspirations. Heaven is at the end of that road.

Love is the common denominator. If we could all get melted down in the crucible of love, we would not be very far apart. How often we grow hot and bothered as we fuss over "important issues." Then some gentle soul stirs our heart with a song as "Just a closer walk with Thee; grant it, Jesus, if You please—" and our hearts are drawn into a new fellowship. Tensions and differences seem to vanish. Why? Love was increased.

Every soul is fighting a hard fight. "Just a closer walk with Thee — let it be, dear Lord, let it be."

Love Must Be Kept Warm

by George E. Failing

EVERY PERSON when first saved has a warm, tender love for Christ. His love has vision: It sees Christ as the One altogether lovely. His love has passion: No sacrifice is too great to serve the One he loves. His love has courage: The Loved One cannot be sacrificed for anyone or anything.

First love, in its tenderness and strength, should abide forever. First love may be perfected, however. Perfect love is first love tempered with mellowness; it is first love sharpened with wisdom.

Love must grow or die. Paul spoke of love "abounding more and more." This is the normal pattern. But love also can diminish; it can grow cold. Jesus warned, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12).

Why does love grow cold? Because one no longer frequents the place of secret communion with the Lord. Because one comes to love things more than the Master, prefers persons to the Person, or loves treasures more than God.

What happens when love grows cold? Preachers cannot preach when they do not love. Only love draws a man within reach of repentance and faith. When love grows cold, preachers no longer try to save men: they merely try to please them.

When love grows cold, Christians are no longer interested in revival. They prefer contests, they become promoters, they love parties. But they are not constrained with the urgency of warning people

to flee from the wrath to come. They know no longer what travail of soul means; they are content with "comfortable" worship services.

When love grows cold, saints can no longer ask forgiveness. No longer can they resolve their differences. They forget that it is neither wisdom nor righteousness that makes agreement possible: it is love. Where there is no love, technicalities outweigh compassion.

When love grows cold, saints spend more upon themselves than they give for the salvation of sinners. Their interest tends toward nice houses of worship, flowers for the sanctuary, and building a self-admiring society rather than hearing the groans of penitents, seeing tears of contrition, and assisting souls out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son. They spend more time in family feasts than at family altars; they spend more time in "recreation" than in prayer and fasting.

Love may be renewed, though it is a bitter way: "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." The opportunity for renewing love is short: "Or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). Better methods of evangelism, better techniques and materials for Christian education, and better opportunities for a healthier and happier life are all of no permanent benefit when love grows cold.

When love is kept warm, family altars will multiply, church altars will be frequented, personal devotion to Christ will deepen, soul-winning will be the "great commission," Pentecostal graces will abound, and the church will pray with great yearning, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."

It May Stagger You

by Armor D. Peisker

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another (John 13:34).

IT IS NOT required of Christians that they work miracles, speak eloquently, or foretell the future. It is not demanded that they understand life's deep mysteries. To give up all of one's earthly possessions or to give one's very life may not distinguish one as a devoted follower of Christ.

But it is required of Christians that they love their fellowmen.

It is easy to become sentimental about loving all mankind. But the test is usually not so much the loving of those distant people whom we do not know as it is the loving of individuals we do know and with whom we must associate. It becomes especially difficult if those individuals by personality, mannerism, or ideas irritate us. But what E. N. West says about himself is true of everyone: "I cannot love human beings in general until I love individuals in particular. . . . It is the first temptation of the devil to bypass the immediate duty which may be painful, in favor of a broader duty which, it is assumed, will not have the same painful associations."

To spread evil reports, even true ones, is sinful. To look upon either the high or lowly with contempt is evil. To turn one's back upon the Christian who is going astray is not like Christ. To publicize the fact that a brother has fallen into sin is wrong. Rather, he is to be earnestly sought after and restored.

To love as Christ loved is indeed an overwhelming idea, a staggering command. Such an attitude cannot be assumed, it cannot be put on as a coat, it cannot be developed by mere human disciplines. However, in Christ it is possible to attain. When Christ reigns in the faithful and obedient heart, His love flows out naturally.

Love and Obey

by George E. Failing

NO, THESE words are not taken from the marriage covenant. Only a few now believe that the wife should love and obey her husband. In most marriage ceremonies the phrase reads, "love and cherish" or "love and honor."

These words, "love and obey," are taken from the Christian's covenant. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." And the Apostle John quickly testifies, "His commandments are not grievous."

To love God supremely is the first commandment. This a sinner cannot do. He can only repentantly trust Christ for salvation. But the believer does love God, for when he believes unto salvation the love of God is shed abroad in his heart. Trust is volitional but the first artesian flow of God's love into our hearts is involuntary. Love follows faith.

But a life of love to God is not involuntary. Love does not remain

love unless it becomes volitional, intentional. So the believer is commanded to keep his heart in the love of God (Jude 21). He is to keep his heart open so God's love will fully possess his heart; then he is to reciprocate by directing his love back to God. The circuit then is complete. God loves and is loved. The believer is loved and loves. As the sacred poet expressed it, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."

Loving by impulse is not acceptable to God. Love must be by purpose. Loving intermittently is not sufficient. Love is to be constant; the believer is to abide in love. Love is not to be partial or lukewarm; it is to be wholehearted and full of strong desire.

Love does not live alone. Love always lives with duty, with obedience. John puts it most bluntly, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." Love can obey God, for God requires no duties the Christian cannot perform.

All Christians do not have equal capabilities for love or for service. But every Christian can love God with all his heart, and he can love his neighbor as himself. And in so loving the Christian will perform his duties to God and to his fellowman up to his own capacity.

Should he fail in love or in obedience, there is always recourse to the blood of atonement (I John 2:1-2). But there is the power of the Spirit to help him increasingly to succeed both in love and in service. And this we will do, if God permit.

Afraid To Love?

by George E. Failing

WE ARE afraid to love. Why?

We fear to love because in loving we must give all our good will to others, reserving not the slightest ill will toward anyone. And we seem to cherish some "small" ill will toward one, or two, or three.

We fear to love because in loving we give other persons the opportunity to hurt us. By their attitudes, by their words, even by their self-serving prayers. It's not easy to present our friend the handle of a sword which he may use against us.

We fear to love because in loving we want only the lowest place.

Love declines honors and gives reward to others. Love is not restful unless it is serving.

We fear to love because in loving we accept blame for our sins of commission and our sins of omission. We cannot charge others (much) when we clearly see the awesome debt we owe God and them. The awakened Christian is amazed that God accepts him and counts him of worth. The sins we cannot make restitution for, love forgives.

We fear to love because in loving we become completely truthful. Truth brings pain and truth gives pain. So before infants can utter plain syllables, they learn to deceive parents and siblings – to gain pleasure or mastery. Love disarms us, and as we love we dare not hesitate to disarm others. They may not relish that “honest” love, but we dare not practice guilt to enjoy their favor.

We fear to love because in loving we seem to leave ourselves without resources. Love opens hand and heart. Love empties its treasure to its neighbor. After love gives all, the giver is richer than ever before. He has no less love than before he gave, and he made his friend rich.

We fear to love only until God's perfect love casts out that fear. Fear has torment; love offers comfort. Not until we die to self are we liberated to love God supremely. Not until we count ourselves less than the least of all saints can we be at ease in the presence of any saint. At the heart of the wonder of life is death; in the center of the wonder of love is absolute surrender to God.

God's Hidden Purpose

by Armor D. Peisker

THE LORD wanted His people delivered from Egypt. Since He is omnipotent, why, then, did He not deliver them speedily? Why the long, arduous struggle with Pharaoh? Why delay the issue, waiting for the effect of the plagues? Why bring suffering and devastation upon multitudes of innocent people at the mercy of their wicked overlords?

If God is looked upon merely as a benevolent dictator, using His power arbitrarily to straighten out things in a very confused world, there never can be an answer. One can come to understand something of the significance of these things only when he realizes that God, to bring about His purposes, has committed himself to work through men, all of whom by their very nature are morally free to choose for themselves the courses they will pursue.

Such a concept is necessary not only to answer the immediate questions, but also to give reason for the great plan of redemption which necessitated the incarnation of Christ and His agony on the cross. It is also necessary if one is to find answers to many of the questions which arise daily in international current events and in one's individual affairs. The often-longed-for shortcut of miraculous intervention actually would bring all human history to an end and would destroy life's greatness and meaning.

Pharaoh was permitted to interfere with the divine purposes partly to bring him face to face with the facts relative to Jehovah and His worship. How would a heathen ruler, to whom God and the religion of his slaves were abominable, ever really be brought to the light without some such tremendous pressures? God also continued His struggle with Pharaoh that He might magnify himself among all the Egyptians.

Again, God's dealings with Pharaoh also gave oppressed Israel opportunity to find a triumphant way out of their captivity and into the Promised Land, thus demonstrating the power and wisdom of the Almighty throughout the world. The whole affair also displayed God's honor, in that judgment was meted out upon those who for generations ruthlessly oppressed a subject people. So it was that by the prolonged delay and all of the relevant events, God signally manifested His sovereignty, mercy, justice, and power before all men.

All of this brings hope to believers who must live in our present, corrupt social order. The divine purposes are being worked out among the children of men as surely now as in Moses' day. It also brings the Christian face to face with the solemn fact that there may not always be a quick and obvious miraculous shortcut to the solution of some individually distressing problems. There may be long delays, filled with much unpleasantness. Most individual problems are related to other people whose wills even God must consider as He seeks to further His purpose.

God's work in human affairs is somewhat like the skilled organist at his instrument. As one listens to a great organ played by a master, there is often an undertone that controls the whole piece. To the careless listener it is almost inaudible. The obvious overtone goes on, ebbing and flowing, rising and sinking. But amid all the changes the controlling undertone may be heard, steadily pursuing its own course. The casual listener thinks the lighter theme the primary thing, but the skilled observer follows the quiet undertone and finds in it the leading thought of the artist.

So it is with the events of life. The actions, the words, the wars, the famines, and the sins are all very evident to everyone. But the heart attuned to the Eternal is aware that underneath all, God is carrying out His own plans and compelling all outward things to aid in establishing His kingdom.

He Goes Before You

by Oliver G. Wilson

THE RESURRECTION message is filled with hope for the despairing; it brings light for dark places and confidence when facing the future.

The angel message to frightened women long ago was: "He is risen . . . He goeth before you" (Mark 16:6-7). What incomparable words! Words pregnant with meaning as troubled souls face life's fatiguing journey.

"He is risen!" By this act Christ fulfills His mission; He demonstrates the fullest approval of the Father and the right to lead every trusting soul back to God.

As the conquering God, Jesus Christ marched out of the tomb. His shout of triumph rings out: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." "All power is given unto me." "Lo, I am with you always." And the angels added: "He goeth before you."

Let your heart catch the significance of those words. Read them through again – and rejoice.

It may be that a loved one is absent, who was strong in life one short year ago. The weary road stretches with endless miles into an obscure unknowable future. "He goes before you." Not a defeated Jesus, but the resurrected Christ who holds all the keys of life and of death. The years have not decreased His vigilance, and the multiplied duties have not caused Him to forget you.

There is no logic for suffering, neither is there logic for faith. Both find their explanation in Christ. Though the pain and suffering and burdens may be heavy, faith buries them in the will of the Christ and causes the heart to sing.

"When he putteth forth all his own, he goes before them" (John 10:4). Jesus was about to commission His followers to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." A hard, bone-crushing task, to be carried out in the face of fierce storms of opposition. But hear the inspiring message: "He goes before you."

The message was directed, not to singing saints, but to fearing disciples who had deserted the Lord, and one of whom lately had denied Him with an oath. The message, you see, is not only to those whose lives are spotless, but to those who have failed. He has not deserted you. His call of love is to you.

"The Lord is risen. . . . He goeth before you." He, the Light of the World, He, the Door to hope, He, the Bread of Life, He, the Water of Life, He, the Conqueror of death, hell, and the grave, goes before you. Take courage and follow on.

The Way of Wonder

by George E. Failing

HE WHO walks with God walks in the way of wonder.

The way of God's love causes unceasing wonder. For love is

not an act; it is a motive, a motive that finds expression in many ways. In love God walked into Eden where Adam and Eve had severed the ties of innocent and pure love. And love lingered in the Garden until God had told them of His plan. Calvary. And love persisted until Calvary's redemption was finished.

The way of God's instruction fills us with wonder. "I am the Lord your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you by the way you should go" (Isa. 48:17). How patiently and kindly He teaches us. Each disciple receives individual instruction. God teaches through the beauties of nature, through the pleading of His prophets, through the life of His Son, through the gentle voice of His Spirit.

God's providence is a way of wonder. Remember how He spoke to Abram in Chaldea and led him to the land of promise. Recall how He led Joseph from the pit in the wilderness, through the jail in Egypt, to the throne of honor, and made him a savior of many people. Behold how He led the wise men to find the world's Redeemer in the manger at Bethlehem.

It's an unceasing wonder to discern how God providentially leads His people into trials, to purify them, to prepare them for service, to ready them for glory. "Some through the waters, some through the flood, some through the fire, but all through the blood; some through great sorrow, but God gives a song, in the night season and all the day long" – and until "the day break and the shadows flee away."

God's way of holiness is a way of wonder. As Isaiah saw it, it is "a highway and a way; the unclean shall not pass over it; the redeemed of the Lord shall walk there; wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" (35:8). It is a way of beauty and of safety, a way beyond the sight and reach of sinful men, but the way known and traveled by those that love God.

Brotherly love, as practiced by earnest and humble Christians, is a way of wonder. The Christian has learned that "the gift without the giver is bare," and therefore is more interested in loving concern for his brother than in sharing things with him.

While the way of the ungodly shall perish, becoming darker and darker, the way of the righteous is secure, becoming brighter and brighter until the perfect day.

Leave the Choice to Him

by Oliver G. Wilson

NO ONE can serve two masters. If you insist, God will let you direct your life; but if you will allow Him, He will guide your feet into the paths of satisfaction and contentment which of yourself you will never know.

"Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Gen. 13:12).

"The Lord your God goes before you . . . to search out a place for you to pitch your tents" (Deut. 1:30, 33).

These two Scripture passages describe every life. You are either pitching your tent toward a Sodom of earthly gratification or you are allowing God to go before you to search out the place where you will pitch your tent. It is a day by day choice. To be God's requires a constant repudiation of self and a constant submission to the will of God.

Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, soon lived in Sodom, but was wholly powerless to help Sodom in the least. He lowered his own level of living and brought disaster to his entire household. It is always so. The selfish choice, the choice dominated by personal gain without regard to the rights of others is to direct your own tent-pitching. Such action is rebellion against God and a bold enthronement of self.

He who follows God, pitching his tent where God directs, will bless his generation, and will bring to himself enlargement of soul and of all soul-interests.

God may direct you to pitch your tent in the steaming jungles of Africa, or on the bleak stretches of the Arctic, or on the banks of the great rivers of South America. Wherever it is, there will be glorious contentment.

God wants you to pitch your tent, not where ease and plenty are assured, but where God's work can be wrought; not where you can be served with man's plenty, but where you can serve with God's power; not to be ministered to, but to minister; not to be acclaimed great, but where you can proclaim a great gospel. Wherever God directs the pitching of your tent, there the nightingales will sing, and there will be the heartening visitations from the Christ himself.

The great mistake of Abraham's life was when he pitched his tent toward Egypt. He instructed Sarah to practice deceit, "that it may be well with me" (Gen. 12:13). The whole undertaking proved

a dismal failure because it was not of faith but of the folly of unbelief.

Leave the choice to God. He will search out the place where you may pitch your tent and there rest secure in His will.

PEACE

CHAPTER SEVEN

Be Not Troubled

by Oliver G. Wilson

Let not your heart be troubled (John 14:1).

THE LORD of all harvests said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Surely then my daily bread will be given to me and on time.

The world's Sin-Bearer said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Then there is a sovereign remedy for sin, a Balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole, power in Jesus' blood to heal the sin-sick soul.

The God of all comfort said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Then I am to find a place of comfort and soul rest when all earthly comfort has failed, and the source of all human comfort is swept away.

The God of all grace said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Then I am to find grace sufficient amid slander, opposition, and vicious satanic attacks.

The coming world's Sovereign, whose right it is to rule, said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Then let military braggarts march, let blatant atheists make their alarming threats, let arrogant unbelieving modernists scorn and deride, let vicious criminals frighten the land with their evil. The dawn of a day of righteousness is certain. He said, "I will come again." The angels said, "This same Jesus that you have seen go into heaven shall so come in like manner."

The Lord who holds in His hands the future said, "Let not your heart be troubled." Be not troubled about tomorrow. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Tomorrow is in His hands. He who has not failed you in six troubles will not fail you in the seventh.

Every troubled soul should repeat five times aloud the first phrase of Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd," each time emphasizing

a different word. As we meditate on each word each succeeding time, there will come to the soul a song of blessed assurance.

Be not troubled – believe. God has His way in the storm and He rides on the wings of the wind.

Carest Thou Not?

by George E. Failing

MORE CRUEL words could hardly have been spoken to Jesus by the alarmed disciples than these – “Carest thou not?”

A few hours before no disciple would have questioned Jesus' care of His disciples. But a storm arose. Water began to fill the boat and fear their hearts. Seized by fear a believer can turn on Jesus and charge Him with neglect.

Yet Jesus did not take personal offense at the stinging words. He understood their fears. He knew both their human weakness and His own sufficient grace. And already He had purposed to send them another Comforter who would help them into an experience of faith transcending fear.

In a sense it was true that Jesus did not care! He was not anxious either because of the boisterous waves or the troubled hearts. He knew that all was under His Father's care and that wind and waves were under control. Actually he had been asleep during the storm. Only full confidence in God would allow such rest of heart and relaxation of body.

But a sad note of selfishness is revealed in the disciples' question. It was for themselves they cared: “Carest thou not that we perish?” Yes, these were disciples of Jesus. They had faith, but their faith was neither pure nor strong. Had their faith been pure, they had not thought first of their own safety; had their faith been strong, they would not have succumbed to fear.

Why could they not trust *Him*? Did they not realize that they could not be in real peril if He was with them?

But Jesus did care! He cared more than they could ever know. However, He cared more about their faith than about their comfort. He cared more that they attain to His faith than that they enjoy the luxury of no storms. He cared enough to show them how God could make them courageous and triumphant in a howling storm.

Even so, let my soul trust fully in the God who always cares.

I will choose either thorn or storm if He orders it. It is the trial of my faith, I know, that is more precious than refined gold. And if God, "for a season, if need be," makes me a prisoner of the storm, I will sing exultantly with Madame Guyon: "Well pleased a prisoner to be, because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

If We Must Worry

by Paul W. Thomas

IF WE MUST WORRY, Jesus has a plan that will cut it down by at least two-thirds. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." This eliminates both yesterday and tomorrow.

Yesterday! Many of us need deliverance from the past. If the guilt of past sins lingers with us, God wants us to go to Calvary for forgiveness, and go on from there.

The opportunities we have missed we cannot recall. Let us look for new ones. There is no use to worry about the fish we did not land! The thing to do is get some fresh bait and try again.

Tomorrow! When Jesus said, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow," He did not mean that it was wrong for us to think of the future, to make plans and such provision for it as we can. What He did teach us is that we are not to worry about it. We are to leave the unknown future in the Master's hands.

Today! A small girl was traveling on a railroad train for the first time. The trip was new and everything was novel and interesting till suddenly the train ran along a steep bank above a river. The child became frightened lest the train fall into the stream. The problem of getting across to the other side loomed large in her thinking and it terrified her. Just then the train swung across a bridge with ease and safety, and the child's mind was relieved. A little later the same thing happened again, and then again. Quite composed now and satisfied, the youngster observed to the adult with her, as only a child can do, "Someone has made a bridge over every river!"

And has He not gone before us to bridge rivers and tunnel mountains with His grace?

God has said, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deut. 33:25).

Be Careful for Nothing!

by George E. Failing

THOUGH THESE words are quoted exactly from the Bible (Phil. 4:6), they do not encourage irresponsibility.

On the surface, carefulness seems to be a virtue. We think of it as thoughtfulness, prudence. (But the biblical opposite of carefulness is not carelessness but carefreeness.)

But the Greek word translated "careful" means anxiety, worry, distraction. This is precisely what Jesus forbade when He commanded, "Take no thought for the morrow." Anxiety is what our Lord condemned in Martha: "Thou art careful and troubled about many things."

Back of anxiety are two false assumptions: the importance of self and the importance of things.

Our worries start with ourselves. We may worry over hair ("Thou canst not make one hair black or white") or we may worry over height ("Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"). We may worry over food or clothes ("Take no thought . . . what ye shall eat nor yet . . . what ye shall put on." (See Matt. 6).

The flowers and the birds rebuke us. "The lilies of the field toil not, neither do they spin"; "the fowls of the air . . . sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns." Who takes care of them? "Your heavenly Father feedeth them"; "God clothes the grass of the field." We act as though God did not care or that He could not provide. We need to learn that our concerns are chiefly God's concerns. "Your Heavenly Father knows that you need all these things . . . and all these things shall be added to you." He wants to be our Father, manage our lives, provide for our best interests. If we take full responsibility, we snatch ourselves out of His care and take this "anxiety" upon ourselves.

But things also concern us. In fact, they overconcern us; they burden us. Yet things are not truly ours, except on loan. They belong to God, and He is interested in them. If we could only regard ourselves as earthly managers of God's property, we would relieve ourselves of much anxiety. Incidentally, we take care of things better if we regard them as God's rather than our own.

Anxiety grows out of self-centeredness and too great concern for temporal things. The cure? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee." Then

what happens to us or to things does not matter overmuch; what happens to God's interests is our chief concern.

Prayer, generous giving, visitation – these are remarkable antidotes to worry. They also further God's kingdom. These are the practices which – in true self-interest – lay up for us treasures in heaven.

Jesus Was Tempted Too

by Robert W. McIntyre

ONE OF the certainties of the Christian life is temptation. The truth of salvation by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8) stands alongside the words of Jesus: "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14). Temptation comes in the area of the "whatever."

Matthew characterizes the devil accurately as the tempter (4:3). So true is the enemy to his own nature that he tempted even Jesus himself. And so true was Jesus to His own human nature that He endured the ordeal of temptation.

The very first of the three temptations Jesus faced in the wilderness revealed the enemy's pattern of approach, now common enough to be predictable. In fact the predictability of the approach offers the believer one of his best defenses against it.

As it so often does, the temptation of Jesus came at a time of physical depletion. One must respect the frequent success of the tactic but scorn with holy hatred the despicable character that attacks the Lord's people in their times of physical exhaustion. The attack is underhanded – but not indefensible. Just as the mysterious workings of the human body provide massive amounts of adrenalin and extraordinary strength for times of emergency, so does the divine alchemy make strength perfect in weakness.

The enemy's approach is often directed toward an area of weakness. What better time to tempt one with food than at the end of a 40-day fast? By definition, temptation is directed toward desire. Had Jesus not been hungry, the invitation to make bread of stones would have been no temptation at all. When one learns by bitter experience the location of the weak place in his armor, he is foolish not to mount a double guard against temptation in that area.

The tempter may be expected to attack during a time of spiritual depression, after a spiritual "high." Forty days of fasting may be viewed by some as simply a foodless ordeal, but such experiences are made bearable because of the spiritual feasting which transcends physical hunger. Jesus told His disciples He had meat to eat that they knew not of. It was *after* the fasting that He hungered. And it was after the ecstasy of those days had somewhat abated that the tempter launched his attack. One may expect the most vicious attacks when he is in the trough between the swelling tides of great victory.

To round out the picture it must be pointed out that the tempter's approach was a subtle, low-key one: "If You are the Son of God. . . ." The words are reminiscent of those in the Garden: "Yea, hath God said . . .?" The frontal assault is obvious and immediately calls for the deploying of appropriate defenses, but the indirect approach is designed to gain a hearing — to establish a beachhead.

To present life in Christ as a constant struggle is to distort the picture, but to ignore the inevitability of temptation may be disastrous. Jesus was tempted. And His victory is the surest promise of our own.

What God Requires

by George E. Failing

CHRISTIANS ARE disciples and disciples are students. Thus Christians are students, enrolled in Christ's school.

In the school of Christ many subjects are required. Those required are clearly stated. "Whosoever does not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). In every case Jesus insists that the disciple carry *his* cross. So cross-bearing is a required course.

So also a walk of faith is required. As we begin the Christian way in faith, so we continue by faith. By faith we enter upon the way of life, and by faith we walk. And "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Faith is not merely an initial act of trust; it is a continuing attitude of dependence. "Because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thy hand" (II Chron. 16:8). The Christian is shut up to faith, and the unbelieving never enjoy eternal life.

A course in holiness is also a requirement. God is holy and His people are called to holiness. This separateness and utter abandon-

ment to God is not a call to the few who follow a particular form of Christian service. It is a requirement of all who would bear Christ's name. Holiness is not an exercise in self-improvement; it is imparted and developed as we look away from ourselves to Him. But it is never developed in those who do not consecrate to His will and yield to His providences. A believer cannot be uninterested in holiness, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

A course in obedience is required. Our Lord "learned obedience by the things he suffered" and He gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him. While obedience with us can never become a performance measured by infinitely perfect standards, the spirit of obedience and disciplined efforts in obedience are absolute essentials in the life of the Christian.

And finally, yielding to the love of God and growth in that love are absolute requirements for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. There is no heaven without love, and there is no Christian in whose heart the love of God has not been shed abroad.

Touchstones of Discipleship

by Oliver G. Wilson

MANY HEARTS now are crying out for more of God. They desire more power in prayer, more eloquence in testifying, and more influence in community and church circles. It would be well for every individual to search his heart in the light of the Word, for the way to greater effectiveness in spiritual things is the way of self-renunciation.

God is not imposing His blessings on anyone who is already satisfied. He is not giving them to anyone who feels that he can get along very well as things now stand. "He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away" (Luke 1:53). When we are wise in our own eyes, then we are as weak as water, but when we are in the dust at the feet of Christ, then His power flows out to a distraught world.

If I speak lightly of the service of others, and emphasize their weak points while I compare them with my strong points, I am guilty. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others."

If I am impatient, unkind, or bitter because of the delays or failures of others, I am guilty. "Be patient toward all men."

If I show resentment when others are promoted, and feel a secret stirring of jealousy at the success of another, I am guilty. "In honor preferring one another."

If I am soft and tolerant in my attitude toward vicious wickedness, I am guilty. God cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance.

If I fret at life's drudgery, at the thoughtlessness of others, at the narrow circle of my activity, I am guilty. "Fret not."

If I seek to regulate my life, rather than allow Him to regulate it, I am guilty. "Not I, but Christ."

If I have with elation told of my accomplishments while covering my failures, I am guilty. "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; that no flesh should glory in His presence."

It is only when we take a low place before God and are able to count ourselves as nothing, that the Holy Spirit is able to use us. From the person who is filled with the Holy Spirit will rivers of living water flow out to bless the world.

We Need to Grow Up

by Armor D. Peisker

CONVERSING with an older man, a young fellow, with an air of finality, maintained his point of view with statements which were definitely debatable. When the wiser, more experienced man finally could get in a word, he remarked: "My boy, when I was your age, I, too, knew far more than I do now."

The opinionated, closed-mind attitude of the youth was a sign of his immaturity. Maturity is open-minded and recognizes that another's opinion merits a hearing.

Each of us comes into the world very immature. We all begin life quite ignorant. Not only so, but at first we are also inarticulate, irresponsible, and self-centered.

And strangely enough, becoming an adult physically does not guarantee growing out of those baby ways. Some people accumulate a lot of information, but remain irresponsible. Others become articulate, like the dogmatic young fellow already cited, but they remain ignorant and self-centered.

One becomes mature only to the extent that he replaces those unpleasant qualities with better ones: ignorance with knowledge; inarticulateness with ability of expression; irresponsibility with dependability; self-centeredness with a sincere interest in other people and things outside himself.

In this there is a parable. Growing up spiritually is much like that. To enter the kingdom of God, men are born anew. They, as Jesus said, become as little children. But the simplicity and trust which this implies does not suggest that Christians are to be childish. They are expected to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." To increase in that way involves taking diligent advantage of such means of grace as prayer, study of the Bible, attendance at the house of worship, fellowshiping with other Christians, even with those believers whose opinions may differ from our own.

Maturing Christians also become more and more able to communicate their faith intelligently and winsomely. The Apostle Peter admonished his readers to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you."

Growing Christians learn, by the grace of God, to take things as they come – to live victoriously with those things which they can neither prevent nor avoid. They learn to be content even in the midst of unpleasant circumstances. This enables them to be dependable in all that life may bring.

They strive to fulfill the spirit of the Apostle Paul's admonition: "Give entire obedience . . . not with an outward show of service, to curry favor with men, but with singlemindedness, and a reverence for the Lord. Whatever you are doing, put your whole heart into it as if you were doing it for the Lord and not for men" (Col. 3:22-23, NEB).

Then, the more grownup a Christian is, the more he follows the instructions of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and "a new commandment I give unto you . . . as I have loved you . . . love one another."

We need to grow up!

Bruised Christians

by George E. Failing

PROBABLY THERE are more bruised Christians than healed Christians. So I write to encourage those who are bruised.

To be bruised, at least, is to be hurt; at most, it is to be crushed.

Jesus said, "It is impossible but that offenses will come." He was speaking to believers. Offenses always hurt; sometimes they are intended to destroy.

Only at first will it seem strange to the believer that the world hates him, that the world scorns him, that the world wishes the Christian witness to be put out. None of this should surprise us or alarm us. "They hated me before they hated you," warned our Lord. "The world will love its own," and if we are not of the world, we will be on the outside.

Persecution by the world hurts the Christian, slows his evangelistic outreach, and may even take his life. But bruising often is inflicted by other believers. Christians may annoy or misrepresent other Christians. Otherwise, why would Paul counsel the Ephesians in these words: "Let all bitterness, and wrath . . . and evil speaking, be put away from you . . . and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:31-32)?

We Christians must learn better than we have that sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, we become a severe trial to other Christians. We are ignorant of their actions, more ignorant of their motives for action. We do not take the time to understand each other. In our preoccupation with our own (Christian) work, we may be thoughtless, unkind, even punitive, and harsh. Now these are not the traits of that I Corinthians 13 love we regard as the standard of Christian perfection. I cannot explain how some of us can appear so considerate at some times to some people, and how inconsiderate we can be at other times!

I am reminded of two things. First, how tenderly toward others I must live and walk. I must always painfully consider what a trial I am to others, and repeatedly request my Father to set me about the task of healing saints rather than bruising them.

Secondly, I will remember Christ's attitude toward bruised believers: "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench" (Isa. 42:3). It would be so simple to break that bruised reed, then to cast it away as useless. But a bruised reed is not the same as a fruitless branch. The fruitless branch will be

cut off and cast into the fire, but the bruised reed. . . . Can anyone imagine the gentleness and patience of God with unworthy persons like me and you? Christ, having been bruised himself in the days of His flesh, knows our limitations, our unfulfilled longings, our need for help and healing.

May God give to me a ministry like His own: "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds" (Ps. 147:3).

OBEDIENCE

CHAPTER NINE

Stay Young and Be Saved

by George E. Failing

LITTLE WONDER there is much emphasis on child and youth evangelism. Most people are already too old to be saved.

I know that is a sweeping statement. But this is what Jesus emphasized when He said, "I tell you truly that if you do not have a change of heart and become like a child, you will not get into the kingdom of heaven at all. The greatest in the kingdom of heaven must become as humble as a child" (Matt. 18:3, paraphrased).

And is not this the testimony of the psalmist? "Lord, my heart is not haughty. . . . I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother."

David wrote often about tears and a broken heart. Many adults have been "weaned" from these. Instead, they manifest rage, resentment, pride, self-assertion, revenge, and retreat. An adult with a tender heart, with eyes that weep without shame, with a spirit that can be mended easily, is not frequently found. Yet these are the priceless virtues of the saints, the very watermark of the holy.

Any parent who endeavors to rear his children with love and discipline knows the supreme blessings of the broken heart. The real purpose in administering discipline is not to lay on stripes but to soften the heart. In fact, if discipline is not so administered as to soften the heart of the offender, he only becomes harder as he grows older.

I can recall in our home occasions after discipline was administered when tears of penitence were shed and pleas for forgiveness were offered. What times of blessing those were! How much good those moments brought to us parents. In administering discipline to the children, we became childlike again. Our hearts felt washed afresh;

we looked through the eyes of a child and felt through his heart.

Only the heart broken in repentance can be melted in surrender. And the surrendered heart is the peaceful heart.

It is dangerous to become "old in heart." We become old in heart when callous resentments, petty prides, and hurtful social customs bind us tightly. In the endeavor to be manly we adopt the world's pattern of manliness — utterly unlike Him who was "meek and lowly in heart." Jesus could weep and forgive easily. He loved little children and was tender to the infirm and aged.

How old am I? Too old to admit a mistake? Too old to ask forgiveness? Too old to do a small deed with childish delight? Too old to reckon my real worth in deeds of simple kindness rather than in the applause of other self-seeking adults?

I must become childlike to be saved. I want to remain childlike enough to keep saved. Always I want to be "young in heart."

Obedience: One Beautiful Flower

by Armor D. Peisker

"LIFE IS very simple, and yet how confused we make it seem," Mme. Chiang Kai-shek once said. She went on to illustrate like this: "In old Chinese art there is in each picture only one outstanding object. Everything else is subordinated to that one beautiful thing. An integrated life is like that. What is the one beautiful flower? As I feel now, it is doing the will of God."

Jesus Christ was a perfect example of that. Everything in His life was subordinated to God's will for Him. And anyone who would live a full life must place less value on everything else than he does on the will of God.

What does such obedience involve? No two of us will, in every detail, find an identical answer. There is a divine purpose for each individual which only God can make plain.

There is, however, a general principle into which all of life's affairs, both small and large, must be integrated. An Old Testament sage said, "To sum up the whole matter, revere God, and keep His commandments" (Eccl. 12:13, Berkeley).

Sometimes it is easy to obey God; sometimes it is arduous.

Even Jesus found it that way. Young and eager, thrilled by His

visit to the great Temple in the capital city, He found it easy – and doubtless extremely interesting – when God's will brought Him attention and commendation from the honored leaders of His nation. But it was vastly different some 20 years later in nearby Gethsemane; then it took all He had of purpose, of courage, and of strength. Nevertheless, He did follow through and fulfilled His redemptive work for mankind.

It is easy for us to obey God when to do so does not interfere too much with personal plans and desires. It is not too hard when no separation is involved, when there is no ostracism by long-cherished companions. It is not too difficult when to do right costs nothing in material goods. But it is harder when keeping God's commandments means a departure from familiar, pleasant paths, when doing so turns old friendships cold. It is also hard when to do right brings a loss of money or position.

But life lived by any other rule is self-destructive. Concerning living by our own rules, Dr. Eugene Frank wrote: "We go on doing what never works out. We go on defeating ourselves. We get angry with God because He won't let us have our own way.

"We get downright bitter with God who gently but firmly insists that His way is the only way that will work. . . . Imagine a chemist getting angry with the universe because water is made up of two molecules of hydrogen to one of oxygen. Suppose he constantly tried to act as though water was $H_2 SO_4$. Nothing he did would ever come out right. Water is H_2O ."

The formula for an abundant life is simple: Obey God. And we dare not break that rule. To try is to break only ourselves.

Not My Will

by George E. Failing

NOTHING IS more important to me – nothing is more essentially mine – than my will.

That which I call mine encompasses many things. It includes the body with its activities, the soul with its desires, the mind with its perceptions. But the body and soul and mind – all together – are not most important to me.

By my will I can direct my body, satisfy my soul, develop my mind. There is no intelligent direction to, or development of, my

life apart from my will. So I recognize the centrality of my will. I can forfeit a hand, but I cannot set aside my will.

Man is essentially evil, but not because of what he does, or says, or thinks. He is evil because of what he wills. And every natural man – every person who has not been captured by Christ – is the captive of a will that defies God, that disobeys God.

The true test of what a man's nature really is, comes when that man's will is confronted by God's will. That moment is the only ultimately decisive moment in his life. All other choices are of secondary importance.

There are two supreme moments of crisis as concerns the will. The first is faced when the person sees the righteousness of God – particularly as manifest in Christ – and his own sins. The convicted sinner sees that he has been guilty of repeated evil choices and indulgences, and that these oppose God and are offensive to God. That discovery should bring about godly repentance – a renunciation of known sin and an embrace of all known goodness. Both motives and deeds are then sharply changed, as the person surrenders to God.

The converted person, the trusting Christian, faces now the supreme crisis. His first great crisis of will involved the choice of God and truth. His second crisis means he surrenders his prerogative of choice. He will no longer boast of his will, not even of his will to serve God. He simply yields his will to God and lets God make all the choices. Then the believer becomes as ready and willing to serve God as his own hand serves him.

This, and nothing else, is perfect peace and perfect surrender.

The Victory Road

by George E. Failing

"THE HIGHWAY of triumph is the low way of tribulation" are words which challenged me as I was reading a magazine article.

The low road of Calvary, with its beatings, its bloody sweat, its loneliness and pain, was the highway of triumph for the Son of God and for all the sons of Adam.

The low road for the kernel of wheat is to "fall into the ground and die," but that also is the highway of plentiful reproduction, the highway of profitable harvests for the farmer, providing food for man and beast.

The low road of blindness with its helplessness was the highway of triumph for John Milton who gave to the world *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*.

The low road of the filthy Bedford jail was the highway of triumph for John Bunyan who blessed all succeeding generations with his *Pilgrim's Progress*.

For the soul there need be no prison walls, no binding chains, no creeping blindness. God can "make a way in the wilderness, and streams in the desert."

A lady, broken by a terrible accident, was compelled to lie on her back and stare at the ceiling for 70 days. She said, "I thought I would go mad, staring at that ceiling, until it occurred to me to look clear through the ceiling and see the face of Christ. From then on I was no longer staring at a blank ceiling, but into the face of the compassionate loving Christ. Life took on a different meaning. My lowly bed became a highway to the throne."

The low road of tribulation may become the highway of triumph. It may be an obstacle course, but "in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths."

There are people who, after being afflicted, talk and act as if they had suffered a great injustice. Their lives grow bitter and rebellious. The fires of affliction have turned their gold into dross. What could have been riches has become poverty, and what could have produced eternal values has fruited in hard selfishness. "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed."

The victory road is the road of trust and obedience – not always easy but always triumphant.

Stand Up and Be Counted!

by Armor D. Peisker

CONFORMITY, adaptation, adjustment – such words rank large in the current religious vocabulary.

In these days we are taught not to make our distinctions too deep, nor our contrasts too abrupt. At times we may need such counsel, but there are some distinctions which must be made; there are contrasts that deserve emphasis.

Men and women of firm Christian convictions are needed – those who know right from wrong and who, when occasion demands, will stand up and be counted.

A man can be measured both by the quality and the strength of the convictions he holds. He may have unusual ability and his mind may store up information from many volumes, but if he has no strong convictions in matters of truth and morals, he will, when the hot blasts of temptation blow upon him, squirm like a worm.

It is, however, important to recognize what convictions really are. We must distinguish between eternal truth and temporal assumptions. Religious notions, however strong they may be, are not to be confused with convictions, those abiding principles of uprightness which are set down in the Bible for all time.

Religionists of Jesus' day made this great error. Among them the ideas and opinions of men were given greater importance than the clear demands of the Scriptures. The same men who would not walk so much as a mile on the Sabbath Day greedily deprived widows of their property and neglected their aging, needy parents. In the name of religion they overcharged sincere worshipers for their sacrifices and Temple coins. The same men who fastidiously washed their hands many times a day lest they become ceremonially defiled,

used those hands to persecute and even to murder those who opposed them.

But history also recounts many examples of noble men who, at great cost, ordered their affairs by principles of right. An old cartoon from World War I days provides an illustration. The background is a map of war-swept Belgium. That little nation had been promised immunity from strife if she would become the corridor through which Germany's troops might pass to invade France. She refused. All the world knows the awful story of her ravage. In one corner of the foreground of the somber picture stands the Kaiser, in the other King Albert of the Belgians. The Emperor taunts the King: "So you see you have lost all!" King Albert, standing up erect in the dignity of firm conviction, replies with determined confidence, "But not my soul!"

A Christian Under Criticism

by Oliver G. Wilson

MARY perceived that the earthly pilgrimage of our Lord was coming to a close, and with her precious ointment she anointed her Lord for His burial. It was an outgush of love – this giving of her best.

Notwithstanding her pure motives, sharp words of criticism were spoken in her hearing: "To what purpose is this waste?"

The criticism touched the soul at its tenderest point – the act of worship itself, and the act of expressing love for the one worshiped.

The criticism came not from the Pharisees or worldlings, but from one of the chosen Twelve. Yet Mary answered not a word. However, the Christ came to her defense and pointed out that it was an act of devotion that would not go unnoticed. By that little act, Mary made herself the most famous woman in history, for wherever the gospel is preached, this story of Mary's love and devotion to the Christ is told.

Anyone can criticize or censure, but it takes a great soul to go on working faithfully and lovingly and living as radiantly as Jesus.

When unjust criticism comes, that is a unique opportunity to learn self-control. It will be easy to speak out in self-defense. But to do so is generally useless, for the critic usually feels himself to be prosecuting attorney, jury, and judge all combined. Commit your defense to the Master.

Give no place to resentment or despondency. This is a dangerous temptation, for it gives a false coloring to the situation and renders your judgment unreliable.

When criticism comes while we are in the line of duty, we must not take time to answer it; leave it in the hands of the Lord. Words of criticism do not go unnoticed by Christ, and I believe the words spoken by the Lord were balm indeed to the wounded spirit of gentle Mary.

Each troubled heart, each criticized soul must remember that Christ is present and observing; He will come to your defense. He will not fail you. Leave the answers with Him and thereby put yourself in line for His rich approval.

"Never take vengeance into your own hands, my dear friends: stand back and let God punish if He will. For it is written: Vengeance belongeth unto Me: I will recompense" (Rom. 12:19, Phillips).

Restitution – the Authenticating Seal

by Robert W. McIntyre

NO ONE, unless it be a politician running for office, exposes himself to the critical examination of an unsympathetic public like the person who testifies to new life in Christ or particularly to the lordship of Christ in his life. A Christian life transformed by the Spirit's power is often an aggravating conviction to the unbeliever. And, since it is demonstration rather than opinion, it is virtually an unanswerable argument.

It is not strange then that in an attempt to weaken the impact of that transformed life, the cynic or unbeliever will conduct a careful search for flaws. For, the reasoning seems to go, if that life can be faulted or disqualified, then the professed transformation is a farce, and commitment to Christ has resulted in no real evidence of life-changing power at work.

It is a long-recognized truism that the unbeliever often has a higher standard for the Christian than the Christian has for himself. This is understandable and the Christian believer in working out his own life pattern must carefully find the line between being an offense to the gospel and merely being a continually frustrated slave to other men's whims.

One area, however, which deserves considerably more attention

than it often receives is that of restitution. A person wronged or robbed – believer or unbeliever – has ample reason to expect that when the one who has wronged him really meets Christ, every effort will be made to set the wrongs right and to restore the stolen property. Attempts to witness are disqualified if one has serious reasons to question the sincerity or the commitment of the witness-bearer.

Forgiveness covers the sins, but restitution conditions the unbeliever for witness and authenticates by act the testimony of the lips.

Restitution can be costly. Men have faced jail, the paying back of huge sums, and sometimes humiliating and crushing experiences in order to complete it. But men have testified, too, to the impact of a witness in restitution that could be accomplished in no other way.

It is true that salvation is by grace through faith. It is also true that the open avenues of fellowship both vertically and horizontally are dependent upon each other. The sincerity of a man's commitment is open to question if he still benefits from the fruits of early sins.

Keep Tender

by Oliver G. Wilson

THE LIFEBLOOD of Christian holiness is tenderness – lowly, gentle, compassionate tenderness.

In the world we meet with bluster and strut and harshness and resentment. All of these must have no place in the heart of God's holy people. To give way to a spirit of severity ever so slightly, sharpens our words and toughens our inner life.

It is unwise to reflect on the selfishness and meanness of others, lest we allow bitterness to take root within our spirit. Should this occur, we will begin to have the same evil temper that we condemn in others.

In order to maintain the Spirit-filled experience, we must constantly live in an attitude of self-surrender, of "resisting not evil," of speaking evil of no man, even those who despise and mistreat us.

Keep tender. It will bring riches of grace, riches of goodness, riches of love.

Speak the truth by all means. Speak so that no man can mistake the utterances. Be bold and fearless in your rebuke of error and

sin, but be loving and gentle and brotherly while you do it. When you must deliver the Redeemer's rebuke, deliver it with the Redeemer's tears.

This is Christianity as Christ intended it to be lived.

The art of saying appropriate words in a kindly way is an accomplishment to be coveted by each follower of Christ. F. W. Faber said, "Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence, or learning."

Everyone knows how painful it is to be rudely ignored or to have his remarks treated with contempt. Everyone knows also the pleasure of receiving a kind word, a warm greeting, a slap on the shoulder. Each of us therefore should direct his life according to Christ's pattern of gentle tenderness.

Brilliance of mind and capacity for deep thinking have rendered great service to humanity. But they also have strewn the world with war, oppression, and slavery. Tenderness has dried tears, restored courage, and repaired broken spirits all around the world.

Faultfinding

by Paul W. Thomas

FAULTFINDING is out of bounds for every true soldier of the cross. And there are good and sufficient reasons why.

Faultfinding is hard on the fault-finder. Indulging in it is like shooting a gun with a heavy recoil – it kicks back. Faultfinding is hard both on a man's peace of mind and on the health of his body. In the study of their records over a two-year period, a big psychiatric clinic discovered a common denominator in all of the cases of tension in their files. It was being hypercritical – being a faultfinder!

Faultfinding erodes the personality. One of the strong points in Dale Carnegie's course on friendship is, "Don't criticize!" A far greater source, the Bible, carries this beautiful statement, "Love suffers long, and is kind." The habitual critic is hard to integrate. He is sand in the bearings of life's machinery.

Faultfinding hurts others. A few years back an evangelist went around handing out wall mottoes which read, "Home, the place where we are treated best, and grumble the most!" He had traveled much and was grieved over the grumbling and complaining that is so commonplace in American homes. Similar cards with appropriate

wording are needed elsewhere. How many hearts have been crushed and broken under the weight of faultfinding, God only knows; but there must be many.

Faultfinding is displeasing to God. It speaks of doubt, not of faith. It is the voice of frustration rather than hope. Indirectly, it is aimed at the Lord, His love and providential care, and the fact that He has said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay."

Faultfinding is a deadly habit. It is rarely confessed, perhaps because it is not easily recognized by us as our own fault. Yet it is an evil which needs to be pinpointed by down-to-earth heart searching, and acknowledged for what it is. There is a frightening amount of hypocrisy in seeking for faults in others and overlooking our own.

"How can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck out of your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matt. 7:4-5).

Cumbered and Careful

by George E. Failing

I THINK I would like to have dined at Martha's house. She must have been a meticulous housekeeper, a good cook, and a gracious hostess. What's more, she would have made me feel welcome.

Besides, Martha was a true believer in Jesus — as were her brother Lazarus and her sister Mary. Her faith was not any more superficial than the faith of her brother or sister. John's account (chapter 11) seems to imply all this. If Jesus enjoyed the friendliness of any home more than another, it was Martha's home. He seems to have spent more time with His friends in Bethany than He did with His own family in Nazareth. None of His own family, except His mother, Mary, believed in Him! At Bethany all believed Him and all loved Him.

Jesus never rebuked Martha for her good housekeeping any more than He chided Nicodemus because He was well-to-do. He who had created all of earth's infinite beauty and variety appreciated orderliness and tasty food.

What Martha failed to realize on that day of pressing duty was that Jesus had stopped by primarily for reciprocal love and fellowship. The nicely spread table and well-prepared food were secondary to Jesus.

Instead of giving Jesus her attention and love first of all, on this occasion Jesus' entry into the home immediately sent Martha into a flurry of straightening up the house and preparing a meal *par excellence* for her esteemed Guest. On the other hand, Mary quietly seated herself and begged Jesus to tell her about himself and His work. She "sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word."

Have not all of us been guilty of Martha's error? We have tried so hard to do nice things for Jesus. We have visited, organized, "committed," sent money. We have been active on His behalf, no doubt about that!

But all the time Jesus has been hurt by our hustling. He wants to talk to us. We don't stop long enough to let Him speak. We are not quiet enough to hear His voice. Even our praying often rules out listening. We know so well what we want that we never find out what He wants. We desperately search for a new Pentecost while the Holy Spirit has been waiting upon us, upon our obedience, upon our faith.

If religious liberals seek satisfaction in social activities, we conservatives seek satisfaction in our routine church practices — so routine that there are no deviations from them. How seldom do we draw near just to love our Lord, just to hear His voice, just to revel in His grace and goodness.

GOD'S RESOURCES

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Replenish Your Account

by Paul W. Thomas

IF ONE cannot be rich, it is wonderful to be financially solvent. Savings banks and reputable loan associations like to emphasize the advantages of regular, systematic savings. Christmas clubs have gained wide popularity with people who have discovered that a few dollars laid aside each week can become a worthwhile amount by the end of the year.

It is also God-honoring and wonderful to be spiritually solvent, to have grace to meet all the demands of life. But life, if it is to be spiritually solvent, also needs regular deposits.

Spiritual life cannot be all expenditure, or we will soon come to an hour when our checks will return marked "no funds." Deposits must be sufficient to offset expenditures; and, according to the Word of God, they are to be made with daily regularity. "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (II Cor. 4:16).

"Though our outward man perish." How true! Eventually physical expenditures exceed resources: we come to the end of our strength and our days. Only in spiritual things is the way open for a constant inflow of spiritual resources that by the grace of God equal, even exceed, all the demands made upon them. Deposits can be made to keep pace with all our expenditures.

But this renewing of the inner man is to be "day by day." Spiritual deposits are to be made, like the savings account, regularly. Marvelous as are the initial experiences of the new birth and the baptism with the Spirit, these blessings do not suffice for all our days. There is a day-by-day aspect of Christian living that the Bible calls walking with God.

It is a mistake to wait until calamity strikes before seeking to replenish our spiritual account. Temptation can and often does strike like the tempestuous trials that fell upon Job in one day. All that he possessed was swept away except his faith in God. Happy is the man whose spiritual resources are sufficient in the day of adversity.

Why do we allow our spiritual account to become so dangerously low? Resources are available. The bank of heaven is still honoring drafts and checks drawn in the name of Jesus according to the provisions of grace.

One answer to this question, and perhaps the most common, would be "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. 13:22). With the grand rush to own this and that, the things of God and the soul are so often given less consideration than they should have. We are like a man writing check after check without care to balance the books. Suddenly there comes the rude awakening; the account is overdrawn, and we are embarrassed by spiritual shortage!

To know today and every day that spiritual resources are what they can and ought to be, is the secret of calm and successful living.

I Want to Be Poor

by George E. Failing

LIFE'S FIRST blessing is a feeling of poverty.

The poverty that blesses is poverty of soul. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," pronounced Jesus. That sense of deep need throws us upon God.

Satan tempted Adam to become wise and well-to-do apart from God. He suggested that dependence upon God was a sure recipe for poverty. Satan was right — dependence upon God would keep a man feeling poor — this is what "poor in spirit" means. But he was also wrong — dependence upon God would make a man infinitely rich. For he who depends upon God has both God and all of His infinite resources!

Many have discovered that the feeling of wealth — independence from God and from man — has no power to bring happiness or contentment. Some of earth's unhappiest people have been those who could afford to purchase all that money could buy. Like the rich young ruler they finally ask, "What lack I yet?"

God made man, and He made man to depend upon himself.

Man's only fulfillment becomes possible when he comes to rely on God. To God man should look in faith for daily bread, for deliverance from evil, for forgiveness of sins, for help in time of need.

There's nothing craven about being poor. Children are poor. They have no bank account. They cannot make their own way in a world run by adults. They are unable to treat their own diseases or to provide for their own education. They are little beggars. But what delightful beggars they are!

So God's children come to Him asking for bread, for companionship, for guidance, for protection. And God loves to furnish them all they need. In fact, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:11). What pleasure God must take in satisfying the needs of His children!

There are no personal or church revivals unless the feeling of poverty grips us. If we, like the Laodicean church, already believe ourselves to be rich and in need of nothing, God cannot give anything to us.

The rich need no help. The healthy need no physician. The religious need no Savior. I want to be poor.

Enough and to Spare

(Luke 15:17)

by George E. Failing

"BREAD ENOUGH" means you have sufficient to eat. "Bread to spare" means that you have sufficient to give away.

It was the thought of the abundance of food at his father's home that made the prodigal long to go home. The far country had its fascinations and thrills until the boy became hungry. When he began to "perish with hunger" there wasn't one good thing to be said for the far country. At home there was "bread enough and to spare."

There never is want with God. There is not only sufficiency with Him there is overwhelming, immeasurable abundance. He did not make a few suns; he made uncounted millions of them. The space boundaries of the universe are unknown to man — perhaps they extend so far man cannot measure them. And as for "time," it is limitless

with God. "One day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Man has not yet probed – and probably never shall – all the secrets of this small planet, earth. He does not know exactly how many varieties of plant and animal life exist – although he has catalogued them by the hundreds of thousands. He does not know for sure how many chemical elements there are; he only knows those he has discovered. He does not know how much gold, coal, oil, or iron is in the earth. He does not know how many fish are in the seas. And this earth is only one small planet of one small star – the sun.

God unveiled himself in Christ, but man only observed a small part of the fullness of His grace and power. For all the miracles He wrought and the truths He taught, Christ was none the poorer. In Him were exhaustless reservoirs of blessing and salvation, healing, and forgiveness. He would ask the question, "Which is easier . . .?" for there was nothing hard for Him.

Now the Christian has Christ, and the sinner may have Him. Why are we so weak and heavy laden when His power and joy may be ours? With Him there is always "enough and to spare."

Jesus never died on the cross because His resources failed. He died because He chose to make available to us His infinite resources of mercy and grace. Through death He bequeathed to us the unspeakable gift of God's favor.

So the Christian's resources are more than adequate: "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us"; we have immediate access to grace and to power, "enough and to spare."

The Resources of Grace

by Paul W. Thomas

NEITHER THE man born blind nor the penitent thief on the cross could define divine grace, but they knew what it could do.

The Bible is the story of redeeming grace: past, present, and future. There we may read of "the God of all grace," Jesus is seen "full of grace and truth," and the Holy Spirit is designated as "the Spirit of grace."

Grace has been defined by the scholars as "the unmerited favor of God." It is revealed in the Word as the basis and means of our

salvation: "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

The grace of God is not only a subject for devout meditation and for the theologian's logic, it flows into the practical aspects of Christian experience. Grace pleads our case before the bar of Divine Justice; grace, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, pays our debt and sets us free; and grace makes possible joyous, victorious Christian living. The Holy Spirit renews the soul in the image of God, and continually guides and strengthens the believer in doing the Divine will.

Grace is the sum total of our spiritual resources in Christ, and they are inexhaustible. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work" (II Cor. 9:8). We are invited to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

"He giveth more grace" is the assuring promise to the hard-pressed soldier of the cross. Annie Johnson Flint has incorporated these heartening words in beautiful poetry:

*He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater,
He sendeth more strength when the labors increase;
To added affliction He addeth His mercy,
To multiplied trials His multiplied peace.*

There are two confessionals, the earthly and the heavenly. In heaven we have "an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He understands our weakness and will grant us mercy and grace. Christians never outgrow the need for a heavenly High Priest.

The earthly confessional may be at the church altar, in the home, or in the office. It is necessary to confess to men when this is possible, if we are to receive their forgiveness and God's. Of course, we can "repress and be sick."

What is the alternative? "Confess . . . and be healed" (I John 1:9).

The Beauty of God

by Oliver G. Wilson

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us (Ps. 90:17).

A MORE sublime prayer could not be prayed. It is the expressed desire of a soul that wanted to be Godlike in all the outgoings of life. It is not for superficial prettiness but for inner beauty – the beauty of holiness.

The beauty of God is the beauty of truth, of justice, of peace, of mercy, of hope. In Romans 15 we are told that God is the "God of patience and consolation" (v. 5); He is the "God of hope" (v. 13); He is the "God of peace" (v. 33).

It would be appropriate for every soul to offer this prayer of the psalmist – "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

When the beauty of the Lord our God rests upon a soul, it means a life filled with radiance despite hardships and buffetings. It means a life devoted to justice, mercy, and truth, poured out in self-forgetful service.

Commenting on the passage, Adam Clarke says: "No action of ours is beautiful, except the beauty of God be stamped upon it: done by His direction, His rule, His Word, and to His glory."

"Holiness is the beauty of the Lord. Let that be upon us in all we say and do. Let the grace of God in us make our face to shine; then let divine consolation put gladness into our hearts, and a luster upon our countenance. That will be the beauty of the Lord."
– Matthew Henry

To strive and toil and spend ourselves for anything contrary to

the beauty of God is folly. Eliminate pride, prejudice, pettiness, personal resentment from the soul. God's holiness will rush in as air seeks to fill a vacuum.

Especially For You

by George E. Failing

Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has asked permission to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed especially for you that your own faith may not utterly fail (Luke 22:31-32, Williams).

JESUS KNEW well all the disciples, "all of you." In fact, He knows well all men.

Jesus knew well the purpose of Satan. Satan had repeatedly endeavored to "sift" Jesus as wheat. What Satan tried to do with Jesus, he tries to do with Peter – sift all the wheat out of his life and leave only worthless chaff.

Jesus knew that Satan especially wanted Peter. Why? Peter's influence was strong over all the other disciples. When he said, "I go fishing," they replied at once, "We also go with thee." This ability to lead made Peter desirable to Satan.

Jesus also wanted Peter especially. Those whom Satan singles out are also singled out by Christ. Christ desired in Peter a staunch friend and ally.

Christ foresaw Peter's peril. Peter's short and imperfect vision was not sharp enough to discern Satan's developing strategies.

Christ helped Peter. Christ assured Peter that He would go ahead and, as it were, station himself at the very spot in the path where Peter would stumble. Oh, the wondrous forethought and kindness of Jesus!

Christ's help to Peter was the greatest He could offer – prayer. This is ever Christ's greatest help to the believer. Now we begin to understand why Jesus entered into frequent all-night vigils of prayer – to intercede for His friends. And, bless His name, the glorified Savior still ceaselessly intercedes for His friends.

Satan expected Peter's faith to "utterly fail." All he saw in Peter was "Simon," the old name, the old nature. Jesus knew that there was more. So Jesus' look of forgiveness led Peter at once to weep his way back to the Savior's restoring love.

"Especially for you" Jesus prays today. Touched with the feeling

of your infirmities, He mentions your name and need to the Father. His prayers are always heard and honored. Is this not enough to strengthen and assure your fainting heart?

Life Without a Wrinkle

by Oliver G. Wilson

TIME MAY wrinkle the skin, but it cannot wrinkle the soul.

Manufacturers are spending their best energies, employing highly trained technicians to work out formulas to prevent wrinkles and to remove them from the face. Should they ever fully succeed, they will have made a fortune indeed. Every youth, every adult would be a customer.

All of this has to do with the part of man that is to perish. Wrinkles are sure signs of ultimate dissolution. Man's best efforts cannot prevent it.

Jesus Christ stands in the midst of the ages and promises life without a wrinkle. What an announcement! "Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27).

Grace is the great wrinkle remover. It will not take the wrinkles from the face but it will from the soul. This we should be especially concerned with.

Grace will remove the wrinkles of selfish greed, and in their place write generosity and good will.

Grace will take away the ugly wrinkles of hate which scar the soul and in their place engraft the beautiful spirit of love.

Grace will remove the wrinkles of care, worry, and distrust and replace them with contentment, gladness, and peace.

All of this comes to the Church of the Firstborn, not because of any worthiness which it possesses but because of the love and efficacy of the resurrected Savior.

Soul wrinkles are inexcusable. The remedy may be had for the asking. It has worked effectively across the millenniums, in all climates, and upon every race.

As the ancient Israelite in the wilderness was compelled to look in faith to the brazen serpent, just so must wrinkled souls look in faith to Christ.

There is a "Balm in Gilead." There is a cure for soul wrinkles.
Look, and gain beauty for your soul.

Treasures of Darkness

by Oliver G. Wilson

GOD WILL give to His trusting child treasures heretofore undiscovered – the treasures of darkness.

Perpetual light can do irreparable damage to the eyesight and cause the nervous system to break under its merciless glare. Nature wisely provides alternating light and darkness for our physical well-being.

The days that have furthered our spiritual life have not been the days of financial prosperity or popular acclaim or great emotional excitement. They have been the days of darkness, the days of financial need, the days of slander, the days of fierce battles with Satan. Such days carried us far down the road of spiritual development, and deeper into God.

God disciplines us with darkness that we may enjoy His treasures. The drill of disappointments, the grind of duty, the acid of patience, the distractions of danger; all are administered in love. And every dark day, every experience of darkness is filled with treasures.

Life is filled with apparent contradictions. Try as we may we cannot reconcile the facts with right and good. If we try to answer the problems of this world by intellectual or scientific methods, we shall go mad, lose our faith, and miss the treasure God proposes to give. But if we will commit world problems to God and lean upon His love in the hour of adversity, we shall enter into the treasures of darkness and develop a rare trust that cannot be grown in the sunlight.

The path may be dark, very dark, but the promise is unalterable: "Lo, I am with you always." Wherever there is a man who is fully devoted to God, there by his side is Jesus Christ the Lord. With

Him there is fullness of fellowship, fruitfulness of friendship, felicity of faithfulness. These are the treasures of darkness, unknown while living in perpetual sunshine.

Hidden Gold

by Armor D. Peisker

THERE IS gold in those hills of trouble. The vein may be hidden, but we can find and mine it if we will.

Treasure can always be found in the mountains of difficulty. Men of all times and in all walks of life have recognized this. An old Arab proverb states: "All sunshine makes a desert." We moderns put it: "Fair weather never made a sailor." The Chinese knew this centuries ago, for in their graphic language symbols the word "crisis" is written by combining the two characters which mean "calamity" and "opportunity."

Crises and calamities are always laden with rich opportunities. Each of us should, therefore, be an opportunist — one who, according to a current definition meets the wolf of adversity at the door and appears the next day in a fur coat.

The man who has vital faith in Christ is able to meet the problems of life in a positive way. He is assured that the eternal God who rules the affairs of men stands with him. One devoted Christian demonstrated that attitude when, going through severe trial, he was asked, "Don't you feel you're liable to break?" He replied, "Yes, but not until the fiftieth psalm breaks at the fifteenth verse — 'Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'"

Such a man is confident that all things — the difficult and unpleasant as well as the easy and delightful — must work out for his ultimate good. In desperate times he is able to lay fast hold of life's abiding values and come through better than he was when he entered.

Every one of us will have our share of trouble. There is no escape, and often those troubles may raise the heavyhearted question, "Why must this come?" Faith in Christ will not give us the intellectual ability to answer that question, but it will give us the spiritual strength to overcome the difficulty.

A woman who had met with a brutal tragedy related how she had wasted much precious time in asking herself, "Why must these things happen to me?" But when she began to ask how she could

put them to positive use, she laid hold of the faith that always masters trouble.

When struggling to surmount the bleak, forbidding hills of trouble, we need not despair. We need but open the eyes of faith to see the vein of gold.

Our Light Affliction

by Paul W. Thomas

THERE IS much enlightenment and comfort in the Apostle Paul's statement concerning our affliction, which we read in II Corinthians 4:16-18: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

We are all aware, at least to some degree, that the outward man, our body, must yield to a process of decay, and in the end it must pass away. Meanwhile, "the inward man," regenerated by the Holy Ghost, is rising through a succession of renewals to a higher and more blessed life in Christ.

The new birth and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are experiences which in their initial aspect are instantaneous; but growth is progressive. It is from stage to stage, "First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear" (Mark 4:28). Paul speaks of our renewing as being "day by day." This takes in all the days — days of great struggle, days of crisis, days of victory, and days of affliction.

Not one of us can escape affliction, although we may overlook its true meaning and miss its benefits.

Affliction rightly borne works glory. This is the purpose of affliction. "I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10). The more spiritual our lives, the more we shall regard affliction as being but for the moment. Paul himself was a great sufferer. But viewed in the light of eternity, in the light of their spiritual ministrations, he could speak of his afflictions as being light.

We have before us both the seen and the unseen. Two sets

of objects are set for our contemplation, the one the temporal and the material, the other the eternal and the spiritual. It is to one or to the other of these that we direct attention. We cannot seek both at the same time. The worldly heart regards only the temporal and the material. But every true child of God has as the object of his desire that which is eternal and spiritual.

In a sense therefore, we begin to live in eternity by looking upon that which is unseen as being eternal. If we gaze only upon those things which are seen and temporal, we are bound to view our afflictions with dismay. But if with the eye of faith and divine love we are occupied with eternal things, then in the midst of that which is temporal and material, the spiritual rises and shines. Here we find the secret of victory in Jesus. We are made to rejoice in "our light affliction."

Tin Christians

by George E. Failing

PRECIOUS IN God's sight are His people, just as gold and silver are precious in the view of men. But precious metals only become such when they are refined and pure.

Humanity itself is the ore. God sees in that ore the gold and silver of possible restoration to the divine likeness. But each person must be refined to become Christlike. The only true refiner of human nature is the Holy Spirit.

Refining is a torturing and costly process. To become a Christian a person must allow God to put him through the refining fires of repentance and contrition. He who refuses to humble himself to pass through this fire cannot become a Christian. Seed was cast on the stony ground, but "stony ground" hearers proved themselves unworthy of keeping that seed.

God wants His people as pure as He is. He delights to see men remade in His own image of holiness and love. To accomplish this purity He sets the fire of His presence burning within us. Not only does He want to purge out the tin of sinful desires, but He wishes to free us from self and other-self bondage. Some of God's fiercest fires burn within us to consume our love for ourselves and our slavery to circumstance and opinion.

He whom God loves is put through the fire, that he might partake

of Christ's holiness. When God would teach His follower sweetness, He allows waves of bitterness to be hurled at him. When God would teach him lessons in humility, He allows men to scoff at him or neglect him.

Strange and awful thought: "Gold Christians" may become "Tin Christians." How this can occur, we do not fully know. But silver may become dross (Ezek. 22:18); the beautiful may become the repulsive. Just as submission to God once burnt out the alloy, so refusal of divine correction puts "tin" back into the soul. This is the observable fact, whatever the explanation may be.

When "tin" reenters the life, the person reverts to the same sort of life he lived before – independent of God.

"Tin Christians" should seek again the purifying fires of the Holy Spirit. When those fires have done their work, then indeed will we be clean. Then indeed will we become *vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use.*

Glory in the Sanding

by Oliver G. Wilson

WE HAVE rejoiced over our pleasant surroundings and our congenial companions, but have we ever counted it all joy when we fell into divers temptations, and the gritty, grimy, distressing things cut into our soul like the sander on soft pine?

We have thanked God a thousand times for the roses of joy which bloom in our lives, but have we ever thanked God for the thorns that prod us on in the path of duty?

We have anticipated the glad day when we will exchange our cross for a crown, but have we ever gloried in the cross?

Says Theodore L. Cuyler: "It is the easiest thing in the world to obey God when He commands us to do what we like, and to trust Him when the path is all sunshine. The real victory of faith is to trust God in the dark."

The glorious unveiling of God to the soul comes not on the day of parade and song and fame, but when the thorn-pricks become almost unbearable and the cross cumbrously heavy. Then, to the trusting soul, come fresh revelations of God.

He who starts a journey under Christ's command will finish it under Christ's protection.

Life for a Christian is not lived in an air-conditioned, pressurized cabin equipped with upholstered furniture and foam mattresses. It is a life of hardship and toil and suffering. However, "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord." "God maketh the clouds his chariots." Every dark cloud may become a chariot in which you ride to new spheres of spiritual development.

"He walketh upon the wings of the wind." It is difficult to recognize His footsteps when the winds of adversity blow and all your props are swept away. Nevertheless, He walks on the wings of adversity, and with Him you, too, may go through life's hard experiences triumphantly.

He will "make a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert." Your enemies will be bread for you. The Valley of Achor (Trouble) shall become the door of hope.

The victory is yours, not by fretting or fighting, not by dogged determination to wait for better times and circumstances, but by accepting life's experiences as His appointments. "You are Christ's and Christ is God's." You are safe no matter which way the wind blows or how rough the sanding.

Glory in the sanding.

FEAR

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

I Was Afraid

by George E. Failing

MY FAILURES are often the product of my fears.

For example, I believed that I ought to tithe my income, supporting the church in its earthly administration. But I feared that I could not afford to give the tithe and still have sufficient to take care of all my needs. So I failed to tithe and missed its blessing and rewards.

I believed that I ought to give priority in my life to the Bible, to prayer, to Christian fellowship. But I was afraid that I would not have time to take care of my own interests – an employer to please, household duties to fulfill. So I neglected the priorities and failed.

I believed that I should take a friendly and diligent interest in my family, endeavoring to be a true companion to my wife and a full-time father to our children. But I feared that my friends would think me unsocial if I did not attend all the clubs and picnics, and that they would misunderstand the discipline I ought to have maintained in the home. So I went with my friends and let my children find their own friends and their own answers. Now children and parents can neither find nor understand one another. Fearing to displease my friends, I failed my family.

I felt I ought to witness to my personal and business friends, to my relatives and neighbors. But I wanted to be considered a good fellow, and was afraid to talk to them about Jesus, to share with them the inexhaustible riches in Christ I had discovered. So dozens of opportunities were neglected, opportunities that may never come again. Now I fear to approach the doors I never bothered to knock upon.

Am I dreaming? Are these fears and failures real? Why did the one-talent soul receive so scathing a rebuke from Christ – the man

who never put his talent to work? He gave the answer: "I was afraid."

There is, there must be, a better life than this. For if Christ cannot deliver me from my fears, I have failed; I am defeated.

But David "cried and the Lord delivered him out of all his fears" – and lifted him out of his failures. So also the Lord will deliver me – and you!

The Fear of the Lord

by George E. Failing

THE FEAR of the Lord is the motive for many of life's greatest blessings.

It is doubtless true that some are converted simply by hearing of the mercy and love of God. The conversion of Lydia would so indicate. While she was listening to Paul, the Lord opened her heart and said to her, "Lydia, this is what your heart craves and needs." Forthwith Lydia received the word and was baptized into the faith. There was little, if any, pre-conversion struggle. God knocked; Lydia opened the door at once; God came in.

But the entire record of Scripture suggests that most people have to be exhorted, warned, pled with, before they yield to the entreaty of God, "My son, give me thine heart." Most hearts are locked, and those who have locked them are not even standing by the door. They are away on their own errands, stuffing life with selfish and wicked practices.

God knocks to get our attention, then stands without to carry on a conversation through the locked door, hoping it will open. Imagine, Almighty God waiting at the door of the rebel's heart, in the longing hope that the door will open. Sometimes it does open, and God always eagerly enters. Compassionate, condescending love!

Strange it may be to say that fear begets love. Fear is a combination of awe and respect. But no one can love another unless he genuinely respects him and, to a degree, stands in awe of him. We must admit this to be true in human relations, I think. In this respect, as in some others, we only reflect the nature of God.

If the law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, then the motive is fear. Law makes certain demands and enforces them on pain of certain penalties. It was not to his discredit that Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. And today he who

is driven to God by fear may tarry to be drawn to God by love.

Furthermore, most people do their best work under supervision, that is, when there are penalties attached to poor work. He who is the true Vine has told us that the Husbandman cuts off fruitless branches.

Under Christ's command, therefore, we labor diligently lest we be "ashamed before him at his coming." We dare not return to Him our talents unused.

Why Are You Fearful?

by Oliver G. Wilson

IF EVERY black cloud had a cyclone in it, the world would have been covered with nothing but rubble long ago.

If every hard circumstance in life had ended in disaster, no one would be here to relate the tragedy.

Although we are true Christians, we must not be forever so shielded from adversity that we become a society of mushrooms and toadstools.

We should count it no strange thing if we must endure sickness, losses, bereavements, and disappointments. Christ has promised us forgiveness for our sins, but He has not promised freedom from hardships.

Very often by affliction Christ shows us our earth-mindedness, and by this method seeks to wean our affection from the world and to long for heaven.

We need not fear the storms, no matter how severe, when Christ the Lord of heaven and earth is present.

To the raging sea the Christ said, "Peace. Be still." And there was a great calm.

To the devil that so grievously tormented the man (recorded in Mark 5) the Christ commanded, "Come out of the man." And the man was fully restored.

To the man whose little daughter was dead, the Christ said, "Be not afraid, only believe." And at Christ's gentle command the damsel arose and walked.

"Why are you so fearful?" (Mark 4:40).

Are you frightened at world conditions? The Christ is King of

Kings, and He will set up an everlasting kingdom that shall proclaim righteousness to the ends of the earth.

Are you afraid of old age and loss of physical powers? "Even to your old age I am he; and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isa. 46:4).

Are you afraid you cannot hold out in your Christian life? "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb. 7:25). This uttermost of course means both the uttermost need and the uttermost reach of time.

We are told that on the front of the mantle in the ancient Hines hotel in Bray, England, is a legend all may read: "Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered, so no one was there." The true message is grasped firmly when one remembers that this legend was put on the mantle at the time of Dunkirk, one of England's darkest hours.

Read the great "I am persuaded" passage in Romans 8:33-39, and then think of the trouble and persecution which Paul experienced. Could anything separate him from his Master or swerve him from his path? No, because Faith answered the door whenever Fear knocked.

So, "fear not, only believe."

Fear: Friend and Enemy

by George E. Failing

FEAR IS both man's best friend and his worst enemy. Only he who fears to disobey God can be saved, and he who fears to obey God can only be lost.

Fear, as awe and respect, is the very essence of character and piety. Fear lest he treat any other person meanly or unfairly will make any man a gentleman. Fear lest he dishonor or distrust God will make any man a saint.

Fear of punishment is wholesome and deters wrongdoing. Had Adam really feared death he would not have disobeyed God's plain command not to eat of the forbidden tree. Because Noah was "moved with fear," he built an ark and preserved himself and his family from perishing in the Flood. Remove the fear of prompt and proportionate punishment, and restraints to crime are largely eliminated.

Even saints are motivated by "the fear of God" in their endeavor to cleanse themselves from filthiness of flesh and mind (II Cor. 7:1). And "holy brethren" are cautioned to fear, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Heb. 4:1).

Fear, as cowardice and unbelief, is at the very heart of wrong. He who, from lack of courage, falls into dishonesty and impurity, corrupts himself and others. He who fears to confess his sin and repent of it, defies God and builds his house of reputation on the sand. The beginning of wisdom is to fear God, and "the conclusion of the whole matter is to fear God, and keep his commandments."

The sinner's first confession in the presence of God is, "I was afraid." And of all those who have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, the one group that leads the way for all the rest are "the fearful," i.e., the cowardly (Rev. 21:8).

Isn't it the strangest reversal of truth for Satan to emphasize constantly that it is cowardly to believe and follow God, under the pretense that to be a sinner requires courage?

The Bible teaches what every undeceived man will admit, that courage is properly associated with goodness and that the highest type of courage is required in the pursuit of moral and spiritual goodness.

So, I welcome that fear that makes me aspire to holiness, and disdain that fear that makes me a slave of my sin and my weakness.

On Fear and Love

by George E. Failing

HE WHO does not fear God is no Christian at all.

He who fears, but does not love God, is only half a believer. He may have faith but he is without peace or joy.

He whose love for God is so complete that his fear is swallowed up by love, is a perfect man in Christ Jesus. He is possessed by the love that casts out tormenting fear. The fear that remains is one of respect and awe.

Perfect love casts out the fear of man. He who perfectly loves God perfectly loves people. He never attempts to purchase their favor, nor is he overcome by their scorn and rejection. Loving God supremely frees a man to love his neighbor unselfishly.

Tyrants and dictators fear people; they never love them. Men who covet power fear people who may upset their designs, but they do not love those who assist them to power. In fact, they easily desert them.

Perfect love casts out the fear of sin. Hatred of sin is an indelible mark of love.

Some Christians seem to believe that only by living in mortal dread of sin can they be kept free from it. This is a tragic error. For he that dreads sin so much cannot get close to the sinner lest he be contaminated. Only he who hates sin is really free from its power and pollution. At the same time he is free to love and help the sinner.

Perfect love casts out the fear of illness and death. It is a pitiful thing to be enslaved by the craving for life and health. Indeed, life is a priceless loan from God and good health is to be desired. But these are not supreme blessings.

Paul learned to take pleasure in his infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon him. Approaching death, Paul saw only the crown of righteousness awaiting him. What a glorious deliverance it is to be free from the tormenting fears of poverty, reproach, disease, and death.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom but the love of God is its end. And only love endures forever.

OUR FATHER'S CARE

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Our Heavenly Father

by Paul W. Thomas

AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD boy in a Queens, New York, hospital came out of an 80-day coma to say, "I love you, Daddy," to his father who had spent most of the 80 days at his son's bedside. The boy had suffered a fractured skull in a bicycle accident, and after a brain operation had been in a coma for nearly three months.

For the first nine weeks of his son's unconsciousness the father had stayed at the bedside day and night. His meals were brought to the hospital. Eventually he returned to work, but each morning and evening he resumed his vigil. The boy never spoke. Then one evening as the father walked into the hospital room and said, "Hello, Robert. How are you?" the boy answered, and the father wept for joy!

This heart-warming scene touches a responsive chord. How great is a true parent's love!

The incident suggests a great spiritual truth, for in Psalm 103 we read, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Jesus talked about God as the Heavenly Father and taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

We cannot take the unscriptural position that all men are God's children, except in the sense that they are His by creation; but they can be truly the sons of God by the new birth. The Apostle Paul writes, "You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father [my dear Father]" (Rom. 8:15).

If we had earthly fathers who loved us and who like that parent in the New York hospital devoted themselves to our welfare, how

much more our Heavenly Father loves and cares for us. Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:11).

What comfort this is for dark days! How much better to put our case in His hands and trust Him, than to try to carry the burdens through sleepless nights and anxious days.

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

Never Out of Range

by George E. Failing

THE FACT that God is near to us is one of the clearest and cheeriest teachings of the Bible. "He (is) not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

In a devotional message I heard some time ago, the leader commented on one of the precious promises given in Psalm 34: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry" (v. 15).

Observed the speaker, "We are so close to God, we are never out of His sight." She remembered that as a missionary in Africa, she always charged the care of her small daughters to an older national, who would watch against poisonous serpents and spiders as well as against other hazards. "But," she said, "I always tried to have them within sight. My eyes were upon them."

Then one day, this missionary related, "I heard a scream. I knew it was the voice of my daughter and a cry of alarm. I could not see her, but I could hear her, and went immediately to my daughter's aid. She had been bitten by a poisonous spider. Though at that moment out of my sight, she was not beyond range of my hearing."

The application is obvious and beautiful. Even in a busy world God cannot lose His children. They are always within the range of His eyes and His ears. He can see our danger; He can hear and respond immediately to our call.

God loves to show us how near He is. After many days on a storm-tossed boat, Paul testified, "There stood by me this night the angel of God" (Acts 27:23).

The Scriptures plainly assure us that God is a "very present help in trouble" (Ps. 46:1). Literally, the Hebrew reads, "A help in distresses has God let himself be found exceedingly." He can be found easily and quickly.

God stays close by you, believer. He is never far away, never out of range.

Has God Forgotten?

by George E. Failing

THERE ARE TWO possible answers to the psalmist's question: "Has God forgotten?" (77:9).

Yes, God has forgotten the sins He has forgiven. Because Christ's sacrifice completely atoned for our sins, God remembers them against us no more forever. In moments of discouragement it is well to remember that the past – all of it – is forgiven and forgotten. Memories of the past ought only to provoke us to praise.

No, God has not forgotten His ancient promise to Noah – symbolized by the rainbow – that "the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Gen. 9:15). "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22).

Nor can God forget any of His promises. "Of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you, all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing has failed" (Josh. 23:14). This testimony has been repeated by so many saints, through so many centuries, that we should be amazed that we ever doubted the exact and timely fulfillment of all that God has said.

Nor can God forget any of His people. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isa. 49:15). "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10).

God cannot forget His people because they are precious to Him; they are as the apple of His eye, to use a scriptural simile. Shall we say it reverently – God has wrapped up His own destiny with the destiny of His people. He has linked their eternal blessedness

with His own. He can neither forget His people nor His purposes.

*Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; the clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break in blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, but trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.*

—William Cowper

THE CHANGELESS CHRIST

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

He Can't Be Hid

by Robert W. McIntyre

JESUS AS A man is seen in solitude and in the multitudes. Nights of seclusion and prayer were followed by days of ministry to the masses. Mark records eleven times when Jesus retired to rest, pray, or escape from His enemies, desiring not to be disturbed. Though some of His attempts at momentary seclusion were successful, it appears that He often failed in His efforts to withdraw even briefly from the press of the crowd and the persistence of human need.

On one occasion, after an extended season of teaching, Jesus entered a house in the region of Tyre and Sidon, attempting to keep His whereabouts unknown. But straightforward Mark, relating the event, concludes tersely, "but he could not be hid."

What Mark observed about the Master at the house near Tyre was characteristically true of Him everywhere. When did He ever really escape the attention of men except for the briefest of moments when it was necessary for Him to avoid arrest or danger because His time had not yet come? The Sun of Righteousness simply could not be hid.

He still cannot be hid, even today.

He cannot be hid in a true house of worship. Evangelicals, particularly those who claim the heritage of Wesley, have long faulted more formal churches for burying life under liturgy, or smothering it with solemnity. Then, satisfied that they are not slaves to a prescribed form, they fall into the bondage of their own "informality," and eventually find themselves servants of a pattern just as rigid in its own way as the one from which they had escaped.

True, Christ is not in the form. But neither is He necessarily in the formlessness. He can be grieved by casual irreverence, disre-

spect, and self-promoting disorder just as certainly as He can by inflexible form and liturgy. Neither high church nor low has a corner on vain repetition.

Thankfully, Christ's presence is conditioned less on the perfection of our patterns of worship than on our preparation and welcome. And when He is present, He cannot be hid. To the open and welcoming heart His presence becomes known whether aided by forms or by informality, "that in all things he might have the preeminence."

Neither can He be hid in your home. Personal faith in Christ has far-reaching effects. And when members of a household, or even key persons in a household, are united in this faith, it will leave its mark on everything that relates to them: property, furnishings, decor, reading habits, recreation, dress, food, education, finances — in short, life-style.

Christ's followers were marked then, and they are now. They gave day-by-day evidence of a loyalty to Him that took priority over any other, whether personal, political, or anywhere on the scale in between.

Christ's presence in a home may be noted in the family altar and grace before meals, where He is recognized as the unseen guest. He will be seen in the pictures, calendars and mottoes on the wall and in the bric-a-brac on the shelves and tables. He will speak out from the magazine racks, coffee tables, and bookshelves. His Spirit will shine through joy and sorrow, conversation and laughter. Neighbors will see it as an intangible quality and so will tradesmen, teachers, and business people. If He is there, He cannot be hid.

Nor can He be hid in your heart. How can one contain a light brighter than the Sun? Could you conceal the bursting of a great bomb, or hide the difference between dark and daylight?

"Once I was blind, but now I see." Could one hide new sight, or would he want to? If indeed "old things are passed away and all things are become new," can this be hidden?

One might draw a velvet curtain over the Milky Way more easily than keep His presence hidden when He is in the heart. When He is there, His presence will be reflected in a thousand ways. For the sake of a dark world, keep every one of them clean and polished.

The Changeless Christ

by George E. Failing

JESUS CHRIST is the eternal "I am." Today He is what He has been, and no future will change His character. (See Heb. 13:8.)

This is not to suggest that Jesus will do nothing new or different tomorrow. He is not bound to repeat exactly what He has done already. But He remains in character eternally the same. "With Him there is no variableness (Greek, *parallax*)." Divine love today is divine love forever; "having loved his own, he loved them to the end" (John 13:1).

From a human point of view changelessness is undesirable. We want to be better and to do better. But Jesus the Christ is infinitely good, pure, holy, wise. Our ideas about Jesus "grow up," but Jesus himself does not. Our emphases change, but He remains the changeless Christ.

Because Christ is changeless, we know how to get in touch with Him. On earth He was always accessible to eager, praying people. Conditions of approaching Christ will never change: "The humble and contrite heart" He will not despise.

Because Christ is changeless, we know what will please Him. Attitudes and actions that please Him today will honor Him tomorrow. God will spring no surprises on us at the judgment. We now know the rules and the standards. And serving Him is not an exasperating task: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Because Christ is changeless, we can be utterly confident of His continued presence and power. He will never leave us nor forsake us. The comfort and strength of His presence will be ours through all the future.

Years ago, one afternoon, our family was going to take afternoon naps — everybody was. One of the children wanted to sleep downstairs on the sofa while the rest of us retired upstairs.

Some minutes later a little voice from downstairs called up, "I can't sleep."

"Why?"

"I don't know," and there were low sobs.

"Do you want to come upstairs?"

"Yes," and up she came. She lay down and in a few minutes was sound asleep. She was with the family.

Oh, my soul, thou art ever with Christ! Why art thou ever lonely or afraid?

Worthy Is the Lamb

by Paul W. Thomas

IN REALMS of eternal life and glory, it is Jesus, the Lamb of God, whose name is above every name and before whom all the creatures of God bow in love and worship. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:12-13).

Christianity centers in a Person, Jesus Christ. It thrives only when He is exalted as Savior and Lord in every aspect of life. Thus the true church began and thus it must continue. In the Pentecost Day sermon Peter declared, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). The Apostle Paul testified to the Corinthian converts – and all others – "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:1-2).

Institutionalism, or any ecclesiastical polity that tends to eclipse the Lord of glory, can bring nothing but spiritual defeat. The undermining of the authority of His Word, or a spirit of compromise with "this present evil world" dishonors the divine Son of God and invites disaster. Pride and self-sufficiency in the church lead to the rejection of Jesus; they prepare the way for apostasy.

Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). But the dangerous search for a middle ground between Christ and Belial goes on in spite of all the warnings of Scripture.

The practice of paying lip service to the Savior, while ignoring or discounting His Word, has become a common evil in the land. Indeed, so great is the force of this example that relatively few dare to step out into the open to honor Jesus as Savior and Lord in everyday life.

The secret of the victorious, Christ-honoring life in this or any other age, is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Of Him Jesus said, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14).

Neglecting Jesus

by George E. Failing

NEGLECTING JESUS is one of the most common sins of Christians.

We do not deny that He alone is Savior. We believe that He is the only mediator between God and man. We believe in His resurrection and ascension, and in His present ministry of intercession.

We profess loyalty to Him. We offer our prayers in His name. We fellowship with others who revere His name. We are shocked to hear others deride Him. But while we ascribe all honor to Him and while we publicly adore Him, we privately ignore and neglect Him.

Simon the Pharisee made a feast to which Jesus was invited as guest of honor. But Simon neglected the personal attentions and courtesies that a master of the house owed his guest. "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet . . . thou gavest me no kiss . . . my head with oil thou didst not anoint" (Luke 7:44-46). So Jesus was slighted at a dinner in His honor. Formally acknowledged but personally neglected!

Is not this the sad confession many of us should make? In spite of all our public acknowledgements, our love for Christ is little. There is no real tenderness in our hearts for Him. We do not think of the smaller courtesies that would make Him happier than all our carefully worded professions. Like Simon, we are more conscious of what the people think (Luke 7:39) than we are of His grieved love.

All this is the more serious because Christ is God's only and beloved Son. All the Father's affections are lavished on His Son. God misses no chance of loving Him or of revealing His love for Him.

And God has given us His Son that we may love Him. Not to love Christ is to wound the Father. There is no easier way of grieving the Father than to neglect the Son.

Do I love Jesus? Do I show my love for Him in the everyday courtesies of life? Is Jesus honored in my home, at my work, with my friends, in my reading and recreation? Does my heart warm at His manifested presence? Do I realize that by befriending the least of my brethren, I am showing personal courtesy to Jesus?

By God's grace I shall give to Jesus what He wants, not professional homage but personal love.

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Battle Is the Lord's

by Paul W. Thomas

THE HOLY war in which we are engaged is much like a military campaign under constant pressure from the enemy, where one battle follows another.

Strangely enough, times of great victory and blessing often are followed by periods of serious temptation and spiritual conflict. The enemy comes in like a flood to discourage and confuse the worker for God, who may wonder for the moment what has happened. Right after Elijah's great hour on Mount Carmel when the fire fell, depression seemed to engulf the man of God who then fled before the threats of Jezebel to seek sanctuary in the wilderness.

Sometimes what appears to be an unfavorable reaction follows a gracious camp or revival meeting. The attendance at prayer meeting is smaller than usual, Sunday school attendance is down, the people have gone on vacation. Satan moves in with subtle accusations and temptations.

Not infrequently the success of saints in revival stirs up the strongholds of religious Canaanites who see a chance to cash in on the revival (which they sometimes do!). Israel had no sooner been given a new and abundant source of water from the rock than Amalek saw what had happened and "fought with Israel in Rephidim" (Exod. 17:6-8).

Many times these reactions that follow the mountain-top experience are but natural sequences of life, where the valleys interlie the mountains. Often the physical man is exhausted, nerve forces are spent, and the emotional reservoir is drained. As far as the worker himself is concerned, a quiet period of waiting upon God will serve to renew his strength and prepare him for new conflicts.

And when the enemy seeks to rob us of the fruits of victory, a steadfast looking unto Jesus and a sturdy refusal, in His name, to be stampeded, is the policy of faith that puts us in line for deliverance. When Elisha was told by his anxious servant that "a host compassed the city both with horses and chariots," he said, "Fear not: for they that are with us are more than they that are with them" (II Kings 6:15-16).

It is a wonderful thing to rest both our souls and our efforts for the Lord in His hands – not unduly elated over seeming success, nor unduly dismayed by the threats of the enemy. For "the battle is the Lord's" (I Sam. 17:47).

That We May Obtain

(Hebrews 4:16)

by George E. Failing

WE ARE beggars, every one of us.

Life makes us beggars. The infant begs for food, for a painless body, for sleep. The child begs for toys, playmates, attention. The youth begs for new experiences, for opportunities to earn, for understanding friendship. The adult begs for position, for security, for recognition, for fulfillment.

None need be ashamed to beg. God made us so. He made us dependent on himself, on the world in which we live, on one another. Only he need be ashamed to beg who is ashamed to acknowledge his own need or to help meet another's need.

Spiritually, the sinner and the saint have the same primary need – mercy. The publican who smote his breast cried, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." The earnest Christian comes boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy.

The sinner begs for mercy because of his transgression and rebellion. He comes to God as a sinner. The Christian comes to God as a son and begs the mercy of the Father because of his impulsiveness, his forgetfulness, his inconsistency. And, thank God, "the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him." How often I have thanked God for that verse and for a similar one: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. 103).

Mercy spans the chasm between God and me. So obtaining mercy is like the renewing of fellowship. We are consciously at one – God and I.

But I need more than mercy. The way stretches before me and I am lonely and weak. So God gives me grace. Grace offers partnership and strength.

Of Enoch it is written, "Enoch walked with God." The parallel truth is more glorious: God walked with Enoch. And so He has promised, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exod. 33:14).

I weary often. This is a world of toil, for daily bread, of course. But there's conflict every day and every hour with the relentless foe of my soul. The battle often waxes fierce and sometimes is prolonged. Then I find grace to help in time of need, for "when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him" (Isa. 59:19).

And so we travel on, my Lord and I. From Him I constantly receive mercy and grace. I can make it, I know.

Satan Is Afraid

by George E. Failing

SATAN IS afraid of the Almighty. So are the many evil spirits that are in his service.

The devil has no trouble with doubts about the existence of God. In the Garden of Eden, when tempting Eve, Satan questioned the truthfulness of God – but not His existence.

Nor does the devil doubt the power of God. When God moves, Satan promptly removes! He fears divine power and judgment. Satan was cast out of heaven for his rebellion and now is strictly limited by divine permissions, awaiting final doom in the lake of fire.

But Satan does not dread atheism. Atheism is only a false faith. It would have no power at all unless the sinful heart wanted a "faith" escape from deity.

Idolatry is the religion of Satan as atheism is his irreligion. The devil has no fear of "gods many or lords many." Idolatry always goes hand in hand with superstition, a fettered society and the fettered mind. Any idolatrous religion works as an ally of the devil.

But Satan is afraid of honest men. Even sinners are blessed with flashes of truth and many of them are constantly exposed to much that is true. To the extent the human conscience becomes free by believing and endorsing the truth, Satan opposes it. The devil seeks

to blind the minds of men to the truth, leading them into devious and ingenious detours. He seeks to saturate their minds with vanity and falsehood. He constantly reminds them of the horrible – and unnecessary – costliness of being true.

If we love truth, we must take pains to support and encourage men who show a loyalty to truth. For this reason we should encourage every honest citizen who serves his country in public office. To do less than this is to conspire with fraud and deceit.

Satan desperately fears the earnest Christian. The devil knows that the believer has an alliance with Almighty God. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). Satan knows that all the power of heaven is available to the believer who claims it. He also knows that he cannot overthrow a single person whose trust is fixed in God. Lions' dens or atomic holocausts cannot scare the believer in God. "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea" (Ps. 46:2).

They Are Defeated Enemies

by Paul W. Thomas

WE MAKE a grievous blunder if we think that God has abandoned the human race to the Evil One. It is true that in this present evil age humanity often assumes an attitude of wild abandon. But the facts are that the kingdom of God exists here and now in the midst of the darkness. There are many who have not bowed their knees to Baal. God is even now taking out a people for His name (Acts 15:14).

The kingdom of God has both its future and its present aspects. We read with joy of "the ages to come" (Eph. 2:7), but in a very true sense the "ages to come" have invaded the present age. The future triumph of Jesus Christ assures present victory. Sin and Satan and Death have already been met and conquered.

Because Jesus died on Calvary, sin no more shall have dominion over us. The Bible teaches us that "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me (us) free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). Satan's power over the soul of man is broken wherever Jesus is trusted as Savior and Lord.

In the coming glory of the first resurrection, death itself is to

be destroyed. But death has lost its sting through Calvary. Eternal life has begun already in those who know Christ through His saving grace and sanctifying power. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:11-12).

Certainly there shall be an intensification of evil as this present evil age comes to its close. Satan remains the god of this age, and we are caught up in the conflict between the powers of Light and Darkness; but Christ's triumph is certain. Even now we taste of the powers of the world (age) to come (Heb. 6:5).

Sin and Satan and Death are still enemies, but they are defeated enemies. This is our message of hope.

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Spiritual Blessings

by George E. Failing

ALL BLESSINGS are not spiritual. Some are physical, some financial, some social, and some intellectual.

But spiritual blessings are the greatest of all blessings. They are blessings that are ours from the Holy Spirit. In other words, they come to us because of Christ's work on Calvary, are applied to us by the Holy Spirit, and are sanctifying in their benefits.

Spiritual blessings are best because they derive from God and draw us to God. They are also valuable to all – those who suffer physically, those handicapped intellectually, and those hemmed in by oppressive circumstances. There's always available to us the up-look and outreach. God is forever looking down upon us – “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous” – and the arm of the Lord is forever exercised on our behalf – “to show himself strong on behalf of them whose hearts are perfect toward him.”

Even before Pentecost, spiritual blessings – blessings bestowed by the Spirit – were enjoyed. For example Simeon, an aged citizen of Jerusalem in A.D. 5, enjoyed three distinct blessings of the Spirit. (See Luke 2:25-27).

“The Holy Ghost was upon him.” The presence of the Spirit accounted for the fact that he was “just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel.” The Spirit gave His own regenerating and sanctifying presence to Simeon. The greatest gift of the Spirit is himself!

“It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost.” The truth Simeon perceived, “that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ,” could not have been arrived at in any other way. How the Holy Ghost reveals and certifies truth to us remains a mys-

tery – the illumination comes to us as we are “moved (Greek, borne along) by the Holy Ghost.” This revelation was primarily for Simeon’s own encouragement. It is blessed to think that the Spirit is so personally helpful to one waiting soul!

“He came by the Spirit.” Simeon did not merely wait for Israel’s Savior. At the exact hour he was prompted by the Spirit to walk into the Temple. Without any preliminary information from Mary and Joseph, Simeon arrived at the Temple right at the moment Jesus was brought. What wondrous guidance!

All these spiritual blessings are available to us – “with ten thousand beside.”

Blessings Shall Overtake You

by George E. Failing

MANY OF life’s blessings are not prayed for. They just come.

Take the elemental gift of life itself. None of us asked for it, yet the blessing was given.

Consider the conditions that support life. Rain and sunshine the world around bless people who always take them for granted.

Consider the physical and mental factors that make for good health. Some of earth’s most undeserving people enjoy these blessings. Certain it is that saints have no monopoly on good health.

Blessings are not accidentally or arbitrarily distributed. They are the rule in our world, not the exception. God designed it that way. As a father loves to benefit and please his children, much more does God lavish goodness and bounty on all of His children.

God cannot give us as much as He would like. With too many gifts we become conceited and selfish. We take His gifts for granted, then sometimes proceed to ignore the God who gave them. So God must restrain himself from giving, lest His gifts alienate us from Him. (See Deut. 8:7-18).

There is a definite secret in the matter of receiving gifts from God. God himself has let us in on the secret. “And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God” (Deut. 28:2). Those blessings pyramid, one upon another.

First come blessings on city and country alike. Next come bless-

ings of plenty. Then come blessings of peace: peace within the land and with other nations. Then follow the blessings of good health. Finally, God blesses with priority among nations that nation who fears and obeys the Lord: "You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. And the Lord will make you the head, and not the tail" (Deut. 28:12-13).

All these blessings, with "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38) shall God pour upon a people who never pray for them. They come without asking. They come on the single condition of obedient trust. God asks our undivided love and our undiminished obedience.

Make room for God's blessings. Then shall His own prayer be answered: "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me, and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" (Deut. 5:29).

The River of God

by George E. Failing

THE ANCIENT Hebrews spoke of things great as "of God." Thus, great mountains were "mountains of God." Large rivers were "rivers of God." A small river, a creek or stream – these would never be called "rivers of God."

The Nile, the Mississippi, the Amazon would be called "rivers of God." They are big, full, flowing, life-giving. There is no danger of their drying up. Many trees line their banks and abundant fish live in their waters. Millions of acres of land could be refreshed and fertilized and still the rivers would be "full of water."

The psalmist saw more than the rivers of nature. The psalmist was a believer who had found spiritual refreshment in God. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God." In that city of God dwell the children of God, and for their refreshing flows "the river of God."

What the Nile is to Egypt, what the great Missouri-Mississippi is to the United States, what the Amazon is to Brazil – that God is to His people.

Should we try to name the blessings brought by that "river of God" we would list the primary spiritual blessings: pardon and purity, joy, peace, and hope – ours because of Calvary and through the

Holy Spirit. Yes, we are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ."

Then follows an abundance of secondary blessings. "All these things shall be added unto you." Our Heavenly Father knows about the need for food and raiment, for work and wages, for home and friends. God has not dealt grudgingly with us. Daily He "loads us with benefits." Out of His abundance He "gives us richly all things to enjoy." Just as God "loves a cheerful giver," even so is He the greatest Giver of all.

When life begins to hesitate and run backward, when we no longer can relish the secondary and temporal blessings, we may develop a stronger appetite and a sharper delight in the primary blessings of fellowship with God. To the believer the river of truth in the Bible never decreases to a rivulet. The personal fullness of the Spirit never decreases because of increasing years. The oldest saints know best of all that the "river of God is full of water."

Why then do we thirst when we may come and drink! There are satisfactions unlimited in enjoying God, for He makes us to "drink of the river of His pleasures."

HUMILITY

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Whatever Happened to Humility?

by Paul W. Thomas

WHAT IS happening to the old-fashioned humility taught by the Word of God and preached by our predecessors? Does not the Bible condemn pride and self-exaltation, and does it not commend humility?

Did not Jesus teach us to take the lowest seat at the feast? What about all these people who push themselves to the front, who seek the spotlight and the applause of men? It is not uncommon these days for ministers to have publicity directors who see that they are properly headlined and eulogized and their abilities and successes extolled. Religious workers advertise their own success like conceited children. What has happened? Has black suddenly become white? Is poison nourishing? Is sin righteousness? Is death life? Is pride of person, place, and achievement humility?

Sometimes two planes are parked side by side in a terminal. When one starts very slowly, the passengers may for a few moments wonder whether their plane or the other plane is under way. Some of the things that are happening round about us in the religious world make us ask ourselves, "Who is going where? Is this a fantastic dream?"

William Law wrote pointedly and well when he said: "Self is the root, the branches, and the trees of all the evil of our fallen state. All the evils of fallen angels and men have their birth in the pride of self. On the other hand, all the virtues of the heavenly life are the virtues of humility. It is humility alone that makes the unpassable gulf between heaven and hell. What is then, or in what lies, the great struggle for eternal life? It all lies in the strife between pride and humility. Pride and humility are the two master powers – the two kingdoms in strife for the eternal possession of man. There never

was, nor ever will be, but one humility, and that is the one humility of Christ."

One far greater than William Law has said, "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23:12). And again it is written, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10).

Not Worthy, Lord

by George E. Failing

"Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8).

God can work only through unworthy men. Those who feel worthy cannot serve God.

We do not admit unworthiness simply out of deference to the divine Being. We do not commend ourselves to Him by degrading ourselves.

We are unworthy because we are so marred and so depraved by sin. God had made us worthy of His companionship; sin made us feel ashamed of being related to God.

Unworthiness is not the same as worthlessness. If man was worthless, God would never have sent His Son to redeem him. But after man has been reached and redeemed, man is still unworthy of all the love and grace outpoured on him.

We are worth more than all of earth's flowers, all its sparrows and sheep, according to Jesus. The inherent value in us is our potential to bear the full image of God's Son, Jesus. And some day all the redeemed shall be transfigured – "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

To be unworthy is not the same as to be unable. One may be able to be a husband, and still be an unworthy one. One may be able to be president of a group and still be unworthy of that position. In fact, some degree of unworthiness is necessary to the performance of any task. He who feels worthy is often overbearing and demands lavish honors and great power. He demands that others serve him. He who feels unworthy feels more easily the need to serve others.

There must be no groveling in the feeling of unworthiness. God

made us men, not worms. But He made us to be humble and respectful men.

In heaven, if I read the Bible aright, we shall sing over and over again, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

Then our unworthiness shall be swallowed up in praise for His worthiness.

Sit on Low Seats

by Oliver G. Wilson

WHAT SEAT do you occupy at the table of life?

The Christ said: "When you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place" (Luke 14:10). Do you do this, then stew all the time in discontent? Do you miss every opportunity to be gracious by waiting to be asked to sit in a more honorable position? There is no merit or grace in such an attitude. This is hypocrisy parading as humility. It will eat the soul as a canker and poison it throughout.

Sit in the lowest seat because, knowing yourself as you do, you know this is the place where you really belong. Learn to sit on low seats and grow tall. Have no confidence in the flesh. Commit your way unto the Lord; in due time He will exalt you, not by a more honorable seat perhaps, but by a spirit of compassion and tenderness toward others. Then the men from the more honorable seats may seek your friendship and words of wisdom.

Humility, a Mark of Greatness

by Armor D. Peisker

REALLY great people are humble people. In His well-known Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of that when He exclaimed, "How happy are the humble-minded, for they already own the Kingdom of Heaven!" (Matt. 5:3, Phillips).

In the same sermon He spoke of another class of humble people, "the meek." By changing two letters in the word "meek" we get

"weak." And most people in the world consider the meek man just that — one whom everyone can run over and take advantage of.

But that is a misconception of what meekness is. Meekness is an element of splendid strength. Moses, noted for his meekness, was not a weakling. Jesus, "meek and lowly in heart," with power and authority cleansed the Temple of evil traffickers.

Meekness and all types of humility spring from confidence in God and make up that quality which enables a man to have poise of spirit in all of life's circumstances. Such men are happy and contented. They are gentle and mild, with an influence for good far beyond that of the brash, boisterous, and self-assertive.

The pride against which Jesus warned is depicted in the attitude of a dinner guest of a top-ranking British official in the Orient. The general's assistant had seated a sophisticated lady guest on the left of her host rather than in the honored place at his right. Having borne the matter as long as pride would permit, the lady burst out, "I suppose you have great difficulty getting your aide-de-camp to seat your guests properly."

"Oh, not at all," replied the general. "Those who matter don't mind, and those who mind don't matter."

The truly humble man is a great man because he has a proper sense of values and, busy doing his appointed duties in the fear of God, keeps his rightful place.

HUNGERING FOR GOD

CHAPTER TWENTY

Now I Know

by George E. Failing

PRIMARY KNOWLEDGE comes only by experience.

This principle is true as to what I know about myself. Some years ago I was hospitalized for minor surgery. But what felt like major pain followed that minor surgery. Now I know that pain can be so intense that sleep is impossible. And I know that there are more kind and thoughtful people in hospitals than I ever imagined, though I had called upon thousands of my friends in their hospital experiences. Now also I can better visualize the many millions on earth without adequate medical care, and I can understand how Christlike it is to minister to the healing of men's bodies. Blessed are those physicians and nurses who tenderly care for the sick and injured and twice blessed are they if in doing so they serve in Jesus' name.

I only know others by experience with them. One can live in the same house with his own family and understand them but little. A person can know very little the people with whom he works. A pastor can understand poorly those to whom he preaches often. Being with people is not enough. One must enter into experiences with them. Some of these experiences will be pleasant and some unpleasant, but we must pass through them together if we are to understand each other. Some of my life has been unprofitable because I have failed to understand the people with whom and for whom I have worked.

I only know God by an experience with God. It may shock you quite as much as it shocked me to learn that God knows us by observing us and entering into experiences with us. The caption "Now I Know" is God's word respecting Abraham (Gen. 22:12). God's perfect knowledge included what was in Abraham's heart and

what Abraham might do under trial. But God did test Abraham by commanding him to offer up Isaac. Abraham promptly and completely obeyed God though his own heart must have stabbed him a hundred times at the thought of sacrificing his son. But when God saw Abraham's hand extended to slay Isaac, God stopped him: "Lay not thy hand upon the lad, for now I know that thou fearest God." God found out, through Abraham's obedience, that He himself was more important to Abraham than was Isaac.

What we are finding out about God now is only a fraction of what God is. But God is finding out about us, in this life, all that He will need to know about us in eternity. With us the reverse is true. We are only entering into fringe experiences with God in this life, as real as these experiences are. One of the great purposes and employments of eternity will be to know more completely the God we have discovered here.

Taste and See

by Paul W. Thomas

THE PSALMIST boldly exhorts us to "taste and see that the Lord is good."

There is no substitute for a personal experience of salvation, to know for ourselves that we are the Lord's, that He has redeemed us.

Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14).

It takes neither philosopher nor scientist to discover that the difference between the desert and the verdant plain is water, water that nourishes all growing things! Salvation to our spiritual natures is like the water that quenches our thirst. They nourish every aspect of life and make the heart rejoice and blossom as the rose!

Our Savior himself said, "I am the bread of life." And in the simple, but great commemorative feast of the sacrament, Jesus took bread and broke it and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you." Jesus is indeed the bread of heaven, the staff of life.

"Taste and see." The experience of personal salvation means

the opening of our eyes to see the things of God as they are revealed to us in Christ. It is only when we do taste that we see the things of God.

O taste and see that the Lord is good (Ps. 34:8).

That I Might Know Him

by Oliver G. Wilson

IF YOU would find God, He is near you.

If you would see God's work, look into the heavens which "declare the glory of God," and look into the face of the innocent child.

If you would know God, learn at the feet of Jesus; He came to reveal God: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

To know God is the soul's supreme quest.

Other knowledge, though pursued to its ultimate, leaves the soul unsatisfied. To know God, not just something about Him, but to know Him as a Person – gracious, righteous, kind, and concerned for the things that concern me, is to start the fountains of peace flowing in the soul.

The wider your horizon of the knowledge of God, the wider your fields of admiration and wonder.

He who knows God has a sound basis for all his science, for all his philosophy, for all his ethics.

He who knows God has mastered his fears and determined his destiny.

To know God, it will be necessary for me to matriculate in God's school. The tuition and fees sometimes are high, and submission to His instruction will cut across our ease-loving self.

Paul gladly witnesses: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know him" (Phil. 3:7-10).

If your resolution is weak, you will never know the riches of

the knowledge of God reserved for those who are abandoned to Christ.

God makes no difference in His love to His children. He has no favorites: "There is no respect of persons with Him." You, my friend, enroll in God's college of "fine arts" today. He will reveal the deep things of grace to you, even you.

Do We Really Hunger?

by Paul W. Thomas

THERE IS a close connection between our desire for God and the help we receive from Him. His Word makes it plain that He has victory for those whose deepest cravings are for spiritual help and blessing. Jesus said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

One of the outstanding characteristics of the church of apostolic times was a manifest hunger for God. Something akin to this must, and will, mark every true work of grace in our times.

A genuine hunger and thirst after righteousness is a work of the Spirit. Crowds we may get through well-done advertising and the use of big names. Enthusiasm may be generated on a grand scale, but a heart desire for God is a hunger that is of divine origin.

The awakened soul has an epochal hunger and thirst when seeking for deliverance from sin and the fulfillment of righteousness within. But there is a recurring hunger and thirst after righteousness that is as normal for the soul who walks with God as hunger for food and thirst for drink are natural for a healthy man. The quickened, indwelt soul seeks after Christ, who is our life (Col. 3:4).

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness speak to us of pure worship, a rarity in these surfeited times. Perhaps the church needs to search no farther for causes when there is little manifest presence of God in the midst, when so much effort is dry and ineffectual. Is it not well to ask ourselves, Do we really hunger and thirst after righteousness?

A heart hunger and thirst after God is the atmosphere in which showers of blessing appear and the soul can sing, "Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" (Song of Sol. 2:11-12).

THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Marks of the Spirit-Filled Life

by Paul W. Thomas

THE SPIRIT-FILLED life begins with a crisis; we do not drift into it. The Spirit does not come by chance, nor as a reward for being good. He comes in His fullness only when the divine conditions of obedience and faith are fully met.

If men are ever scripturally converted, there must come a time when they lay down their arms of rebellion, repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and are born of the Spirit.

The Spirit-filled life begins when we see God's great purpose in Christ and recognize our need of cleansing and the enduement of power from on high. The proud, the casual, the lukewarm see no need, acknowledge nothing, and receive nothing. But "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

The Spirit-filled life begins when we completely separate from the spirit and principle – as well as the practice – of worldliness; when we come in complete submission to the will of God; when we present our bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.

All this may take place in less time than it takes to read this page, for God is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children (Luke 11:13).

The Spirit-filled life is marked by a deep and abiding love for God. Speaking of the indwelling Spirit, Jesus said, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:14). It is this experience that enables us to love the Lord with all our mind, soul, and strength.

The Spirit-filled life is marked by a love of the truth, the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has His own way of illuminating the sacred page. This does not mean that we come to understand the secrets of knowledge and wisdom without prayer and application and study; but it does mean that in His own peculiar way He opens up spiritual truth as no other one can do. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you . . . the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth" (I John 2:27).

The coming of the Holy Spirit in His fullness brings a new spirit of freedom. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (II Cor. 3:17). This is freedom and power in prayer. The fullness of the Spirit intensifies our prayer life and enables us to offer the sacrifices of praise continually.

The Spirit-filled life is marked by compassion for the lost. It is written of the Savior that He was "moved with compassion" when He saw the people as sheep without a shepherd. When the Spirit of the compassionate Christ dwells within us, we too are moved with compassion.

The Spirit-filled life is marked by a radical stand against the world, the flesh, and the devil. There is nothing in the sanctified heart that has an affinity for anything the devil has to offer.

The Spirit-filled life is marked by an inner consciousness that all is well. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world" (I John 4:17).

The Spirit-filled life is the New Testament standard of holy living.

Spiritually Minded

by Oliver G. Wilson

ONE OF the most comforting promises in the Bible is: "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6).

This places earth's dearest treasures within easy reach of every man. Life and peace come not as a result of struggle, or accomplishment, or acquired grace but by surrender to Christ Jesus.

The spiritually minded man is one in whom the Spirit of God is supreme. God rules the whole man, not as a constitutional monarch but as an absolute monarch, controlling and directing the inner desires of life.

The spiritually minded man delights in holy exercises, in service no matter how humble, for Jesus' sake. He is charmed with spiritual melody, and thrilled day by day with new discoveries in Christ.

The spiritually minded man desires spiritual good above temporal gratification, and companionship with the holy before association with the ungodly. He focuses the attention of his life on Godlikeness, and directs his energies to the task of making Christ known.

"To be spiritually minded is life and peace." Life at its best; peace undisturbed by temporal loss or gain. Life that puts a song on the lips; peace that abides despite contrary winds and howling storms of slander. Life that has its source and end in God; peace that brings the whole personality into harmony with itself.

It is a life free from inner conflicts; it faces adversity with the assurance that "all things work together for good to them that love the Lord."

Take from the truly spiritual man his wealth, his health, his home, his inheritance, but his life and peace abide. He has a home in the house of many mansions, and a kingdom which cannot be moved.

The spiritually minded man's life and peace rest not upon statistics, finances, flattering compliments, or honorable position, but upon an inner condition, an inner voice, an assurance of hope.

To be spiritually minded is to be lifted out of the depraved fallen state into which man is born, and into the kingdom of God and His Son. It is a divine transaction. It is a supernatural act. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

The Abiding Comforter

by Paul W. Thomas

THE NEW Testament standard of the Christian life is a Spirit-filled experience. If we are to be filled with the Spirit, then it is to be expected that the blessing is immediately available. What God requires, He graciously provides for.

"Be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). This admonition is given in the present tense. We may have the Spirit's fullness now, and we may continue experiencing that fullness. There is one giving of

the Spirit, one baptism; but He comes to abide with us forever, and His dwelling within us is characterized by many manifestations, refreshings, and enlargements.

If we are to receive the Holy Spirit in His fullness, we must make room for Him. We must consent that everything within us that is contrary to His will shall go, including all carnal manifestations as envy, ill will, inordinate affection, selfishness, unholy ambitions, jealousy, and such like.

Now we cannot drive these things from our hearts; they will not depart at our command, as many have learned by sad experience. But while we cannot drive them out, we can consent that they shall go, and the Holy Spirit by His incoming, drives them from the temple of the soul and in turn floods that temple with His presence so that we in truth become a habitation of God through the Spirit.

When the Sun of Righteousness arises in our hearts with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2). He brings the day of full salvation. And it is God's plan that this Sun shall go down no more in the soul. Do we consent to the Spirit's infilling, and do we consent now?

Our dedication, the consecration of our lives, and our consent to be filled is to be on an unconditional and irrevocable basis. We are not to say, If the Holy Spirit will come, I will be wholly His. Without any reservation, we must yield ourselves wholly to Him.

The Holy Spirit is given to abide with us forever. The same obedience of faith that secures this fullness is required if He continues to abide with us.

Only the Spirit-Filled Understand

by George E. Failing

ONLY THE Spirit-filled Christian understands the meaning of Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Natural man can understand only natural things; all else is "foolishness" to him. "Foolish" in the sense that he cannot interpret what he sees and hears. (See I Cor. 2:14).

Carnal men, i.e., Christians who are not Spirit-filled, only partially understand the things of the Spirit of God. As babes in Christ, they need care and must have nourishment, but they can neither bear the "meat" of truth nor can they take care of "babes in Christ"

(1 Cor. 3:1-3). Furthermore, carnal Christians at times act as natural men!

Before Pentecost James and John sought for the honors of position, "one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory" (Mark 10:37). Only two positions open, and the two "saints" grabbed for both! Little wonder that the ten were displeased.

Before Pentecost the apostles were still interested in the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). Though exposed to the teaching and example of Jesus, the "image of the invisible God," they could not comprehend, much less proclaim, the blessings that belong only to the poor in spirit, to the meek, to the pure in heart.

The light of the Spirit has to be turned on inside our hearts before the life of Christ can be seen outside in our conduct. Pentecost did not add to the apostles' store of Bible truth, but that transforming experience suddenly did *illuminate what they knew and empowered them to do what they should.*

The phenomena within the Upper Room were known and felt only by the 120 there. The experience they received, or rather the Holy Spirit who fully invaded and captured their hearts then, could not be contained in that Upper Room. No human leader needed to urge any to "evangelize" or "share." With burning hearts and loosened tongues, they could not forbear telling what they knew, personally and for sure.

The one phenomenon manifest outside the Upper Room was that of speaking "with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The 120 Galileans were speaking in at least 15 native *dialects* (as the Greek plainly reads).

But as amazed as they were with the phenomenon of Galileans speaking various dialects, they did not miss two other (and more important) things. First, the utterances of the 120 were spiritual. Their words came as torrents of fresh water would spring from a large and pure fountain. This was not Babel, mere confusion; this was an awesome and revealing work of the Holy Ghost.

Second, they did hear, each man in his own dialect, "the wonderful works of God." The "sermon" of Peter was essentially the testimony of each of the 120. Little wonder so few ask us, "What meaneth this?" when all we can talk about are the "wonderful works of (Christian) men."

THE PATTERN OF THE AGE

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

What Is Your Life?

by Robert W. McIntyre

QUALITY OF life presently holds high priority among matters discussed by youth, sociologists, and even politicians. But the subject is not new, nor is concern about it an innovation of our times.

James, the apostle of the practical, in the fourth chapter of his letter to Jewish Christians scattered everywhere, refers to several normal appetites or drives which are one's servants when properly controlled but which may individually or collectively become obsessions commanding all of life. He places them all in perspective by saying, "How do you know what is going to happen tomorrow? For the length of your lives is as uncertain as the morning fog; now you see it, soon it is gone. What you ought to say is 'If the Lord wants us to, we shall live and do this or that'" (14-15, LB).

Although the setting changes, human nature does not; and although James wrote 20 centuries ago, his life-style evaluation is remarkably relevant today. Men gave themselves then to the same things that often command them now, but life is still a "morning fog" which vanishes in a moment.

What is your life? What is its primary center? What commands your thoughts? Controls your activity? What drive has you in its possession? James's checklist may be helpful.

Is your life strife? "What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it because there is a whole army of evil desires within you?" (4:1). Life is too short and uncertain to spend it with a perpetual "chip on the shoulder." Life was made for love, not for hate.

Is your life selfishness? "You want what you don't have so you kill to get it. You long for what others have, and can't afford it, so you start a fight to take it away from them. And yet the reason

you don't have what you want is because you don't ask God for it. And when you do ask you don't get it because your whole aim is wrong – you want only what will give you pleasure” (vv. 2-3).

Is your life sex? “You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband's enemies. Don't you realize that making friends with God's enemies – the evil pleasures of this world – makes God your enemy? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God” (v. 4).

Is your life a constant striving for superiority – a spirit that cannot rest unless it is in command, in control, of other people? “But He gives us strength to stand against all such evil longings. As the Scriptures say, God gives strength to the humble but sets himself against the proud and haughty. So give yourselves humbly to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (vv. 6-7).

Is your life slander and criticism – the constant activity of a vicious tongue and censorious mind together cutting everything and everyone down to size – down to your size? “Don't criticize and speak evil about each other, dear brothers. If you do, you will be fighting against God's law of loving one another, declaring it is wrong” (v. 11).

Is your life a constant search for security? Has the battle for bread become a striving for status – an obsession with possession? “Look here, you people who say ‘Today or tomorrow we are going to such and such a town, stay there a year, and open up a profitable business.’ How do you know what is going to happen tomorrow? For the length of your lives is as uncertain as the morning fog; now you see it, soon it is gone” (vv. 13-14).

What is your life? Let the Holy Spirit be your teacher as you turn to the Bible. By contrast with the morning fog which so swiftly passes away, eternal life is found in Jesus Christ alone.

Be Unlike the World

by Oliver G. Wilson

A LITTLE lad came from the backyard covered with mud. His mother exclaimed, “Sonny, what in the world are you doing? You have mud all over your clothes! Look at those shoes!”

She was interrupted by the little fellow's “I's sorry, Mommy. I guess I am getting worldly.” So much “world” was sticking to him that he thought he was getting worldly.

Perhaps the little fellow was not far from expressing a great truth. Worldliness results when so much of this world's ethical conduct and practices stick to us that the true beauty of the soul cannot be seen.

When I speak of "worldly" I do not mean "saints" who sponsor dances and bridge parties, attend the theater and have cocktail parties, dress immodestly and deck their persons with jewelry. I have in mind something more significant than these things.

To conduct our business affairs with so much zeal that there is little time or attention given to the kingdom of God – that is worldly.

To be more concerned with the furnishings in the home than the culture of the soul – that is worldly.

To be enthusiastic about picnics and hunting or fishing parties and not enthusiastic about the things of God – that is worldly.

To be known as having a large appetite for lavish dinners, and little appetite for the Word of God – that is worldly.

To talk much about politics, finance, sports, automobiles, but little to God and about the things of God – that is worldly.

To enjoy social meetings of the church but consider the prayer meeting a drudgery to be avoided if possible – that is worldly.

These things are doors through which swarm all manner of evil. Paul calls them "the desires of the flesh and mind."

"Be not conformed to the world." The only alternative, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Unless day by day the spirit is renewed by fresh visitations from God, the soul will by an almost imperceptible process be pressed into the world's mold. Be transformed by the Divine companionship.

The Children of the Lord

by George E. Failing

You are the children of the Lord . . . you shall not cut yourselves (Deut. 14:1).

WHAT A blessed relationship – "you are the children of the Lord"! We are the children of God by divine choice: "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people . . . but because the Lord loved you" (7:7-8). In love God has chosen us to be His own. This covenant has been sealed by atoning blood.

We are not sons because of something we did, but because of what He did. The one condition on our part is faith – faith expressed in willingness to receive and willingness to obey.

Because we are sons we are not to pattern after those who are not children of God. "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for himself!" (14:2). The Christian's one "peculiarity" is to be like His Lord. And if the Christian rejoices in God, this conformity to God will be a pleasure and not a cross.

*Tell me not of heavy crosses, nor of burdens hard to bear,
For I've found this great salvation makes each burden light appear.
And I love to follow Jesus, gladly counting all but loss;
Worldly honors all forsaking for the glory of the cross.*

Fellow Christians, let us not be reluctant to reject the sinful patterns of our age – social patterns, fashion patterns, business patterns, recreation patterns – whenever these conflict with a likeness to our Lord. Let us rejoice that we may be like Him, disdaining every compromising suggestion of conformity to a passing and sinful age.

Did it seem "peculiar" for the ancient Jew to refuse to eat "unclean meats"? Well, he chose to eat "clean meats" to please his God. And if one's heart is set only on pleasing the Lord, the Christian will gladly count all things but loss that he may win Christ.

The Marks of Jesus

(Galatians 6:17)

by George E. Failing

PAUL WAS a marked man.

Often we think of the marks of Jesus as being spiritual characteristics. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is evidence indeed of the presence of Jesus. Changed attitudes and loyalties are obvious testimony that we belong to Jesus.

But these marks (Greek, *stigmata*) of which Paul writes were in his body. They were physical markings. The marks were placed there by angry and frustrated men. But those marks were conspicuous evidence that Paul belonged to Jesus.

It was the custom among some oriental people to place the brand or tattoo of the master or commander upon the body of a slave or soldier. It was the mark of possession. Paul here testifies that on

his body were to be seen the clear traces of his imprisonment, stonings and scourgings. Because he suffered them for Jesus' sake, these marked him as being Christ's approved servant and soldier.

Infuriated men never knew, when they marred Paul's body, that they were placing upon him marks that would eloquently testify of Paul's faithfulness to Jesus Christ his Lord.

Paul's discipleship exposed him to conflict. Conflict, in turn, left its marks on him. Paul took a solemn pride in those scars of battle. They testified that he had fought battles to their end – to victory – and had not retreated from the perils of warfare.

In Paul's day there were some disciples who tried to avoid being marked. Because they did not take open sides with Jesus, they bore the respectable title of neutrals. Among Jews they adapted themselves to Jewish customs and practices to gain favor with the Jews. Among Gentiles they avoided anything distinctly Jewish. They were out to gain human acceptance – and they did, but they did not obtain solid commitments to Jesus Christ.

Christian discipleship is a rugged life. It is meant to be a life that demonstrates loyalty to Christ. Such unafraid attachment to Jesus Christ angers men of this world and causes them to fight back and inflict "marks."

Men admire the lushness and softness of our economic and "religious" prosperity. But no one is going to die to maintain it. Most Americans recoil from the marks of rugged commitments to honor, integrity and self-reliance. Along come Communists who do not out-promise us but who say, "The world belongs to people that are willing to be marked. We bear the marks; therefore the world belongs to us." They are converting the world.

The gospel of Christ wins converts only when proclaimed by those who bear the marks of Jesus.

Religion – Pretense or Reality

by Oliver G. Wilson

IN THE Sermon on the Mount the Master distinguishes between the religion of pretense and the religion of reality. The pictures are placed side by side so that we may readily evaluate our spiritual state.

The Master gives five points of agreement between the false and

the true; both give, both pray, both fast, both are evangelistic, and both are rewarded.

On these points alone, then, one cannot draw any proper conclusion as to the genuineness of profession. The search must be more minute and deeper. What then are the marks of the religion of pretense – or the hypocrite?

“To be seen of men” is one of the unerring marks. Do I give more generously when the amount is to be publicized? Do I pray more eloquently and longer when I have an audience than when in the secret place?

Remember, the Pharisees were great prayer makers. Often they prayed on the street nine times a day. However, their prayers were repetitious and filled with personal praise.

The religion of pretense is easy on self but hard on others: “They bind heavy burdens on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matt. 23:4). They demand of others separation and sacrifice but they themselves live indulgently.

The religion of pretense loves the parade: “They increase the size of their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their robes; they love the seats of honor at dinners and front places in the synagogues” (Matt. 23:5-6, Phillips).

Since this is the description of the religion of pretense given by the Master himself, it would follow that the religion of reality would be the opposite. Since most of the conditions described here are heart conditions, one needs to examine his inner life at each point.

The religion of pretense dotes on the greatness of the prophets, the excellence of former times, while neglecting the primary principles of genuine religion – justice, mercy, and faith.

The religion of pretense is the religion of conformity to outward show, while the religion of reality is concerned with inward purity.

The religion of pretense is concerned with the exaltation of self, while the religion of reality is consumed with the desire to exalt Christ.

The religion of pretense is fearfully denounced by the Christ – “You fools and blind men.” “You shut off the kingdom of heaven.” “You are like whitewashed tombs.” “You brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?”

It is of no small concern that each person, in the light of God’s Word, make sure that his religion is real.

THE CHRISTIAN AND OTHERS

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

God's Son, or My Brother

by George E. Failing

EACH ONE of God's sons is my brother, whatever his race or denomination.

One of the strangest errors of many Christians is the belief that one can be a son of God without, at the same time, being a brother to all the sons of God. This error accounts for the behavior of some Christians who believe they are truly sons of God, yet refuse to accept and fellowship others who have also trusted in Christ. Paul's express admonition is: "Welcome a man whose faith is weak, but not with the idea of arguing over his scruples" (Rom. 14:1, Phillips). A lot of us need to be saved from argument!

What a transformed church we would have if believers in Christ manifested brotherly kindness toward all other believers! Of itself this would not create one denomination but it would prevent carnal divisions and schisms in the body of Christ. What a testimony this would be to the unsaved! And is not this the unity for which Christ prays?

There is one other level of brotherhood. Besides the level of believer with believer there is the level of man with man. True brotherhood here would transform our world, that is, the kind of brotherhood exemplified by the Good Samaritan (whose faith was imperfect but whose kindness was unmistakably real).

The parable of the prodigal son should rather be called the parable of two sons. These two sons were brothers, but one was profligate, the other was decent. One stayed at home, the other wandered. But neither one had the right attitude toward the other. And the decent brother had the worse attitude. He bitterly begrudged the celebration of the prodigal's return and in speaking to his father referred to his brother as "your son" (not "my brother").

When the forgiving father justified the glad welcome for his prodigal son, he reminded the older son that the prodigal is "your brother."

The lesson? Sin drives men from oneness in God. Some sons become profligate and openly irreligious; others remain decent and professedly pious. These two classes are brothers, but they act like enemies, which they are. When the profligate returns home and is forgiven, he can receive his brother, but how difficult it is for the self-righteous brother to welcome the profligate!

Little wonder that Jesus preached to the poor and disenfranchised, that He ate with publicans and sinners. Those whose hearts can break are much closer to the kingdom of God than those whose hearts are stone. Profligates are easier to redeem than Pharisees.

Here is a gospel for the church and a gospel for the world. We can choose either fraternity or fratricide.

Adorn the Gospel

by Armor D. Peisker

"FOLKS, we'll be stopping here for 20 minutes," the driver said as he turned to his passengers before opening the door of his bus at its scheduled midday stop.

Then he continued, "The bus company makes it a strict policy never to recommend an eating place by name, but if anybody wants me while we're here, I'll be eating a wonderful T-bone steak with french fries at Tony's first-class, spotlessly clean diner directly across the street."

Of course, most of the people followed him to Tony's. His indirect approach was more effective than direct advertising might have been.

This is true in every phase of life.

To influence others for Christ, one need not always talk about religion. To be sure, speaking a word at times is needful and the part of wisdom. But much more than talk is needed. Christ came not simply to talk about a beautiful light, but to be that light: not simply to speculate about righteousness and holiness but to be righteous and holy. And the same should be true of His followers.

The man who reveals Christ by the way he pays his bills, keeps his house and yard, and a thousand other details of life — will have

more influence than the man who talks about his religion but neglects these practical aspects of daily living.

In fact, any direct approach is more than likely to come short if one does not exemplify true Christianity in these daily matters generally not directly associated with religion. That at least is part of what the Apostle Paul meant when he admonished his friend Titus to "be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior in all respects" (Titus 2:10, Moffatt).

The "Revived Version"

by Paul W. Thomas

"I AM A translator," said a young English miner to a friend whom he had invited to attend a local Bible Society meeting.

"You a translator!" came the surprised reply. "What language do you know?"

Said the miner, "I know the English Bible and the language of daily life, and I am busy every day translating the New Testament into my daily life."

"And this truly modern translation," said the brother who related the incident, "is the best of them all. It is the 'Revived Version,' the version that is lived again."

Truly the religion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is to be practical if it is what God intended. The Apostle Paul wrote to Titus, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (2:11-12). Here we have inner rightness, an outward godliness, and perfect devotion toward God.

Nothing less than a work of divine grace in the heart will enable us to live such a life "in this present world." Translating the New Testament into everyday living calls for the power of God to set us straight before the Lord and keep us going in the right direction. To attempt to live the life of a Bible Christian without divine grace is an intolerable undertaking, but what is impossible with man is possible with God.

"As your days, so shall your strength be" was God's word to the children of Israel (Deut. 33:25). It is His word to each of us.

One day at a time God will go with us, giving us grace for every step of the way.

"You are manifestly an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart" (II Cor. 3:3).

Jesus Could Not Be Hid

(Mark 7:24)

by George E. Failing

JESUS COULD not be hid; we cannot be found.

In the days of His incarnation, many could not find Jesus because they would not seek Him. Though the Gospels abound in stories of people who sought and found Jesus, I am amazed that every sinner and sick person in Palestine did not seek Him out. But most of them did not; only a few did.

As Jesus entered Jericho, only one blind man (there may have been a score or more of them) asked to be healed. In Jericho only one man really wanted to see Jesus so he could be saved. His name, Zaccheus, is preserved forever. No one knows the names of the hundreds of proud citizens of Jericho who merely caught a glimpse of Jesus to satisfy their curiosity.

Jesus constantly made himself available. The woman with an issue of blood found Him. The unnamed "woman which was a sinner" (Luke 7:37) found her way to Simon's house and to Jesus' forgiveness. We don't read of a single person who tried to find Jesus and failed in the attempt. In fact, Jesus went out of His way – "He must needs go through Samaria" – to help the woman with a shameful past and a hopeless future. The Syrophoenician woman found Him when her daughter needed help.

If you have ever traveled in the woods, you know about two places game always frequent – the stream of water and the salt lick. Wild life – and human life – requires both.

If a person becomes as a spring of water or as a seasoner, he will be sought out. No one bothers to seek out an empty-hearted or an empty-headed person. He has nothing to give. Nor do people seek out those joyless and despondent people who have no gladness today and see no hope in tomorrow. But people always congregate around those with joy and hope and love.

Today many are craving those blessings to be found only in Christ. If they find us, could we help them to find Him?

ARE YOU THIRSTY?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Are You Thirsty?

by George E. Failing

JUST AS my lungs need air, just as my body requires water, so my soul demands God. There is no substitute for air, water – or God.

David put it plainly, "My soul thirsteth for God." His body did not. The body has its own cravings; many of these are essential. Some of them demand fulfillment if the body is to survive. Starving these demands means death.

The soul has its own cravings. Some of them are not primarily related to God. For example, aesthetic desires are longings for learning, for the beautiful and lovely, for music. All men have some of these aesthetic longings, but with some they are so strong that to deny them fulfillment brings a kind of death.

But some of the longings of the soul are related solely to God. In fact, they center in God so directly and so personally that nothing other than God can satisfy them. Even religious teachings and church sacraments and pious fellowship are not adequate substitutes. Just as he offered to Jesus in His temptations, so the devil offers us (1) the gluttonous satisfaction of physical appetites, (2) the fulfillment of desires for social acceptance and prestige, and (3) the realization of desires for power and dominion. But if a man could – and perhaps some have approached it – revel in the quenching of all these human thirsts, he would still have to confess, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Life, even in the midst of plenty, would be seized with a gnawing emptiness.

Men of the world think they are realistic when they claim that humans need money, health, security, freedom, acceptance. And judged by studies that rule out the "third dimension" of life – man's

relation to and desire for God – they are right. These rights or privileges are the best that men can offer. They are the gospel of our day, and even some religious people are equating these five needs with the gospel of Christ.

But a man may have all these – and millions in America do – and still be starving to death. Men cannot live by bread alone, and no political philosopher or campaigner can change that fact.

God has set eternity in our hearts (Ecc. 3:11, RV), and those things “under the sun” can never slake our soul’s thirst. One great reason for reading the Bible is to sharpen this thirst for God and spiritual things. One of the chief ministries of the Holy Spirit is to beget in our hearts a thirst for God.

Blessed is the man who admits he has a soul. Blessed is he who admits that his soul is thirsty. Blessed is he who follows that thirst to its only Source of true fulfillment. “If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.” “Blessed are they that . . . thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

Can you testify with me, “I have found Him whom my soul loves”? Are you satisfied in God? You may be.

Come Just As You Are

by Oliver G. Wilson

A TOURIST’S handbook carried advertisements of hotels and motels. After describing the advantages of the particular hotel or motel, in easy readable type were the words: “Come in just as you are.” That’s the gospel message.

If the wear and tear of daily living tends to get you down; if everybody, including yourself, gets on your nerves; if you are just plain bored and don’t know what to do about it, the invitation is, “Come as you are.”

To those who are bowed down under the weight of a great guilt, tormented by an accusing conscience and shunned by those who maintain their own self-righteousness, “Come to Jesus as you are.”

To those who are frustrated, from whom hope has fled, and who feel that life is a farce, the invitation is “Come as you are.”

This is an aspirin age – a day of being half alive. We act as if “What we don’t feel, won’t hurt us; what we don’t like, put off

until tomorrow." Then tomorrow we sigh for the help of the "Lone Ranger" or "Super Man." The farther we go down that road the more frustrations we meet.

Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. The invitation is given to every weary individual. In every conceivable form of assurance God has called sinners to partake of His salvation. Yet some poor, sin-bound, mind-darkened sinner goes on in despair. The Spirit of God whispers to the depths of every heart, "Come." The church, in all her divinely appointed ordinances, cries, "Come." Every believer in the highways and hedges is authorized to say, "Come."

You are invited. Come in just as you are. By delaying you do not ready yourself. By your self-efforts you only sink deeper into the mire of sin and shame.

Come penitently, come believingly, and accept this invitation from the heart of Infinite Love to come to the storehouse of His exhaustless wealth. Your guilt will be removed; your hope will be restored; new life will course through your soul. Come just as you are, and come now.

Rivers Shall Flow!

(John 7:37-39)

by George E. Failing

WHEREVER THERE is life, fertility, and productiveness, there are rivers.

In northwestern Africa only a few oases appear in an area of thousands of square miles. We call it the Sahara (dry) desert. In eastern California there is a large tract of land where temperatures soar as high as 125 degrees. We call that depressed area Death Valley.

Neither the Sahara nor Death Valley are hopelessly unproductive. But until rivers flow through them, they will remain unfruitful and uninhabited.

At one time rivers of life flowed through man's nature. Before he sinned Adam had open communion with God. His life was pleasing to God and brought forth "fruit unto holiness." Then sin entered and man's soul became a desert and his life became fruitless.

The one true fact about every sinner is that he is perishing of thirst. He still has capacity for God, just as the prodigal retained

hunger for food in that far country. But the prodigal was perishing with hunger.

The sinner tries to satisfy that craving for God, but all his efforts are doomed to disappointment. The poet sang the truth:

*All my life long I had panted for a draught from some cool spring,
That I hoped would quench the burning of the thirst I felt within.*

Jesus is the answer. Never did He utter a more hopeful promise than this: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." Perishing soul, drink all you need. There's an exhaustless supply. Your sins will be forgiven, your record cleared, and your soul regenerated.

God waits to do more than pour water into a life. He wants to start rivers flowing through the life. Over 1900 years have passed since the Jerusalem Pentecost, but many have not yet heard of the outflowing life. Yet Jesus promised it: "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water."

It requires eager and exact faith – "He that believes on me" for this outflowing blessing! The supply is as sure as Jesus' promise and as sure as the Spirit's initial fulfillment at Pentecost. Do you believe this?

My Father's House

by George E. Failing

I HAVE NO memories of the house in which I was born. We moved out before I was three.

But of our next house I have many memories. It was a two-and-one-half-story farmhouse, situated on a fertile 40-acre farm and facing an unpaved country road, a road incredibly muddy during the spring thaw.

The house had an old-fashioned parlor which we seldom used, a living room we used sometimes, and adjoining kitchen and dining rooms where we constantly lived. We all had ample bedrooms upstairs, very poorly furnished by today's standards.

Besides my bedroom I remember two other places most clearly – the dining room where we ate and had family prayers twice a day (Father always presided) and the attic where Mother prayed. The attic was her prayer closet where she talked earnestly with God,

and all of us believed that God talked with her there.

I am not sure that the house of my earliest memories is still standing. A large airforce base adjoins it – or perhaps has engulfed it now.

But there is a place I can call “my Father’s house.” Jesus called it just that, and because He makes His home there, He has assured me that His Father’s home is also my home.

Jesus did not hesitate to use the personal pronoun “my.” Neither will I. Though I had nothing to do with the house – heaven – or its furnishings, it is mine. Mine in the same sense that the old farmhouse was. I did not own it or furnish it, but my father did and I belonged to my father. So his home was mine. He never begrudged me access to its rooms, its protection, its comfort. Neither does my Heavenly Father. Heaven is my home, too.

Home has little meaning without a father. Heaven has God. Without God heaven would not be home. I want to go to heaven because my Father lives there, His Son, and all His children.

But heaven is not just a place. It is a house we can call “home.” It is a place to live in, a place of love and safety and splendor.

John speaks of the New Jerusalem as a city of transcendent beauty. It is a city of homes, homes where fear, pain, death, sickness, evil, sorrow can never come.

I am only a pilgrim now, on my way to “my Father’s house.” Will you join me on the journey?