

THE PREACHER'S VIEWPOINT

By

Edsel Burlison

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INTRODUCTION

One volume of Bro. Edsel Burleson's articles was recently published here in India and we are delighted now to be able to present a second volume. These writings originally appeared in a church bulletin which Bro. Burleson edits. They have also been printed in other papers in the United States.

You will note that Bro. Burleson writes on a very practical level, dealing with problems and needs of the day. We think you will enjoy what he has to say and will find the book as a whole to be very useful and helpful.

Bro. Burleson serves as the preacher for the Palisades Church of Christ in Birmingham, AL U.S.A., and we thank him for sharing his writings with us here in India.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi 110049
Oct. 1, 1992

Note: In July Bro. Burleson suffered a heart attack and died. We mourn his passing.

J.C.C.

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WHEN IS A CHRISTIAN A CHRISTIAN?

We determine what one is by what one does. We recognize one as a musician because he plays an instrument. We know one is an artist by the pictures he paints. We accept one as an athlete because he runs, or skis, or swims. But when is one a Christian? Because he calls himself one, or because he is actively involved in Christlike things? Paul urged the church at Corinth, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

One of the outstanding principles of all the New Testament is the expectation of the Lord that all his followers be involved in His work. James said, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (1:22). Once a farmer was hiring a new hand. He showed him the equipment that he was to use and how to operate it. He outlined the chores expected of him. They discussed salary, side benefits, and related items. Each detail was gone over several times until it was thoroughly understood by both. Finally, the new hand said, "Well, Sir, I understand all of that. Is there anything else that you want to tell me?" The farmer replied, "No, nothing else, 'cept just get to work'."

How very careful many folk are about details, making sure they thoroughly understand every instruction, only to fall so far short of getting the job done. We find it so easy to talk about Christianity. We even plan, we dream, we imagine. But the greatest need facing us is, "just get to work." Someone has said, "The prime difference in a live Church and a

dead church is EFFORT."

This story by an unknown author says it very well. Three turtles decided to have a cup of coffee. Just as they went into the cafe, rain started to fall; so the biggest turtle said to the smallest turtle, "Go home and get the umbrella."

So, the little one said, "I will if you don't drink my coffee." The other two promised that they would not. Two weeks latter the big turtle said to the other one, "Well, I guess he isn't coming back, so we might as well drink his coffee."

Just then a little voice called from outside the door, "If you do, I won't go."

Plans, tears, and resolves are good only if they motivate us to "get to work." "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Ephesians 5:14).

IT ISN'T ALWAYS WISE TO TELL THE TRUTH!

Certainly, one is never justified in giving false information about anything. But there are those occasions when it is wise not to say anything. The gift of speech is often perverted by "too much" talk. Solomon said, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19).

The customer settled himself and let the barber put the towel around him. Then he told the barber, "Before we start, I know the weather's awful. I don't care who wins the next big fight, and I don't bet on the horse races. I know I'm getting thin on top, but

don't mind. Now get on with it!"

"Well, sir, if you don't mind," said the barber, "I'll be able to concentrate better if you don't talk so much."

Even though we may not be saying any thing that is ugly or untrue, frequently, much of it is of little importance. Paul urged the Thessalonians to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business" (I Thessalonians 4:11). Somewhere along the way "much talk" will result in harm.

One should be careful to clearly state what he means lest some undesirable conclusions be reached. Once a census officer stopped at a certain house and, stating his mission, asked for the name of the householder.

The spinster replied: "Matilda Brown." Officer: "Age?"

Spinster: "Have the Misses Hill, next door, given you their ages?"

Officer: "No."

Officer: "That will do." Proceeding to fill in the form, he murmured: "Matilda Brown, as old as the hills."

Solomon declared; "Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles" (Proverbs 21:23).

Two youngsters had strayed away from their mother in a department store and were riding up and down the crowded elevators. Suddenly the boy noticed that his ice cream cone was dripping and wiped it against the back of a lady's mink coat.

"Be careful, Jimmy, watch yourself," whispered his sister. "You're getting fur all over your ice cream."

"It is better to remain silent and be thought a

fool, than to open the mouth and remove all doubt."

IS GOD SATISFIED WITH YOUR RELIGION?

Solomon said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). The person who is seeking "Self-satisfaction" in religion desperately needs to take a second look at what religion is all about. We are not serving ourselves and should not be trying to please ourselves, but with the Master should be saying, "he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). Paul said, "for even Christ pleased not himself" (Romans 15:3).

The North American Indian was satisfied with his worship of the "Great Spirit" which rejected both Christ and the God of the Bible. The majority are satisfied with a religion that rejects the Christ and worships in idolatry. The Jew is perfectly satisfied with a system of worship which allows no acceptance of the Christ. Paul recognized their lost condition and pointed out their satisfaction with their religion when he wrote, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have established their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-3).

Those who are satisfied with their religion are

saying they have reached the top of the spiritual ladder. They have gone as far as they need to go and there are no improvements that need to be made in their lives. How different from the attitude of the Apostle Paul! "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13,14).

Have you asked yourself, "Is God satisfied with my religion?" Religion that pleases God is not a "You go your way and I'll go mine" proposition. God must be pleased if our religion is to be of any benefit to us. One can be perfectly satisfied and completely lost at the same time.

A great educator once said, "Show me a man that is entirely satisfied with himself, and I will show you the sorriest man in the world." He was emphasizing complacency and indifference. How desperately this lesson is needed both in and out of the church.

WHY SHOULD I COMPLAIN?

Are you one of those people who just cannot feel good when you do feel good, because you are thinking how bad you will feel when you feel bad? When we have the faith to follow carefully every instruction the Lord has given, we will know that every cloud facing us will have a silver lining. Paul assured Christians: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). To the

Corinthians he said: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Most of us should be ashamed when we complain of our lots in life compared to many other folk. In July, 1970, there appeared in a Fort Worth, Texas, paper, this news item from UPI. "Troubles just seem to pile up for Mr. and Mrs. Frank Leck and their six children. Their oldest son has stabilized cancer of a leg. A 6-year old boy has heart trouble and a 3-year old daughter was badly burned by a heater recently. Leck is in danger of losing his \$119 week job because his company plans to lay off 14,000 employees before the first of the year. Mrs. Leck has a back injury and cannot work. To top it off, the family returned home Saturday night from arranging an uncle's funeral and found their home burned to the ground. They have no insurance." And we complain!

An unknown author put it this way, poetically:

"There's nothing whatever the matter with me,
I'm just as healthy as can be.
I have arthritis in both my knees,
And when I talk, I talk with a wheeze.
My pulse is weak, and my blood is thin,
But I'm very well for the shape I'm in.
I have arch supports for both my feet
Or I wouldn't be able to walk the street.
Sleep is denied me, night after night,
And every morning I look a sight;
My memory's failing, my head's in a spin

I'm practically living on aspirin.
My leg keeps aching clear down to my shin,
But I'm very well for the shape I'm in.
The moral is, as this talk we unfold,
That for you and me who are growing old,
It's better to say, "I'm fine!" with a grin
Than let anyone know the shape we're in."

May we always try to see a window as something
to let light shine through, rather than something that
gets dirty!"

IT IS NOT JUST A PART OF A PLAY

A tense drama was in progress in one of the great theatres of years ago and the audience was greatly involved in the plot. Midway through the second act, the stage manager rushed to a microphone and said, "Ladies and gentlemen, a fire has broken out back stage. Would you calmly and quickly leave the theatre."

From the rear of the audience a voice said loudly, "Ladies and gentlemen, keep your seats. It is just a part of the play."

Soon the stage manager was pleading again. "You must clear the building, the fire is spreading." Again the voice responded, "This is just a part of the plot, don't get excited." Everyone kept their places.

Moments later, the manager was crying frantically, "Please! please! The fire is out of control. You must go." But by that time, all the exits were aflame, and everyone perished in the fire.

Many people regard the preaching of the gospel as "just a part of the play." The efforts of concerned

Christians to persuade others to obey the Master are frequently considered a "part of a plot."

The great word in the Bible is TODAY. Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4.) The Hebrew Christians were told, "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts," and, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day: least any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:7,8,13.) Paul urged the Corinthians, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2.)

There is no more dangerous word in our language than "tomorrow." This is the best scheme Satan has for keeping people lost. As long as he can keep men thinking "it is just a part of the play," just wait until tomorrow, he knows he has everything going his way.

Satan knows he will never destroy man's faith in the Bible or man's belief in the love of God. He really doesn't care that one realizes he is lost and needs to obey the gospel, as long as he can keep one waiting until "tomorrow."

Why don't YOU become a Christian today? This warning is not a part of a plot. "Behold, NOW is the day of salvation."

TO KNOW, AND FAIL TO ACT - HOW SAD!

James warned, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James

4:17) The Scriptures abound in such warnings designed to encourage us to "be ready" when the Lord comes. The tender pleas from the lips of the Master should melt even the hardest heart to bring about complete submission to His will. Yet, with one voice multitudes are saying, "Go thy way for this time."

Several years ago, in Gospel Digest, there appeared a story about Moses E. Lard, a great gospel preacher of more than a generation ago. He had a very dear friend who was a successful lawyer and withal an excellent man in every way in the estimation of the world, but he was not a Christian. He took sick, and it soon became evident both to him and his friends that he would die in a little while. He sent for his close friend, brother Lard, who was glad to respond and render the dying man any assistance he might be able to confer upon him. He made the visit, and after usual salutations were exchanged, the sick man said:

"Mr. Lard, I would not have you think that I have sent for you with any idea that you can do me any good in my dying hour, for such is not the case. I know that when I die, I will go to perdition and there is no help for me."

Brother Lard asked, "Why do you think there isn't any hope?"

"Hope, Mr. Lard, talk not to me about hope. For twenty-five years I have understood the gospel and my duty under it as well as you do and during this time I have refused to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. I have lived a life of disobedience and am dying in my sins, and where Christ is I cannot go. I am lost--eternally lost. I sent for you to preach my funeral, and I don't want any sentimentalism about it. I want you

to tell my friends and neighbors that while you are preaching my funeral, I am in hades and suffering, and inform them that I requested you to use my case to warn others against the life of disobedience that I have lived, lest they die without hope, as I am dying, and go to hell, as I am going to hell."

He was not unlike the rich man who pleaded that Lazarus be sent "to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:27,28). How sad that warnings, known to be true, go unheeded! WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH JESUS? ? ?

COULD BIBLE STUDY BE LIKE SAFE-CRACKING?

Woodrow Wilson once said: "A man has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of this, a knowledge of the Bible."

"When you have read the Bible, you will know that it is the Word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own heart, your own happiness, and your own duty."

Many people have decided the Bible is dry on the inside because they have allowed it to get dusty on the outside. Such a conclusion can only be reached by one who has never diligently searched its contents. The Apostle Peter said: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,

having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:3,4).

A recipe is of no help to an aspiring young cook unless it is followed. The young father will have far less difficulty assembling the new tricycle if some careful consideration is given to the instruction sheet. Likewise, doing the will of God can only result by carefully applying his "instruction sheet". It is the "doer of the work" that will be rewarded. (James 1:25).

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

People would be far more willing to listen to God's Word if our actions more often demonstrated our having listened.

David Allan Hubbard in "The Christian" gave an account of a Bible college president who said that Bible study was like "safe-cracking" and that "a good safe-cracker gets the combination from the safe itself, listening carefully to the tumblers. He doesn't impose his own combination. It is dangerous to use the Bible for our own purpose without searching for the Bible's purpose."

"Study the Bible to be wise: believe it to be safe; practice it to be holy."

WE NEED TO GET OUR "WANT TO" FIXED

One of the greatest needs of many in the church is to be motivated by desire instead of responding to an unpleasant, burdensome task. When one had rather be some other place, or doing some other thing, but he "has to" worship God, or fulfil his responsibility as a Christian, he may as well not.

Inspiration has given us a practical, unailing test by which we can determine if we are properly motivated. Jesus said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:" "If a man love me, he will keep my words." (John 14:15, 21, 23). John further added, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (I John 5:3).

It is clearly established that one who loves God will anxiously do what he says. One may keep some forms without love for God, but one cannot love God and fail to carefully follow his instructions.

Consider this example of "duty". In a hospital room is a small child, critically ill. On one side of the bed stands a person carefully observing every move, alert to any sign of change, yet, there out of assignment, awaiting the shift change when she will be replaced. On the other side of the bed stands a person, carefully watching every breath, never giving any thought as to time of day, she is there because she is the mother. Love causes us to act because we "want to" and not because we "have to".

One of the most difficult tasks in the work of the church is trying to keep people faithful in attendance.

Why do we have to plead, coax, even tantalize? Because we are trying to get people to do things they don't want to do. When one says, "I just must get started to Bible School regularly," it is obviously being considered a task they must perform. It would be naturally and gladly done if one loved God. To love God is to want to please, honor, and obey him and to do all one can to that end. "To love God is to do his will when one feels like it and when one doesn't feel like it when it is convenient and when it is not, when it is what one wants to do and when it isn't; when it is costly and when it isn't."

Holland said, "The most beautiful sight this earth affords is a man or woman so filled with love that duty is only a name, and its performance the natural outflow and expression of the love which has become the central principle of their life." **WE NEVER DO OUR DUTY TO GOD UNTIL WE CEASE DOING IT AS A DUTY!** One of the greatest needs of our lives is to get our "want to" fixed!

A PATIENT SAVIOUR HAS PATIENT DISCIPLES

Someone has said: "Patience is the guardian of faith, the preserver of peace, the cherisher of love, the teacher of humility. Patience governs the flesh, strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper; stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride, bridles the tongue, restrains the hand, tramples upon temptations, endures persecutions, consummates martyrdom. Patience produces unity in the church, loyalty in the state, harmony in families and societies; . . . she

teaches us to forgive those who have injured us, and to be the first to ask forgiveness of those whom we have injured."

One of the greatest needs of the day is for Christians to learn to be longsuffering with one another. Paul often emphasized the need for patience in our relationships. He told the Corinthians to evidence patience as ministers of God (I Corinthians 6:4). He told Timothy one of the qualifications of an elder was patience (I Timothy 3:3). Peter stressed patience as one of the Christian graces (2 Peter 1:6).

Too many of us would ask the Lord for patience and tell him we want it right now. Patience is the ability to remain silent and hungry, while everybody else in the restaurant gets served. Patience has been compared to a mosquito sitting on the bed of an anemic person who is waiting for a blood transfusion.

A little girl had gone fishing with her father and after several hours threw down her pole and cried, "I quit!"

"What's the matter?" her father asked.

"Nothing," said the child, "except I can't seem to get waited on."

The Psalmist worded it this way: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (27:14). Because of our impatience every little accident becomes a catastrophe. But patience never allows the disappointments of life to become an excuse to shirk our responsibility.

"Stick-to-it-tiveness" is a most needed virtue. "Not be weary in well doing" will remove so many of our problems. A salesman called on a big business man at the close of a rush day. When he was admitted

the magnate said, "You ought to feel honored. During the day I have refused to see eleven men."

"I know," said the salesman. "I'm all of them."

Rutherford said: "Show yourself a Christian by suffering without murmuring. In patience possess your soul--they lose nothing who gain Christ." C.H. Spurgeon said: "The disciples of a patient Saviour should be patient themselves."

ALWAYS TRY TO KEEP THE STORY STRAIGHT

Several years ago there appeared in the columns of a small town newspaper an instance of slander of astounding proportions. As is often the case, this slander was leveled against a preacher. It was said that his wife was attending a certain meeting, that he went there in a rage, that he by violence dragged her from the hall, and that he by force compelled her to go home with him. He allowed the tale to circulate for a few days then riddled it in the following manner:

"In the first place, I never attempted to influence my wife in her views nor her choice of a meeting.

"In the second place, my wife did not attend the meeting in question.

"In the third place, I did not go to the meeting.

"In the fourth place, I never had a wife."

One reason gossip is so destructive is the rate of speed with which it can travel. Consider this: if two people told two others a bit of gossip, and these two, in turn, 15 minutes later, told two other different people each, and these in 15 minutes told two other people each, and this procedure continued each 5

minutes, in 7 hours and 45 minutes every man, woman, boy and girl in the whole world would know about it.

God through Moses warned Israel, "Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people" (Leviticus 19:16). Solomon declared: "He who goes about as a tale-bearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing hidden" (Proverbs 11:13). He also pointed out that God hates one who sows discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16) and added: "A perverse man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends" (Proverbs 16:28).

Someone related the following account which well demonstrates the "reliability" of many of the "news" items which come our way. "Absolute knowledge have I none . . . But my aunt's washerwoman's sister's son . . . Heard a policeman on his beat . . . Say to a laborer on the street . . . That he had a letter just last week . . . A letter which he did not seek . . . From a Chinese merchant in Timbuktu . . . Who said that his brother in Cuba knew . . . Of an Indian chief in a Texas town . . . Who got the dope from a circus clown . . . That a man in Klondike had it straight . . . From a guy in a South American state . . . That a wild man in Borneo . . . was told by a woman who claimed to know . . . Of a well-known swell society rake . . . Whose mother-in-law will undertake . . . To prove that her husband's sister's niece . . . Has stated plain in a printed piece . . . That she has a son who started this rhyme . . . And now he's crazy half the time!"

Superior people usually talk about ideas; average people will talk about things; little people too often talk about each other.

“YOU JUST CAN'T MIX BUSINESS AND RELIGION”

Occasionally one will say, “You just cannot mix business and religion.” This philosophy is completely contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. In fact, if one's business conflicts with his efforts to serve the Lord he needs to get into some other business immediately. One who is a Christian is a better business man, a better employer, a better employee.

The business principles of industry, honesty, and service are emphasized again and again in the Bible. Solomon said, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Paul put it this way: “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.” (I Thessalonians 4:11,12). He urged the Colossians: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” (3:22,23).

A very different attitude is frequently seen in one's approach to business in contrast to his approach to religion. Someone told of a Scotchman who often remarked that “on the whole” he was a pretty good man. “I've cheated a little, and sometimes get mad and swear, but then I'm pretty honest. I work on Sunday often but then I give a good deal to the poor, I never get drunk, and on the whole, I have a pretty high batting average with the Lord.”

One summer, the Scotchman hired a man to

build a fence and when it was complete he asked if all had been done according to instructions.

The hired man replied, "Well, its built well, but I can't say its perfect, just an average fence. If some parts are weak, others are strong. A gap was left here and there, but I made up for that by doubling the wire in other places. On the whole its a pretty good fence." Then the Scotchman said: "Don't you know that a fence to hold cattle, must be good in all parts?"

"Well, I used to think so," replied the hired man, "but you talk so much about 'averaging' things up with the Lord, I thought I might try that with the cattle."

When one accepts and applies the principles of truth, that person becomes a better business man, a better employer, a better employee. The world does not need a definition of religion nearly as much as it needs a demonstration. John Howe said, "A religion that never suffices to govern a man will never suffice to save him. That which does not distinguish him from a sinful world will never distinguish him from a perishing world."

USE IT OR LOSE IT

Foolish is the man who fails to use what he has while he has it. Every individual is either going forward or backward, upward or downward. The gifts and powers with which we have been intrusted increase when properly used or decay from disuse. Anything, when used with caution and care, will last far longer than when not used at all. Most of us have seen houses become vacant and remaining that way

for several months, require much time and money to get them "livable" again.

Solomon said a field left uncultivated will soon lose its power to reproduce. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of under standing; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." (Proverbs 24:30,31.) Strength, unused, becomes weakness.

One of the greatest hindrances to our using our abilities is the conclusion that so many others can do a better job. Several years ago, A.O. Ramey told the following story: "A man worshipped in a congregation where I once preached who was raised an illiterate orphan. Because of poverty and neglect he learned basic reading only after he married a fine woman who taught him. Raised in the backwoods by ignorant kin, his speech was full of colloquialisms and strange expressions. People usually laughed at him when he spoke. Yet, without hesitation or embarrassment he would lead a public prayer whenever called upon. He would pray, 'Lord God, we air shore obliged to yuh. You been a sight better to us than we had a 'cummin'.' He prayed so earnestly, so adoringly, and so believ-ingly, that few eyes in the audience would be dry when he finished.

"He said to me, 'What iff'n men DO laftf God ain't laffin. He listens to yore heart, not yore mouth, and my heart talks to him as plain as anybody's. 'Cause we ain't experts in what is to be done, many won't even try'."

God doesn't expect more of us than we can accomplish but he does expect us to DO with what we have. Matthew 25:14-30. When does one begin where

you are and go from there. Time magazine once carried an article about a Japanese doctor who lived through the terrible bombing of Hiroshima. When the blast occurred, Dr. Fumio Shizeto was waiting for a streetcar only one mile away, but was sheltered by the corner of a reinforced concrete building. Within seconds after the explosion his ears were filled with the screams of helpless victims all around him. Not knowing for sure what had happened, he stood there for a moment-one bewildered doctor-wondering how he could handle this "mountain" of patients. Then, still somewhat stunned, Shizeto knelt, opened his black bag, and began treating the person lying at his feet.

"The saddest words of tongue or pen are the words: It might have been!"

"CONVERTED" OR "CONVINCED"?

Too frequently, our patience wears thin when someone we are trying to teach just "cannot" understand the particular point we are trying to make. There is a tendency to assume that the student has progressed to a certain position when, in fact, some "groundwork" still needs to be done. Paul pointed out to the Jewish Christians that there are times when the teaching should go beyond fundamentals. "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgement." (Hebrews 6:1,2).

These instructions tell us also that fundamentals are in order when the student doesn't understand. Never be critical of one who asks, what seems to be, a ridiculous question. To them, it may be a most reasonable one.

An old lady approached the counter of an airline and asked the clerk for a schedule for a flight from a town in Arkansas to Oshkosh, Wisconsin. With care he worked out a series of connecting flights and wrote it all down for the customer.

In about an hour the same old lady returned and asked for the same information.

"But I gave that all to you awhile ago," he said.

"I know," she replied, "but this is for my sister: She wants to go, too."

One may be very advanced in years and still have little or no concept of Bible teaching. May we try to begin where they are and not where we are in teaching them. This necessitates using terms they understand. Even then, extreme care and patience are necessary because we are moulding minds. It is far better that one be converted and not just convinced, and that can take much time.

When James A. Garfield was president of Hiram College, a man brought for entrance as a student his son, for whom he wished a shorter course than the regular.

"The boy can never take all that in," said the father. "He wants to get through quicker. Can you arrange it for him?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Garfield. "He can take a short course; it all depends on what you want to make of him. When God wants to make an oak He takes a hundred years, but he takes only two months to make

a squash.”

Take time to thoroughly prepare the soil that the seed may bring forth plentifully.

KILL THE SPIDER

In one church a certain deacon was frequently called upon to pray at the mid-week service and he always concluded his prayer the same way: “And now, Lord, clean out all the cobwebs in our lives.” He was obviously referring to those little unsightly words and deeds and thoughts that he had let accumulate all week. It got to be too much for one of the brethren who had heard him say that prayer so often. So on Wednesday night, just after hearing those words again, he jumped to his feet and shouted: “Don't do it, Lord! Kill the spider!”

Almost all of us would be far more effective in our fight against sin if we spent more time “killing spiders”. Then, the cobwebs would take care of themselves.

Several years ago, a study at the University of Minnesota resulted in the release of some revealing information useful to every housewife: “Detergents not rinsed out of clothes will build up in the fabric, giving it a harsh feeling, making it irritating to the skin, and turning it yellow when dried in an automatic dryer.”

Housewives were being warned to be careful to see that all residue be completely rinsed from garments to avoid any of the stated consequences.

This very vividly typifies the lives of so many folk with regard to sin. The problems and disappointments

are experienced without determining the cause. Actually, there has been a "build up" over a period of time. That is the way sin works. Almost never will one become a notorious sinner suddenly. Paul warned: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:12).

One should be so careful to thoroughly "rinse" (remove) the cause for the defilements of the flesh. Paul urged the Ephesian church that "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." (Ephesians 4:30, 31.)

There will never be success against any problem if all efforts to correct are directed toward "results" instead of the "causes". The next time you see that cobweb look real closely for the spider.

"LET MY STEPS LEAD HIM TO THEE!"

An atheist, crossing the Great Sahara in the company of a number of other travelers, became interested in watching one of the young guides who was a Christian. The traveler noticed that the young man paused to pray before every meal. And, every sundown when the company stopped to make camp, he watched the young man slip off by himself for a quiet period of prayer. One evening he could refrain no longer, so he asked the young guide, "How do you know there is a God?"

"How do I know there is a God?", repeated the young man. "How did I know a man and a camel

passed our tent last night in the darkness? Was it not by the print of their feet in the sand?" He pointed to the sun, whose last rays were fading over the lonely desert--"That footprint is not of man!"

The apostle Peter said: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps:" (1 Peter 2:21.)

"Church Woman" of February, 1971, contained these excellent thoughts: "A footprint indicates that a human being has left a mark as of now--and also tells the direction that person was going. The prints are a matter of recent record before tides or winds or other footprints blur and destroy."

"A footprint tells much about the person: size, style, sometime man or woman or child; but it does not tell the whole story. We cannot tell color or national origin; social, political, or religious label. And, no can make footprints for another."

The footprints you and I leave along the way will or will not point others in the right direction. The poet, in words entitled, "IN DADDY'S STEPS" said it this way:

I watched him playing 'round my door,
My neighbor's little boy of four,
I wondered why a child would choose.
To wear his dad's old worn-out shoes.

I saw him try with all his might
To make the laces snug and tight.
I smiled to see him walk and then He'd only step
right out again.

I heard him say, his voice so glad
"I want to be just like my Dad."
I hope his Dad his steps would choose
Safe for his son to wear his shoes.

-And then a shout and cry of joy,
A "Hello Dad," and a "Hi-yu, boy!"
They walked along immeasured stride
Each face aglow with love and pride.

"What have you done today, my lad?"
"I tried to wear your old shoes, Dad,
They're big, but when I am a man
I'll wear your shoes, I know I can."

They stopped and stood hand in hand,
He saw his son's tracks in the sand.
His word's--a prayer--came back to me,
"Lord, let my steps lead him to Thee!"

"HAPPINESS IS A HABIT"

Webster says "Happiness is a state of pleasurable content with one's conditions in life." The normal longing of every heart is to enjoy life, to really be happy. An eminent New York educator said, "Happiness is a habit - - - a by-product of right thinking and right living."

The Bible says, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding" (Proverbs 3:13). Paul's closing exhortation to the great church at Philippi concerned their thinking. He said, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,

whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Happiness truly is right living. In referring to the security and prosperity of Israel, the Psalmist said, "Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea happy is the people whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15).

"Happiness is that peculiar sensation one acquires when too busy to be miserable. Three essentials are: Something to do; something to love, and something for which is hope."

Someone has said that in order to be happy, one should "keep the heart free from hate and the mind free from worry. Live simply, expect little, give much, sing often, and pray always. Fill life with love, scatter sunshine, forget self, think of others. Do as we would like others to do to us, These are proven links in contentment's golden chain."

Frequently, the things which would enable us to be the happiest are all around us but we cannot "see the trees for the forest." An old farmer listed his property for sale. When the real estate agent had written up the advertisement, he read it to the farmer for his approval. After the reading was completed, the farmer thought for a moment and then said: "I don't believe I want to sell. That's the kind of place I've been looking for all my life."

"Happiness has many houses,
And dwells in many places;
It lives in many moments,
And shines in many faces.

"It laughs with little children,
Whose hearts are free from pride;
It seeks a sunny meadow
Or a quiet fireside.

"It haunts the house of service,
Knows the place of prayer,
Where broken hearts are mended.
Happiness is there.

"Happiness has many houses,
But mostly it will come
Where faith and love are living,
Where God can make his home."

WITH ONE DRINK, ONE IS ONE DRINK DRUNK

Thomas A. Edison once said, "I have better use for my brain than to poison it with alcohol. To put alcohol in the human brain is like putting sand in the bearing of an engine."

Our great nation—and the world, for that matter—is being gradually eaten away by the alcohol cancer. Abraham Lincoln once said, "The liquor traffic is a cancer in society eating out its vitals and threatening its destruction. It cannot be regulated, it must be eradicated, for all attempts to regulate it will prove futile."

Our nation's drinking population is now nearing the 100 million mark. This is a major part of the inner moral decay that is eating out the very heart of

America. Where once the Christian stood firmly against this great moral evil, now there are many professing Christianity who, by drinking, silence that voice.

Drinking is sometimes referred to as being "frowned on by the church" but it should concern us far more that it is condemned by God. Note these warnings from Solomon: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; not for princes strong drink; lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted" (Proverbs 31:4). Paul said, "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Romans 13:13). "But what about a drink now and then?" When one has had one drink, he is one drink drunk.

The first Indian to play baseball in the Major Leagues was Louis Sockalexis. Though he played only 3 seasons in the majors, he was so great a player as to become virtually a mythical figure. Graceful and fast as a racehorse, he ran a hundred yards under 10 seconds--before the turn of the century! When he played one season in Knox Country League in Maine, his feats were so heroic that one of the league managers was inspired to write stories for boys, using Louis as the model for a fictitious character he created named "Frank Merriwell." For decades, millions of boys were thrilled by these stories.

In 1897, Sockalexis went to the majors, becoming an outfielder for the Cleveland club, then called "The Spiders." But so overwhelming was his playing that

the team became known as the Cleveland Indians, the name by which they are known today.

Once, at a party, Sockalexis was persuaded by his friends to taste his first strong drink. That one drink sealed his fate. He couldn't stay away from drink, and before long he had become a hopeless drunkard. Three seasons and out! He drank himself out of baseball and into degradation, winding up a forsaken and shabby beggar.

Drifting back to his Indian reservation, he existed in despair until December 24, 1913, when he died at the early age of 42.

REPENTANCE HAS BOTH A CAUSE AND AN EFFECT

Someone has said, "Repentance is the making up of one's mind to cease doing evil and to do good, to stop serving Satan and to begin serving God, to do an about face, to stop going in the wrong direction and turn again and start going in the right direction."

Repentance is a change of mind as is shown by Jesus in the story of the son who told his father he would not go work in the vineyard but "afterward he repented and went" (Matthew 21:29). It is a change of mind toward good, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This change of mind toward God and good is followed by the leaving off of any sinful actions and replacing them with good. John the Baptist told his disciples to "bring forth fruit worthy of repentance." Repentance is being so sorry for sin you quit sinning.

Joe Barnett tells the story of little Tommy who

was praying, "If I should die before I wake - - - if I should die . . ." "Go on, Tommy," urged his mother. You know the rest of the prayer."

"I'll be back," he said, as he scrambled to his feet and ran into the next room. He soon was back and dropped to his knees and finished the prayer without a bobble.

Tucking little Tommy in bed, his mother issued a gentle rebuke for the interruption, insisting that he should always think about what he was saying when he prayed.

"Mom, I was thinking about what I was saying," said the boy defensively . . . "That is why I had to stop. You see, I stood all of Ted's wooden soldiers on their heads just to see how mad he'd be in the morning. If I should die before I Wake, I wouldn't want him to find them that way, so I had to go and fix them right away."

"You're right, dear," said a proud mother. Then she thought of herself, and so many other people, who should stop in the middle of their prayers and correct some wrong against another.

One cannot repent too soon because we never know when it may be too late.

HOW IS YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE?

Several years ago the editors of Pageant Magazine conducted a survey of more than 1,000 children in Bible classes of several churches in 17 states and came up with the following facts.

Only one out of 10 boys and girls knows the name of the man who sold his birthright for a mess of

pottage. Less than one-third could name the apostle to the Gentiles. About one-half could tell who delivered the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel. Only one-tenth could name the king who saw the handwriting on the wall. Only 26% could name the disciple who betrayed Christ. Only 68% knew where Jesus was born. Only 57% could tell on what day He arose from the grave. Out of 1,020 who were interviewed, only 557 said it is important to pray except in danger or emergency; 246 said that God loved them more than He did other races; 657 claimed that other religions than Christianity also contained the way of life.

An English teacher in a New England state, Thayer S. Warsaw, gave a special test to five classes of typical 11th and 12th graders to try to determine their Bible knowledge. He received such answers as: "Sodom and Gomorrah were lovers." "The gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luther and John." "Eve was created from an apple." "The stories by which Jesus taught were called parodies."

One of the greatest tragedies in religion today is a lack of knowledge of the truth. God warned Israel, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou has rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee" (Hosea 6:4). Jesus emphasized the need to "know the truth" when he promised that the truth would make us free. (John 8:32.) Paul's prayer for Israel was prompted by his realization that their actions were resulting from zeal and not knowledge. (Romans 10:1-3.) It isn't enough just to "do" unless our doing is based upon divine instruction.

Too many folk have just enough concept of Bible teaching to be totally confused. One preacher,

attempting to prove his ability as a Bible student, told the story of the Good Samaritan in these words:

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among thieves. And they beat him and they kicked him and left him on the roadside to die.

“And the queen of Sheba came by and gave him a hundred changes of raiment and a thousand talents of gold. And he jumped in her chariot and went skylarking off through the woods. And he ran under a big oak tree and there he hung. And the three wise men came by and they cut him down. And he fell on stony ground. And it rained for forty days and forty nights, and he went and hid himself in a cave. And the ravens came and fed him on locust and wild honey.

“And when it quit raining he came out and a man said to him, 'Come with me to supper.' And he said, 'I can't. I have married a wife and the seven foolish virgins have burnt up all the oil.'

“So he went out in the highways and byways and he found Daniel in the lion's den. And said to Daniel, 'Daniel, you put on your coat of many colors and let's go up to Jerusalem.'

“So Daniel did, and they did. And up in Jerusalem he saw Queen Jezebel sitting high in the window. And she laughed at him and made him mad. And he said, 'Throw her down,' and they threw her down seven times. Then she laugh at him again, and he said, 'Throw her down some more.' So they threw her down seventy times seven, and of the fragments they picked up twelve baskets full.”

HOW IS YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE?????

NOBODY LIKES TO BEG

A Christian once said, "One of the sweetest anticipations of heaven is the privilege of worshipping God every day." David's joy in worship is seen as he "was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). The worship of God meant more to Jesus than the whole world (Matthew 4:9, 10). The first recorded action of those converted on Pentecost (Acts 2) was their worship unto God.

It was approximately 30 years after the establishment of the church before the Holy Spirit found it necessary to warn disciples about forsaking the assemblies (Hebrews 10:25). By so doing they were flirting with apostasy. They were warned such was willful sin (verse 26), by which they would be devoured (verse 27). The Holy Spirit further warned that one so forsaking was treading under foot the Son of God (verse 29).

When we catch a glimpse of worship appreciation as characterized Jesus, David, and early Christians, it will not again be necessary to preach on attendance. Sunday night and Wednesday night will see the same faces as Sunday morning. We will "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 29:2).

It is most humiliating when one finds himself in circumstances which force him to ask help from others.

It is also very unpleasant to be in a situation which calls for continual pleading to persuade someone to do a task or perform a service which they should have readily undertaken.

Far too often, this is the task facing elders and preachers. They "beg" members to faithfully worship

God when one should weep at the thought of missing a worship opportunity. They "beg" people to work to save others, when all should be heavy hearted with a consciousness of lost souls. They "beg" people to daily involve themselves in serving those about them through which efforts they are serving God, only too often, to have deaf ears turned to their pleas.

Nobody likes to beg. But, if through begging we may be able to persuade some hearts to "draw nigh to God" and cease to just give lip service to him (Matthew 15:8), we shall continue to beg.

DO ABSENTEES NEED A BLESSING . . OR MERCY?

A preacher in Morgantown, North Carolina, tells of a big white dog who came often to Sunday service, studying the crowd as it poured out, obviously looking for someone whom he associated with the church. That day, he was still standing by the door when the very last automobile was about to leave the parking lot. You see, his owner, very active religiously, had died while the dog was at the animal hospital.

Ted Kell tells of a long-distance telephone call that came to the church building just before the Sunday evening service was to begin. The call was for a young Christian lady in the congregation. The one who knew her well, though miles away, called the church building at the hour of worship. Why? Because it was well known that she would be keeping her appointment with the Lord.

The Psalmist expressed his joy at the privilege of

worship when he said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psalm 122:1). Early Christians delighted at the opportunity. Of the Jerusalem church it is said, "all that believed were together" (Acts 2:44). When persecution was brought against them they "assembled together" for prayer (Acts 4:31). The church at Troas "came together" to break bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). At Corinth the whole church met together for teaching and edifying (1 Corinthians 14: 23,26). They were ever conscious of the promise of Jesus, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

One of the greatest needs of the day is cultivating a "wanting to" instead of "having to" assemble together. A pioneer preacher was called to administer last rites over the remains of a man who had always refused to enter a church building. As the pallbearers neared the door of the little building, the old preacher stood in the doorway and beckoned to them saying, "Gentlemen, I have never taken an undue advantage of any living person, and I am not going to begin by imposing on the dead. If this man were living he would not enter this building. Put him down right there, and let's respect him enough to finish his earthly pilgrimage as he lived it." The service was conducted from the door while the remains rested on the church lawn.

It is said that a feeble, elderly brother, who had put forth much effort to be present in the assembly, in prayer, petitioned God in this language: "O Lord, bless those who would like to be with us, but can't; and ain't." Perhaps more of us, when absent, should ask ourselves. "Do we need a blessing . . . or mercy?"

The following rhyme appeared in recent church bulletin:

"Poor old elders have lost their sheep. They don't know where to find them, Leave them alone, and they'll come home DRAGGING THEIR BOATS BEHIND THEM."

SO YOU ARE GETTING OLD

America is getting gray! Every 20 seconds another person reaches the age of 65. Everything that God has made or continues to make is getting older or will get older. No one really wants to get old, and yet more people want to live a long time and this poses a problem. It has been said that the longest period in a woman's life is the 10 years between the time she is 39 and 40.

The tendency to shrink from the thought of growing old is because unhappiness is a stigma attached to old age. However, many people reach the peak of their ability in that period we commonly call "old age". Emmanuel Kant, the philosopher, wrote his "Critique of Practical Reason" at the age of 74. Tintoretto, the Italian artist, painted "Paradise" on a canvas 36 by 75 feet when he was 72 years old. Thomas A. Edison, an inventive genius, made pioneering studies on the production of synthetic rubber at the age of 83. Paderwreski, at the age of 79, was still the master of the piano giving concerts to large audiences. Alfred Lord Tennyson published one of his most honored pieces of poetry, "Crossing the Bar" at the age of 83. Titian painted "The Battle of Lepanto" in his 98th year. At 78 Benjamin Franklin

went to France in his country's service and wrote his autobiography when past 80.

Solomon said: "The glory of young men is in their strength: and the beauty of old men is in the gray head" (Proverbs 20:29), and "The gray head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31).

Old age is glorious. In China, the first question a person asks the other on an official call is, "What is your glorious age?" If he replies apologetically that he is 23 or 28, the other generally comforts him by saying that he still has a glorious future, and that one day he may become old. Enthusiasm grows in proportion as one is able to report a higher age, and if he is anywhere over 50, the inquirer drops his voice in humility and respect. People actually look forward to the celebration of their fifty-first birthday.

Alex Rennie penned the following words which contain excellent advice for maturing gracefully:

How To Grow Old

If you want to be an old man long before your
time,
Never fool with poetry, never make a rhyme.
Never play with children, never skip the rope,
Never have a good time blowing bubble soap.
Never go a fishing, never pass the ball,
Never ramble in the woods in summer or in fall.
Never lift your eyes to God, keep 'em looking
down,
Never wear a pleasant simile, always wear a
frown.
Never take your time to eat, always over stuff,

Never have the sense to know when you've had enough.

"A great many people who are worried about adding years to their life should try adding life to their years." "Many folk could live twice as long, if they didn't spend the first half of their lives acquiring habits that shorten the other half."

TO DECEIVE OR BE DECEIVED

One of the saddest plights in which we find ourselves is to follow what seems to be such honest and reasonable assumptions, only to learn, sometimes too late, that we have been deceived. The Bible abounds in warnings about "deceiving" and "being deceived". Paul urged: "Let no man deceive you with vain words" (Eph. 5:6); "Let no man deceive you by any means" (I Thess. 2:3); "Let no man deceive himself" (I Cor. 3:18). James said that one could "deceive his own heart" (Jas. 1:26).

Someone compiled the following list of situations of deception as described in the scriptures: A man is deceived if he says he has no sin (1 Jn. 1:8). A man is deceived when he thinks himself to be something when he is nothing (Gal. 6:3). A man is deceived when he thinks himself to be wise with worldly wisdom (1 Cor. 3:18). A man is deceived when he seems to be religious but does not bridle his own tongue (Jas. 1:26). A man is deceived when he thinks that evil companions will not corrupt good morals (1 Cor. 15:33). A man is deceived when he thinks the un-

righteous will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9).

Circumstances do not necessarily always present the whole truth. Robert Willis tells a true story that happened several years ago. A lone man, riding a horse over a country road, suddenly came upon the form of a lifeless man. Moved by compassion, and anxious to help the rider, a Mr. Chandler, dismounted to see if he could give assistance. The body was still warm: he saw that the cruel deed had just been done. Stooping, he drew a long bladed knife from the still form. But at that very instant, two men came galloping up on their horses, confronting Mr. Chandler with the bloody knife in his hand.

Soon, Mr. Chandler was apprehended and brought to court. The two riders gave their testimony. It agreed in every point. They related how they had found the slain man with Mr. Chandler standing over the body. They saw him draw the knife from the body as it dripped blood upon the ground. The body was still warm and no other person was in sight when they arrived. Without hesitation, the court found Mr. Chandler guilty and passed a fearful sentence. All pleas of the innocent man went unheeded. Soon he died at the end of a rope. The community felt a sense of relief to be rid of such a fellow. They considered his punishment very just.

Years later, a missing fact came to light. The hand that drew the knife from the body was not the hand that had driven it into the body. Another, brooding over his cruel crime and the death of an innocent man, appeared and confessed the murder. Even though this brought relief to the conscience of the one making the confession, it could do the poor man no good who had died for a crime he did not commit. This

lone fact made the difference between justice and injustice, life and death.

Those passing judgment had been convinced of the man's guilt but they had only part of the story and had thus been deceived. They suffered great remorse, sleepless nights, and the lashing of conscience. But an innocent man had lost his life.

May we all be warned never to base the hope of our salvation on a part of the story. We could lose our souls. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

WHY DON'T WE JUMP AT OPPORTUNITIES?

Many folk have a serious case of "jumping to conclusions" as they observe the actions of others. It is sad, indeed, for one to interpret, with suspicion, almost every situation he sees. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all would heed Paul's advice in Phillipians 4:8? "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

This would enable others to remain innocent in our minds until proven guilty. With the tidal wave of immorality sweeping the world, we need to avoid creating any doubt, without real cause, about those who are trying to serve God.

Too often, suspicions are prompted by one's

interests or desires. In the Booneville, Mississippi, bulletin several years ago there appeared a story of a stranger who entered a certain dwelling. Several neighbors saw him go in but did not see him again until he departed an hour later. They began to speculate as to why he had entered the house.

"He went to secure votes," said the politician.

"I do not see it that way," said the trader. "He must have entered to sell and get gain."

"I have it. He went to fill his belly," said the glutton.

"My idea is different," said the cold-blooded one. "He must have gone in to do bodily harm."

"You are all wrong," said the sot and sensualist. "That man went in to carouse and commit adultery."

"All of you are in error," said the covetous one. "That man went in to cheat and defraud."

"I think," said the Christian, "that he must have entered to do some work of benevolence."

Each "neighbor" answered in harmony with the trend of his thinking. The speculation of each was governed by what he might have done under similar circumstances. The color of his thought gave the stranger a corresponding tint.

How do you interpret actions of your neighbors? Do you tend to reflect on the conduct to create suspicion by another? Wouldn't it be wonderful if we would all "jump at opportunities" as quickly as we "jump to conclusions"?

WE NEED TO GET OURSELVES A BIGGER JUG

One never goes beyond his plans and visions. One of the greatest handicaps most of us face is harboring the spirit of defeat. "I just can't do this or I can't do that." Our self-image has created for us such an invisible barrier that many of our "talents" have been buried in the rush of the day.

Earl Nightingale tells the story about a Wisconsin farmer who was walking through his fields one day and came across a small glass jug in his pumpkin patch. Out of curiosity, he poked a young pumpkin through the neck of the jug, being careful not to break the vine. Then he placed his little experiment back on the ground and went his way.

When harvest time came, the farmer again came upon the pumpkin in the jug. It had completely filled its glass prison and then could grow no more. Compared to the free pumpkins, it was a runt, exactly the shape of the glass jug, worth little or nothing.

Too many folk have such a small "jug", they never allow themselves to launch out into unplowed fields. Many are prone to undertake only those things which they know they can accomplish. In so doing, they leave the Lord out of their plans.

Paul's faith in the assistance from the Lord was expressed this way: "And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). To the Philippians he put it this way: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (4:13).

What we really need is a bigger "jug". One that

will enable us to grow and grow. One that develops such love for Jesus and His church that we do not have to be pushed, threatened, scared, or begged to move for Jesus.

We need to look into the mirror of life and see ourselves as God sees us and continually fashion ourselves, as the sculptor fashions a statue, into the person God wants us to be. In the Ozarks, the story is told about a hillbilly who went to an auction and saw his first mirror. When he looked into it he thought it was a picture of his "dear old pappy".

He bought the mirror for seventy-five cents. He put it up in the attic where he could frequently sneak away to admire what he thought was a picture of his old pappy.

His wife, missing him, became suspicious. So one day, as her husband was out hoeing the corn, she went up to the attic and took a look. As she peered into the mirror, she exclaimed, "Ah, Ha! There is the old hag he is running around with!"

We may not like ourselves as we take that careful look, but we can be "transformed . . . to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, DO SOMETHING!

Calvin Coolidge once said, "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of

educated derelicts. PERSISTENCE and DETERMINATION alone are omnipotent. The watchword 'press On' has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race."

This is the same truth the apostle Paul was emphasizing when he said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12-14).

It is such an easy thing to give up. Seldom will one undertake anything good but that obstacles will be encountered. Only those who are determined and persistent will succeed. Recently a story was printed of the late William McPherson who had lost his eyes and hands in a dynamite explosion. He found it difficult to face the world of darkness. God's word became extremely important to him. He wanted to read the Bible, but he couldn't master the Braille with artificial hands. He tried the raised letters with his lips, but the dynamite had seared them until he had no feeling in them. One day he discovered he could distinguish the letters with his tongue. As he eagerly sought to learn the Braille system, his tongue became sore, raw, and would bleed. He would stay up all night just to learn one new letter of the alphabet. He prayed to God for help and grace that he might continue to learn. Over a period of sixty-five years, spent in darkness, he read the entire Bible four times with his tongue.

A newspaper report some time ago told how a 23 year old mother, who could not swim a stroke, plunged into the 12 foot deep Byram River in Greenwich, Connecticut, and rescued her drowning two-year old daughter. She never for a moment thought it couldn't be done.

Any person can see farther than he can reach, but that doesn't mean he should quit reaching. When we decide a thing just cannot be done, someone does it. Some of the most successful people in the world are those who thought they could never succeed but were willing to try and determined to give it their all.

A small boy was learning to skate with a number of older playmates. The little fellow's frequent falls prompted a tender hearted spectator to say, "Sonny, you're getting all banged up. Why don't you stop for a while and just watch the other skaters?"

With tears rolling down his cheeks as a result of his last fall, he looked down to the shining wheels on his feet and answered, "I didn't get these skates to give up with, I got 'em to learn with."

After a half-hearted effort, too many of us decide, "No one is interested in studying the Bible", or "No one will attend services when we invite them", or "No one wants to be bothered with the gospel." The Lord's work would be greatly increased if more were concerned with doing things and less concerned with who gets the credit. It is amazing what the Lord will do with those who are willing to try.

“LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT”

The world must be brought to Christ one soul at a time. Too many Christians allow themselves to think only in terms of great numbers. In so doing, the great potential of “one on one” teaching has been greatly lessened.

“If I were able to go as a missionary to some ‘fertile field,’” or, “If I were able to participate in a successful campaign,” are statements heard from those who have lost sight of “little things”. If one doesn't use his ability where he is with the opportunities at hand, he would not be successful with increased opportunities. Jesus said, “He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10).

Some of the greatest lessons of the Master were addressed to one person, such as the sermon to Nicodemus and to the woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. Little beginnings can become powerful forces as they move along.

Leonard Waggoner tells of an experience with two friends with whom he was reared on the West Texas prairies. They had crossed the Colorado Rockies into Utah and decided to climb to the summit of one of the mountains in the Wasatch range.

They were young and inexperienced and threw caution to the winds. Near the summit, they found a large round stone precariously near the edge of the precipice that weighed not less than two tons. By using pry poles they easily dislodged the stone and watched it roll slowly at first, then gather momentum rapidly. Being well above the timber line, there was nothing to impede its downward progress.

Faster and faster it rolled until soon it bounced

into the trees below. The pine trees snapped off like so many tooth-picks--and the stone kept rolling. Many times it bounced as high as fifty feet into the air, each time coming to earth only to destroy more trees. The stone was now out of sight but they heard the terrific echoes resounding from the canyon floor as it finally came to rest.

The next day, on their descent, they travelled the canyon way, and saw the stone and the trail of ruined and destroyed and marred trees it had left. Also near the canyon floor the huge stone had caused an avalanche of smaller stones.

Then they became frightened! What if there had been men in that canyon! What if someone were to have loosened such a stone above them! They were sad as they looked at the timber they had foolishly destroyed, unthinkingly. It was such a small thing to dislodge a stone from the side of a mountain but what a great path of destruction it made on its way to the canyon below.

The preaching of Philip in Acts 8:26-39 was to one person, but he didn't hesitate to take advantage of the opportunity. In fact, he ran to the chariot (vs. 30). This "little" beginning may well have resulted in the conversion of multitudes in Ethopia as the man carried the "good news" there.

Grains of sand make mountains, drops of water make oceans, and pennies make dollars. May we never underestimate the value of little things or of insignificant opportunities.

ARE WE REALLY GRATEFUL FOR WHAT GOD DID?

The abundant blessings of God have been "gobbled up" with hardly a "thank you" since Adam's time. It is almost beyond belief that Israel would have been so ungrateful for and would have so soon forgotten the care and protection of God in their deliverance from Egyptian bondage and their travels to Canaan. When Jesus came to bring salvation to the world, he was rejected. "He came unto his own, but his own received him not" (John 1:11).

Are we very different now? The toils of the personal ministry of the Master, his agony on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead are often taken for granted.

Jesus was confronted with such an attitude following the cleansing of 10 lepers recorded in Luke 17. They had earnestly pleaded, "Master, have mercy on us" (verse II), but only one would take the time to say "thank you". How disappointed Jesus must have been as he asked, "Where are the nine?"

There appeared in the February, 1961, issue of Reader's Digest, a story about a mother in Cincinnati having received a letter from her son during World War II. He was a paratrooper and in the letter referred to a woman in Avranches, Normandy, who had taken him into her home when he was wounded, and hidden him from the Germans. Later on, unhappily, the boy was killed in the Ardennes offensive. Yet the mother was moved by an irresistible intention. She saved up for two years, crossed the Atlantic and went to the village named in her son's letter. She found the woman who had sheltered

her son—the wife of an impoverished farmer—and pressed a package into her hand. It was the gold wrist watch her son had received on his graduation, the only object of any real value the boy had ever possessed.

The mother's act of gratitude so deeply touched people's hearts that it has become something of a legend in and around Avranches. It has done far more than fine speeches to foster good feeling toward Americans.

Someone told the story of a father and mother who honored the memory of a son killed in World War II by giving a sizeable check to the church. When the presentation was made, a mother whispered to her husband, "Let's give the same amount for our boy!"

"What are you talking about?", asked the husband. "Our boy didn't lose his life!"

"Ah," exclaimed the wife, "that is just the point! Let's give it as an expression of our gratitude to God for sparing his life!"

God did the greatest thing he could do in giving "his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). We will do the greatest thing we can do and really demonstrate our gratitude when we follow the pleadings of the apostle Paul to present out "bodies a living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

WHY DID YOU BEGIN?

In the Master's parable of the sower, he described the seed that fell upon the rock as representing those, "which, when they hear, receive the word with joy;

and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13). God, through Jeremiah of old, lamented "my people have forgotten me days without number" (2:32). One of the greatest tragedies of the day is the number of folk who "quit the church." Too often, little thought is given to the seriousness of such action. It seems that a "take it or leave it" attitude is frequently prevalent along with "it really can't make that much difference."

Many have "quit" who, seemingly, are unaware that they have. Yet they have withdrawn their presence from the occasions of worship, they give no moral support to the activities of the congregation, and are giving no financial assistance to any of the work of the church. What else would one have to do to quit? If you have entertained an idea of "quitting", please seriously consider, "Why did you begin?" Why did you confess Jesus Christ to be the Son of God? Why were you baptized for the remission of your sins? Why did you decide you wanted the Lord's will to rule in your life? Was it because you wanted to go to heaven and you wanted to help others to go?

Have you now decided you are no longer interested in heaven or in helping others go there? Are you good for your word? What about your promise of commitment of your life and services to the Lord? Have you convinced yourself that "one" person just can't make that much difference in the Lord's work? Have you decided that nobody will miss you anyway?

A story goes, that they built a new church building. People came from far and near to see it. They admired the beauty of the windows, the immaculately painted walls and the carpets on the floors. There was a beautiful new Bible on the pulpit.

Upon the roof a little two-penny nail held down a shingle. This little nail became angry and said, "If I am that insignificant, nobody will miss me if I quit." So, the little nail pulled out, raced down the steep roof and fell to the soft ground below.

That night, a big rain came and the shingle nail was buried in the mud. The difference between being buried in the mud and holding down a shingle is this: Before, the nail was obscure and usefuul. Now, he is obscure and useless. Furthermore, before, he was protected in his dry place under the shingle. Now, he will soon be eaten up with rust.

The worst of the story is yet to come. The shingle which the nail held down was now loose and without the co-operation from the nail, it blew away, leaving a hole in the roof. That same big rain that buried the nail leaked in through the vacant spot in the roof and ran into the beautiful auditorium. The water ran down the walls, leaving them marred. It also leaked on the Bible and stained its pages. It leaked on the carpet leaving it badly stained. All this happened because one little nail, in a fit of jealousy, refused to stay on the job.

When discouragement begins to rear its head, always remember the example of the Master, "I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

FAMILIAR ROUTES CAN BE DECEPTIVE

"Just leave me alone, I know what I'm doing." "I'd rather do it my way." "It really doesn't matter, as long

as one is honest." These, and similar statements, show how "unlearned" many folk are regarding spiritual strength and relationships.

The apostle Paul clearly defines one's source of strength in many of his epistles. To the Philippian church he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (4:13), and, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (1:21). In even plainer language, he said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Years ago, two travelers bought their tickets at the railway station for a frequently made trip to a neighboring city. As they boarded the train, they rejected any suggestions as to seating insisting that they were "familiar" with all the coaches.

Finding a comfortable "spot" they placed their bags in the rack and sat down. Almost immediately a porter came by and instructed them to move up to the next car.

They objected, "But we are very comfortable." The porter insisted, "you must move up to the next car."

By now, the travelers were upset and demanded to know why they had been asked to move. The porter replied, "cause this car ain't coupled to nothing that will take you anywhere."

This aptly describes so many folk in the field of religion. They are comfortably situated and completely contented, never giving any thought to the possibility of not being "in Christ".

In every passage of scripture where one or more

of the conditions of salvation are mentioned, and the promise of salvation, or blessing, is also mentioned, the condition precedes the blessing. The salvation, or like blessing, is mentioned after the condition (conditions) are thus stipulated by divine authority.

If we expect to enjoy the hope of life everlasting, we must be willing and ready to accept the Lord's conditions for that hope.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE?

One of the greatest needs of the day is for one to realize where he is. Many times one is heard to say, "I'm trying to find myself." Sadly, many young people spend years of study and thousands of dollars and still do not know what they "really want to do."

As tragic as this condition is in physical relationships, it is much more so in spiritual matters. Too many folk have not really tried to find themselves spiritually. Usually one does not know where he is or where he is headed. All could know. The Bible clearly reveals from whence we came, where we now are, the direction we are going, and how to get to the better place. Paul said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Self-improvement only follows self-knowledge. One will change his course in life only when he sees a need for change. If one is pleased with a particular action, he must be shown a danger with that action, or shown something better, before he makes a change.

The prodigal, of Luke 15, had to realize "where he was" before he made any changes. Verse 17 states "and when he came to himself," he began to realize the tragedy of a wasted life. He began to think of the past and the comforts of home. He took a look at the present and saw what could have been a busy, successful young man as a hungry, rejected beggar. He looked at the future and realized that there was a silver lining in those dark clouds but that the silver lining depended upon his willingness to say "I was wrong." Many folk are not ashamed to commit sin but are ashamed to admit sin. He said, "I will arise, go to my father, and say, 'I have sinned'." And he did just that.

A self-made preacher once announced his subject as "Adam! Where Art Thou?" He then explained, "There are three divisions to my subject, Firstly, every man must be somewhere. Secondly, some people are where they got no business being. And thirdly, they that are where they shouldn't be, are going to find themselves where they don't want to be."

No truth is more clearly stated in the Bible than that every man shall stand before God's judgment bar. Where we are now could very well determine where we will be then.

HAVE YOU TOLD THEM LATELY. . . ?

Much has been said and should be said about the responsibilities of parents to children, and awesome responsibilities these are. But please give some thought to the other side of the coin.

The Bible abounds in instruction for children in

their attitudes and actions toward their parents. In the instructions through Moses, God told Israel: "Cursed is he who makes light of his father and mother" (Deuteronomy 27:16), and, "He that curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:17). Solomon said: "He that does violence to his father, and chases away his mother, is a son that causes shame and brings reproach" (Proverbs 19:26). In the New Testament, Paul said: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

An aged doctor was speaking to a group of young people one evening when he said, "Children, I have a story to tell you. One day—a long, hot day it had been, too—I met my father on the road to town. 'I wish you would take this package to the village for me, Jim,' he said, hesitating. Now, I was a boy of twelve, not fond of work, and was just out of the hayfield where I had been at work since daybreak. I was tired, dusty and hungry. It was two miles into town. I wanted to get my supper, and get dressed for singing-school. My first impulse was to refuse and to do it harshly; for I was vexed that he would ask after my long day's work. If I did refuse, he would go himself. He was a gentle, patient old man. But something stopped me— one of the good angels, I think."

"Of course, father, I'll take it,' I said heartily, giving my scythe to one of the men. He gave me the package. 'Thank you, Jim,' he said, 'I was going myself but somehow I don't feel very strong today.'

"He walked with me to the road that turned off to

town. As he left he put his hand on my arm, saying again, 'Thank you, my son; you've always been a good boy to me, Jim.'

"I hurried into town and home again. When I came near the house I saw a crowd of farm hands at the door. One of them came to me, the tears rolling down his face 'Your father,' he said, 'fell dead just as he reached the door of the house. The last words he spoke were to you.'

"I'm an old man now; but I have thanked God over and over again, in all the years that have passed since that hour, that those words were, 'You've always been a good boy to me'."

Paul Hall tells about a Christian in Fort Worth, Texas, who wrote a letter to his parents in which he said something like this:

Dearest Mother and Dad,

"Many times I've tried to sit down and write this letter, but always I found I didn't have the words I wanted to say, so I put it off again. I still don't know what you have meant to me. Dad, time and again I've told my wife that if I can be the kind of father to my sons that you have been to us I'll be thankful. I remember when I was just a little boy and we were at a college football game, and I told you, just as our team was about to make a touchdown, that I had to go to the bathroom, and you asked, 'Son, can you wait a little while?', and I said, 'No.' You just got up and took me out. You didn't fuss, you didn't say, 'I'll never bring you to a football game again. You even bought me a cold drink when we came back up in the stands. Other daddies do not all act like that because I've

been with Johnny and Billy and others. I remember that to this day. In High School, I remember I got the car on Friday and Saturday nights and you walked 20 blocks to the round house, worked all night, and walked back. We never did think anything about it. When John and I were in college, I remember we were embarrassed when you came out to visit us because of that blue suit. That thing must have been 10 years old. We told you it embarrassed us and you told us, 'an old man wasn't trying to make an impression like these young bucks had to do.' I know now you couldn't buy one because you had two boys in college. Mom, what I remember best about you is how happy you always were, always singing around home. You were never too busy to tell us a story. We always took clean socks and clean shirts in the drawer for granted, but I know times they got there. I've seen you many now how bending over the bath tub with a wash board, but I don't remember ever hearing you say you were tired."

After receiving this letter those two old people said, "We own our home, car, furniture, and some other things, but we wouldn't take everything we own for that letter."

If you are fortunate enough to have your parents living somewhere, why not get out paper and pencil and begin, "Dearest Mother and Dad"? You won't always have them with you. Have you told them lately . . . ?

IT IS SO HARD FOR ME TO SEE THE REAL ME

Jesus said: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:3,4).

It is so difficult for us to see ourselves except as things are coming our way. The pagan rule of life, "Look out for number one," has become the standard by which most are living. Jesus gave the very opposite purpose for living: "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:44).

Mr. Crisler, former director of athletics at the University of Michigan, told the story of a football player whose concern was only for himself.

In a crucial game, no score, fourth quarter, the quarterback called a play for this particular player to carry the ball. With expert blocking by the other halfback, he carried the ball to the twenty-yard line of the opponent. The same player was given the ball in the next play. This time, with the same type of interference by his teammate, he carried the ball to the two-yard line.

With the team just two yards away from a touchdown and victory, the quarterback then called for the other halfback to take the ball over for the touchdown. The player who had been running with the ball did not like the quarterback's decision--he wanted to make the touchdown. He was so displeased that he failed to block for his teammate.

The next day when the selfish player went to his

locker he found a printed sign which read: "Eagerness to get; un-willingness to give." The coach benched the boy for two games. Then the athlete said, "I have been taught a great lesson. I am now ready to give." In the very next game his blocking led his team in a sixty-five yard drive to victory.

The poet put it this way:

One day I took a look at myself,
at the self that Christ can see;
I saw the person I am today;
and the one I ought to be.

I saw how little I really pray,
how little I really do;
I saw the influence of my life,
how little of it was true.

I saw my faults and fears
I ought to lay on the shelf;
I had given a little to God,
but I hadn't given myself.

I came from looking at myself,
with my mind made up to be;
A Christian that Christ can use,
all my life and in eternity.

There is only ONE person in all the world that I can completely require to do God's work. Until I can get this person to do his work, I have no right to expect anything of any other. I am entirely responsible for this person's conduct, for you see, this person is **ME!**

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...!

Satan doesn't have nearly the power over us as we allow ourselves to assume. The apostle Paul said: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). Jesus has provided us the power, through obedience to his word, to triumph over Satan.

The problem with most is growing weary after a few determined efforts have met with resistance. The Galatians were instructed: "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (6:9).

Abraham Lincoln won three elections in his life, but he lost eight. Someone has collected the following information that demonstrates his courage, persistence, and determination. His age appears in the left column along with an event of that year.

- 22 Failed in business
- 23 Ran for legislature-defeated
- 24 Again failed in business
- 24 Elected to legislature
- 26 Sweetheart died
- 27 Had a nervous breakdown
- 29 Defeated for speaker
- 31 Defeated for elector
- 34 Defeated for Congress
- 37 Elected to Congress
- 39 Defeated for Congress
- 46 Defeated for Senate

- 47 Defeated for Vice-President
- 49 Defeated for Senate
- 51 Elected president of the U.S.

Too many times we get gown to the one-yard line but just cannot get across the goal-line. When the going really gets tough and the opposition stiffens, we fail to properly "buffet" our bodies (I Corinthians 9:27).

If we do not succeed the first, or second, or third time, try again. The Los Angeles Executive Club published some interesting facts about salesmen's calls: 48% of all salesmen made two calls and quit; 12% made three calls and quit; and, 80% of all sales made after the 5th call.

The story was told of a door-to-door salesman who was demonstrating the great strength of the dish cloth he was selling. "See how strong this cloth is," he exclaimed, giving the cloth a vigorous tug; forthwith the cloth tore completely in half. A moment of awkward silence followed after which the salesman continued with a smile: "Don't blame the cloth, Madam. You see, I also sell Vim and Vigor Vitamins; and since taking them myself, I don't know my own strength. So as long as you won't be buying the dish cloth, I am sure you will want a bottle of the vitamins."

Someone has said, "Everything worth while has a wall around it--but always there is a gate and a key." It isn't easy to break through the wall Satan has around lost souls but there is a gate, the heart of the sinner, and the key, the gospel of Jesus Christ, by which they may be rescued.

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED. . . !

“I AM JUST TOO BUSY. . .”

Life seems to become more complicated daily. There are just not enough hours in a day nor days in a week for the things we would like to do. Many of us would be surprised at the time available if we are careful to arrange our activities. The example of Jesus should convince us that there should always be time for the things that help us to mature spiritually.

From his very first recorded statement to the very end of his life, Jesus was stressing using time to the glory of the Father. To his parents he said, “Know ye not that I must be about my father's business?” (Luke 2:49). To his disciples he said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). In the prayer to his Father near the end of his life he said, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). Jesus was a busy man, but he was never too busy to take time for others, in fact, his business was others.

All of us are very busy but just what are we busy about? Someone wrote the following words about “Sam”:

“Sam was always very busy
With a million things to do;
Running this way, Running that way;
Never finished, never through;
With a million little problems,
And a million trifling cares;
Always hurried, always worried,
With his day to day affairs.

Never happy with his labors,
Never time to do his best--
Always, busy, busy, busy,
Never time for any rest.
On his tombstone it was written
When at last, Sam had to go - -
'So busy buying peanuts
He completely missed the show'."

It is easy to become so involved in so many responsibilities and affairs of life that one decides he is too busy to give time to the work of God, to study and mediate upon the word of life. But, somehow, we always find time to do the things we want to do.

It is wise to be busy but busy in the right ways. God has always called busy people into his service. The announcement of the birth of Jesus was made to men busily watching over their flocks. The men chosen by Jesus to become "fishers of men" were busy men.

Busy people are the happiest people. The happiest people are those who are too busy to notice whether they are or not. One can really be happy only when he is striving for something worthwhile. Note this excellent anonymous poem entitled:

"Busy and Happy"

"Grandmother, on a winter's day,
Milked the cows and fed them hay.

Slopped the hog, saddled the mule,
And got the children off to school.

Did the washing, mopped the floors,
Washed the windows, and did some chores.

Cooked a dish of home-dried fruit,
Pressed her husband's Sunday suit.

Swept the parlor, made the beds,
Baked a dozen loaves of bread.

Split some firewood, and lugged it in,
Enough to fill the kitchen bin.

Cleaned the lamp and put in the oil,
Stewed some apples she thought would spoil.

Churned the butter, baked a cake,
Then exclaimed, For goodness sake---

The calves have torn out of the pen,
Went out and chased them in again.

Gathered the eggs and locked the stable,
Back to the house and set the table.

Cooked a supper that was delicious,
And afterward washed up all the dishes.

Fed the cat, sprinkled the clothes,
Mended a basket full of hose.

Then opened the organ and began to play,
"When you Come to the End of a Perfect Day'."

DON'T BE A CHANCE-TAKER

Are you putting off becoming a Christian, taking the chance that nothing will happen to you before you decide to take the great step? Peter said, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3:10).

Some years ago a famous children's specialist made this remark: "When it comes to serious illness, the child who has been taught to obey stands four times the chance of recovery than the spoiled and undisciplined child does." Salvation, whether temporal or eternal, is forever associated with obedience to proper authority. Jesus put it this way: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

No one has a lease on life. Each of us stands only a heart-beat from eternity. If you know what God wants you to do to become one of his children, then do it without delay. Anguish, despair and eternal regrets are the lot of every soul who remains a chance-taker.

Two citizens were discussing their chances of being drafted into the army during World War II. One consoled the other with this logic.

"There's two things that can happen, my friend. You are either drafted or you ain't drafted. If you ain't, you can forget it; if you are, you still have two chances. You may be sent to the front, and you may not.

"If you go to the front, you still have two chances. You may get shot and you may not. If you get shot, you still have two chances. You may die and you may not! And, if you die you still have two chances."

When death comes, it is not a matter of chance as to where we spend eternity. Man's chances of heaven are determined by his own actions. Paul said, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

Many folk will not allow themselves to think seriously about the judgment. All efforts of appeal are lightly regarded or even joked about. Several years ago a revival was in progress in a southern state. Many had responded to the invitation. However, one elderly man had resisted all efforts of persuasion. The preacher decided to make one last try. He approached the man as seriously as he knew how only to have the man say, "You see how it is preacher. I have a problem. I don't see how I am going to get my shirt on over my wings." The preacher thought a moment, then replied, "Your problem is going to be how to get your hat on over your horns."

There are many worthy goals to be sought after in this life, but none can compare with the goal of eternal life. Don't be a chance-taker. To miss heaven is to miss everything worthwhile. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26).

THE BOOK OF GOD

Several years ago, Dr. Eugene Nida related this incident at an annual meeting of the American Bible Society, in New York. A Bible seller in Syria was dragged into police court for selling "inflammatory political propaganda." The judge examined the portions of the Bible being sold and said: "Where is

that man Paul who wrote this book to the Romans? Bring him into this court!" The Bible seller tried to explain that Paul had been dead nearly two thousand years, but the judge was hard to convince. He said: "Here, you sign a statement declaring that you will be personally responsible for everything written in this book to the Romans. This document is too contemporary and its significance too timely not to have someone personally responsible for its contents."

Someone has well said that the contents of the Bible are as relevant as the headlines of the morning paper. The Mohammedan judge, referred to above, unintentionally paid the Bible that compliment. Truly, it is contemporary with every age. It is the power God uses to save the souls of men (Romans 1:16).

More than 20 years ago, Drew Pearson wrote, "From listeners to my radio program and readers of my column (Washington Merry Go-Round) I get a lot of requests to mention new books--so many, that in fairness I almost never refer to any of the fine books published every day. However, there is one book no publisher has ever asked me to boost, but which I'm going to mention. It's a book you can borrow from any library or buy at any book-stand. It's the "book-of-the-month" for every month of the year--the best seller for all time.

"This book is perennially modern, it will never be out-dated. At any price, it's priceless, For it brings solace to the sick, spiritual strength to the strong; It has given hope to the poor, humility to the proud; it has touched the heart of king and commoner. It was written for all nations and is banned by only one nation.

"Too many of us make a Bible of the "Wall Street

Journal" or the "Daily Racing Form," while the greatest investment guide of all time points the way to spiritual wealth that can never be taxed, and to eternal dividends that will never be passed.

"This book is our legacy from the greatest teacher the world has ever known. If we keep our Bibles free from dust, we need worry less about keeping our weapons free from rust. And if we live by his teachings we cannot fail to make democracy live."

The Bible is God's Book (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:21) and man does not have ability or the strength to destroy. Someone has well said:

"They buried truth in the market place
And thought their work complete;
But next day, with a smiling face,
They met it on the street.

They threw it in a dungeon damp
And thought it was no more;
But lo, it walked with lighted lamp
Among them as before.

They scorned and ostracized it,
And ordered it to depart;
But still it dwelt in all the land
And challenged every heart."

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

WOULD YOU VOTE TO CLOSE THE BUILDING?

The importance of being a part of every public worship opportunity cannot be overly emphasized. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). We are declaring our allegiance to the Master when we keep our appointments with him. We are seeking first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). We are setting our affection on things above (Colossians 3:2).

When we choose to be elsewhere than with the saints at worship times, we are taking action against the Master, we have removed the kingdom from first place, and have shown our affection is not towards heaven. In reality, we have voted to close the building for that particular occasion. It is then only a matter of time until that kind of action by enough people will cause the doors to be closed permanently.

Several years ago, Lemoine Lewis, of Abilene Christian College, was completing his doctorate at Harvard University. While there, he also preached for a small congregation in Massachusetts. One Sunday morning, before services, a stranger came in and said: "I have been looking for the true church for a long time. I hope that this will be that church." At the close of the lesson, as everyone was leaving, the stranger remarked: "I think I have found the true church. I'll be back tonight."

Just as the stranger promised, he was present at the evening service. Following the service, he requested to talk privately with brother Lewis. In the course of the conversation he stated that whereas he

had thought he had found the true church, he was now confident that he had not. Naturally the preacher wanted to know why this was not the true church. Was it a matter of doctrine or spirituality? Just why wasn't this the true church? The reply that the stranger gave to the question should cause many of us to re-evaluate ourselves. He answered, "If this had been the true church, all those who were here this morning would have been here tonight." The stranger walked out the door and never returned.

We give too little thought as to the impact our actions have upon those about us. It is the business of others what we do! Our absence may very well be the factor that will cause another to lose interest. How frightening to think of the possibility of standing before the judgment bar to account for having influenced someone toward indifference.

A young Christian put it this way: "Last Wednesday night I thought I would go to the Worship services of the church. My buddy wanted me to go to the movies with him, but I declined--knowing that I ought to be in church. I did go to the service but was surprised to see the very small number present. I looked for my Sunday morning Bible teacher, but he was not there. I looked for a deacon I knew, but his seat was empty. I looked for a member of the church who had called at our home but she was absent, as well as several men who had waited on the Table of the Lord. It's plain and obvious for all to see that those absent do not think the church or the Wednesday night service are important. I'm not going back to that service anymore either. It was discouraging to me."

Jesus said: "For where two or three are gathered

together in my name, there am I in the the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). It is said that when Herbert Hoover was president, he and Mrs. Hoover and an official group from Washington stopped one beautiful Lord's day morning at a little church building in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Most of the members of the little church were out for a drive to enjoy the beauty of the day, and did not give even passing thoughts to the importance of assembling for worship and edification. Only 13 people were present when the president's party came in. Afterward, when the people of the community heard the news, they said, "If we had known that the president would be there we would have gone to church." It is not with the president but with the King of the universe that we have an appointment on worship occasions. He is there to bestow abundant spiritual gifts. When we break the appointment, we disappoint the King, we miss his bountiful blessings, and we vote to close the doors of the building.

"WHERE AIN'T GOD?"

Several years ago, Ricky Trout, a high school student, having done considerable study in astronomy, biology chemistry, and physics, wrote the following in an article for "20th Century Christian." "I have been asked, 'What things in the study of science have strengthened my faith?' My studies in science have caused me to study the Bible more. Instead of just taking my religion for granted, I have felt the need of really learning why I believe as I do. I have been interested in seeing if the Christian faith could

actually be put to a test. I think that I have a stronger faith because of the questions that have been raised."

"Astronomy has taught me just how suitable the earth has been designed to support human life. The bigness of space makes me believe that the universe just could not accidentally happen. In physics, I have been taught that the world is very orderly and that we work out answers to scientific problems because of this order. I think chemistry has taught me that nature is well organized. Man is sometime careless in the laboratory and his experiments do not come out right. I suppose that the same principle applies to everything that we do. When we respect God's laws, we get the right answers, but when we do not, everything goes wrong. Biology has made me have a greater respect for what life is. The human body is certainly a remarkable creation! I do not believe that the many living things of our world could have just happened by chance."

"I'm not afraid of having people question my faith. I don't have all the answers, but I believe that God will help me to find the answers."

"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). One must know and comprehend all things, both in the material and spiritual realms, in order to know "There is no God." Would any say he so knows? Then one of the things he does not know might be "There is a God."

"The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). After his trip into space, astronaut Gordon Cooper, appearing before Congress said: "I would like to take this time to say a little prayer for all the people, including myself, involved in this launch operation."

Father, thank you, especially for letting me fly this flight. Thank you for the privilege of being able to be in this position; to be up in this wondrous place, seeing all these many startling, wonderful things that you have created."

An unknown poet in "Where Ain't God?" said it this way:

"He was just a little lad,
And on the week's first day
Was wandering home from Sunday School,
And dawdling on the way.
He scuffed his shoes into the grass,
He found a caterpillar:
He found a fluffy milk-weed pod,
And blew out all the "filler"
A bird's nest in a tree o'erhead
So wisely placed and high
Was just another wonder
That caught his eager eye.
A neighbor watched his zig-sag course,
And hailed him from the lawn
Asked him where he had been that day
And what was going on.
'M'm a very fine way,' the neighbor said
'For a boy to spend his time:
If you'll tell me where God is,
I'll give you a brand new dime.'
Quick as a flash his answer came:
Nor were his accents faint:
I'll give you a dollar, Mister
If you'll tell me where God ain't'."

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength" (Psalm 8:2). Isaiah

prophesied, “. . . a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6). How great would be the results if many “intellectuals” could recapture the freshness of child-like faith.

“Doubt sees the obstacles,
Faith sees the way;
Doubt sees the darkest night,
Faith sees the day;
Doubt dreads to take a step,
Faith soars on high;
Doubt questions; “Who believes?”
Faith answers; “I”.
-Author Unknown

“THERE'S FIGHTING ALL ALONG THE LINE!”

History reveals that the Indians used to give their children the name they had earned. Thus, some girl would become Laughing Water, Sunshine, or Timid One. A boy might be named Running Feet, Wise Owl, or Black Hawk.

Suppose God should give unto His Children the name they earned? Some would be Helping Hand, Faithful Teacher, Lively Stone, Generous Heart. But on the other hand, others would, be wearing such names as Evil Tongue, Shirker, Unreliable, Luke Warm, Black Heart, Stingy Giver, etc.

One of the marks of Christianity is service. The judgment scene, portrayed in Matthew 25:31-46 emphasizes the consequence of leaving good things undone. Paul told the Galatian churches “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men,

especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Jesus said: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

Theodore Roosevelt once said: "The test of a man's worth to his community is the service he renders to it." Etienne De Grellet expressed it this way: "I shall pass through this world but once. If, therefore, there be any kindness I can show or any good thing I can do, let me do it now: let me not defer it nor neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."

During one of the battles of the Civil War a recruit, who had lost his company in the confusion of the battle, approached his commander and timidly asked where he should step in. The Commander roared back, "Step in anywhere; there's fighting all along the line!"

What an accurate description of the life of a Christian! There are opportunities for service on every hand. We, as his disciples, were saved to serve. No one can do my work for me; no one can do your work for you. There is great temptation to hesitate to act because "someone else can do a better job." But remember:

"There is a corner somewhere
that I alone can fill.
If I fail to take my place
no other ever will.
It's all a part of His great plan
that each a worker be,
And somewhere is His vineyard wide
THE LORD NEEDS EVEN ME!"

The greatest asset to any Christian is not money, or education, or native ability, but the willingness and the readiness to work. The unknown poet said it beautifully:

When someone does a kindness,
It always seems to me
That's the way God up in Heaven
Would like us all to be.
For when we bring some pleasure
To another human heart,
We have followed in His footsteps,
And we've had a little part
In serving Him who loves us;
For I'm very sure it's true
That in serving those around us
We serve and please Him too.

THE STORY OF TWO BEARS

One of the greatest needs in the church today is to match our doctrine with living. It isn't any wonder that the multitudes cannot hear a thing we say because of the manner of life of so many who profess to be Christians. Paul said the Saviour will come one day for a church "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

There may not be anything wrong with our external features or with our overall plea but we need to give a tremendous amount of attention to keeping ourselves pure. Paul said: "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto

the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).

The story is told of a man who came to the watchmaker with the two hands of a clock and said: "I want you to fix these hands of this clock. They haven't kept time for six months."

"Where is the clock?" asked the watch-maker.

"Why, I left it at home," was the answer.

"But, I must have the clock," insisted the watch-maker, "if I am to make these hands run."

"Didn't I tell you that there is nothing wrong with the clock? It's only the hands that need fixing."

Too many folk are "hearers only." They have a knack for striking an interested pose throughout a sermon, only to go away and forget what manner of person they are.

It is amazing how much greater the offense if done by someone else. Yet, how careful should be the inventory each of us takes daily that we never become a "spot, or blemish, or any such thing" on the Lord's body. Perhaps it would be profitable to most to encounter "Two Bears".

It is said that in a certain village there lived an old couple who often had sharp quarrels. Everybody in town knew how much they quarrelled. Then, suddenly, they quit and they were never heard to dispute after that. The town folk wondered what made the change, and at last one brave woman asked what had happened.

"Two Bears did it" said the wife.

"Two Bears? the neighbor asked.

"Yes, two BEARS which we found in the Bible, 'Bear ye one another's burdens' and 'Forbearing one another in love'."

THE HARVEST IS GREAT-LABOURERS ARE FEW

J. Hudson Taylor tells about a Chinese preacher, who upon meeting a young convert, asked him how long he had been a saved man. The young man stated that he had obeyed the gospel only three months before. The preacher then asked, "How many have you brought to Christ? The young man replied. "No, I am only a learner, not a teacher. I have't had my own Bible very long."

The preacher then asked him. "Do you use candles in your home?" The young man answered, "Yes". "Do you expect the candles to begin to shine when they are burned halfway down?" asked the preacher. The boy replied, "No, sir--as soon as they are lit." The young man saw the lesson the preacher was bringing, and went to work. Within six months time, this young man had taught the way of salvation to several of his neighbors.

Luke tells us, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus said: "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few" (Luke 10:2). The Jerusalem church was composed of members who, though run out of town by persecution, "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4).

There is no such thing as a congregation where there is no work to be done. This does not mean that every member must teach a "cottage class". There are opportunities every day to influence someone for good and to direct one's thinking toward God and His word. The main problem is a smug, complacent, indifferent, "let-someone-else-do-it" attitude. And aged

preacher once said, "One church member plus good intentions, minus action, figures zero with nothing to carry, according to my arithmetic."

Too many wait for some "formal training" and still fail to act. Such training isn't always needed. A newspaper columnist reported that one of the finest "business letter" stories he ever heard was obviously written by an illiterate salesman. It said:

"Dear Boss:

I seen this outfit which ain't never bought a dime's wurth of nuthin from us and I sole them a cuple hunnert thousan dollars wurth of guds. I am goin on to Chucawgo."

Two days later, a second letter arrived at the home office:

"I cum hear and I sole them a milyun," it said.

Both letters were posted on the Bulletin board with a note appended by the company president which read:

"We bin spendin too much time hear tryin to spel, insted of sel, Let's watch them sails. I want everbody should read these letters from Gooch who is on the rode doin a grate job fer us, and you all should go out and do like he done."

Too many times we give up without asking. It is said that when Henry Ford purchased a large insurance policy for himself, the Detroit newspapers blazened the fact, since the amount was large and Mr. Ford was so prominent. One of the articles was read by an old friend of Ford's who happened to be in the insurance business. Being surprised completely by the

purchase, since he had not heard Ford was in the market for insurance, this friend went to see him and asked if the story was true. Ford replied that it most certainly was true. The friend asked why the policy was true. Ford replied that it most certainly was true. The friend asked why the policy was not bought from him since he was a personal friend and had been in the insurance business many years. Henry Ford's simple reply was, "You never asked me!"

We cannot afford to stand at the judgment with our hands dripping with the blood of the lost whom we may have reached. (Ezekiel 33:7-9). Why not begin right now "asking" them?

BIBLE CLASSES ARE IMPORTANT

Many folk have never realized the importance of attending Bible classes. In most cases, adults conclude it is good for children to go, but not if it means they will have to go along also.

In Bible classes we learn how we may meet the approval of God (2 Timothy 2:15). We avoid the danger of being destroyed for lack of knowledge. (Hosea 4:6). We learn how to keep from being puffed up (1 Timothy 6:4). We prepare ourselves against the danger of embracing false doctrine and apostasizing from the faith (2 Timothy 4:3).

Once a man remarked to Samuel Coleridge, "I will not teach my child anything about religion. I will let him grow up, and when he is old enough to judge for himself, he can choose his own religion."

As the two men walked along together, they paused in Mr. Coleridge's garden. "I thought I wanted

to set out some strawberry plants here this spring" said Mr. Coleridge, "but you have given me a new idea. I think I will wait until next August. Then I will see whether it would rather have weeds in it."

"But, Mr. Coleridge, the weeds will take over the place by then," the man replied quickly.

"My friend, the weeds will also grow unbidden in the heart of your child, answered the poet.

Christian training is very important. Bible study classes do pay off. From an unknown source came the following interesting contrasts. Max Jukes lived in the state of New York. He married a girl of like character. From this union came 1,206 descendants. Three hundred of them died prematurely, One hundred were sent to the penitentiary for an average of 13 years each. One hundred ninety were public prostitutes. There were 100 drunkards, and the family cost the state over \$1 million. They made no contribution to society.

In the same state lived Jonathan Edwards. He believed in Christian training. He married a girl of like character. From this union were 729 descendants. Out of this family have come 300 preachers, 65 college professors, 13 university presidents, 60 authors of good books, and 3 United States congressmen. Outside of Aaron Burr, a grandson of Edwards, who married a questionable character, the family has not cost the state a single dollar.

We are told that a Judge Fossett of Brooklyn, sentenced 2700 young people to the reformatory in five years. Not one of the entire 2700 was a member of any Sunday School.

"There was an old woman
Who lived in a shoe;
She had a lot of children,
But she knew what to do.
The old shoe is empty-
Not a lad nor a lass;
It's Sunday morning-
She took them to Bible Class!

If more folk knew what to do such displays of ignorance of the Bible as seen in the following incident would seldom happen. A traveler found himself obliged to remain in a small town one night because of a railroad washout caused by heavy rain that was still falling. He turned to the waitress and said pleasantly. 'This certainly looks like the flood.' 'The what?' she asked. 'The flood'. We read about the flood and the ark landing on Mt. Ararat.' 'Mister,' She said grimly, 'I haven't seen a paper in three days.'

A REAL FATHER WORKS AT BEING A FATHER

Most fathers do a credible job of providing for their children's physical and mental welfare, but too few make any provision for their spiritual needs. Most fathers seem willing to spend their money to have their children trained and equipped to make a living, but too few seem willing to spend much of themselves to help their children make a life.

A little fellow returning home from school went to his father's workshop in back of the garage. The

father gave him a piece of gum and told him to run on. Later he came back and his father gave him a quarter. The third time he returned his father snapped, "Son, I gave you a piece of gum and a quarter. What more do you want" He replied, "Daddy, I want you."

Someone has said that a father is never quite the man his son believes him to be, nor quite the hero his daughter thinks, so he works hard to try to smooth the rough places in the road for those of his own who will follow him.

A real father works at being a father. He knows the time is so short for him to mold precious lives before turning them loose in a harsh and demanding world. He is careful to accept and fulfill his indispensable role of father.

Harry R. Fox, Sr. once wrote: "The older I grow in parenthood, the more I'm convinced that no child ever grows up to be good by accident. Without the right kind of home-help and guidance, training and discipline, including personal example on the part of both parents in all their attitudes, conversation and conduct, the heart of a young child quickly inclines towards evil."

Once a man took his little boy for a walk in the country. They started across a plowed field towards a small lake in the woods. The boy's legs were short, and he became tired quickly. He decided to return to the car.

His father warned him to be very careful in returning to the car, because they had passed by an old deserted well. Some time later, when the father had returned to the car, the lad was found safe and rested.

His father asked, "How did you keep away from the old well?"

The son replied, "I just followed in your tracks."

The apostle to the Gentiles said it this way: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

A real father is careful to give his children himself.

"What shall you give to one small boy?

A glamorous game, a tinsel toy,

A barlow knife, a puzzle pack,

A train that runs on a curving track?

A picture book, a real live pet . . .

No, there's plenty of time for such things yet.

Give him a day for his very own--

Just one small boy and his dad alone.

A walk in the woods, a romp in the park,

A fishing trip from dawn to dark,

Give the gift that only you can--

The companionship of his Old Man.

Games are outgrown, and toys decay--

But he'll never forget if you 'Give him a day!'"

—Anonymous

"WE'D BETTER GET ON THE BALL"

An amateur golfer swung at a ball, missed it and hit an ant hill. Thousands of ants were killed. He swung again and missed, but killed more ants. Again and again he aimed at the ball, only to miss and kill more ants. Finally only two ants remained, and one said to the other, "If we're going to survive, we'd

better get on the ball."

J.D. Thomas wrote in the book, "Spiritual Power": "Our service to our Lord has often resembled an 8-cylinder car running on two or three cylinders. We have just been barely getting along. We have been serving out of a Pharisaical, selfish concept of 'Lord, how much do I have to do? Do I have to go on Sunday night? Do I have to go to mid-week services? How little may I give?' This attitude misses the whole point of grace. We must quit looking for irreducible, minimum requirements that will somehow 'get by'. Our hearts must be warmed and our lives filled with the love of Christ if our service is to be the joyous experience it can be."

But does the Lord really expect action? Note these statements from the Master. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest" (John 4:35). "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).

The apostle Paul put it this way: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1). "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1, 2). "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

Sometime ago Joe R. Barnett told of reading an article that stated that it is the habit of many American Indians to say "Yes" to everything they are

asked to do. This leads to confusion as to when an Indian means "yes," and when he means "no."

Each year there is a meeting of the native Brotherhood of British Columbia. At the meeting in 1952 the question was brought up on the floor of the assembly, "When does an Indian mean 'no'?"

An elderly Indian with a bronzed and wrinkled face arose and in a deep voice stated, "It is plain when Indian mean no. When Indian say yes and do nothing, then Indian mean no."

Could it be that this philosophy by some of those who roamed these hills many centuries ago has affected some professing Christianity?

An unknown poet expressed the problem exactly when he wrote:

"It isn't the job we intended to do
Or the labor we've just begun
That puts us right on the ledger sheet;
It's the work we have really done.
Our credit is built upon the things we do
Our debts on the things we shirk.
The man who totals the biggest plus
Is the man who completes his work."

WHAT WOULD HE SAY?

On one occasion Jesus heard these very familiar words, "I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house" (Luke 9:61). Too many people today are saying to the Lord, "I will follow thee, but first let me do this or do that." Such folk are convinced that material security will prepare them to follow Christ. They do have a place in their

lives for Jesus--second place. But the master said. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Someone told of a call coming to a certain family on Sunday morning. "Tell mother not to go to worship this morning-- we are coming." But mother went right on to worship. The daughter came and was furious about it, saying, "I called you I was coming and you went to worship anyway." The mother replied: "I'm sorry, dear, but the Lord had already called."

How necessary it is for us to get our priorities right. Sometime young people seem to appreciate the value of "first" things better than some others. Recently, I heard about Debra Gable, who was thirteen years old and in the eighth grade at Barre, Vermont Public school, when this happened. She had chores to do after school each day, which included feeding the riding horses for the family. She also regularly attended Bible classes Sunday morning and Wednesday night. One week she was unable to complete the assigned home work on a Wednesday night and found it necessary to work during the lunch hour the following day to catch up. The teacher asked why she didn't do the work the night before and Debra said she had gone to Bible Study. The teacher then inquired if she did not think her home work was important, and she replied, "Yes, but I think Bible Study is important too, don't you?"

"Well, yes, I guess so," she said, "But you know you could flunk your school work if you didn't get your home work."

And quick as a flash, Debra answered, "I may flunk in school, but I think I'll go to heaven, and I

think that's more important, don't you?"

The poet challenged us this way:

If he should come today
And find my hands so full
Of future plans, however fair,
In which my Savior has no share,
What would he say?

If he should come today
And find my love so cold,
My faith so very weak and dim
I had not even looked for him,
What would he say?

If he should come today
And find that I had not told
One soul about my Heavenly Friend
Whose blessings all my way attend,
What would he say?

If he should come today
Would I be glad, quite glad?
Remembering that he died for all
And none through me heard his call,
What would he say?

JUST WATCH YOURSELF PASS BY

One of the most difficult and yet the most valuable requirements of Christian living is self-examination. It is very difficult because it is so extensive and may turn up some unpleasant results.

A business man uses inventory to determine what he needs to buy, what he needs to sell and what adjustment in management policies need to be made. The Christian also needs to determine things of which he needs to rid himself, other things he should include in his life and any other areas of personal management which need changing.

The business man would be considered very unwise to continue a pattern of action his inventory showed dangerous. He would know that bankruptcy was on the horizon. Christians likewise, who examine themselves and recognize needed corrections, are foolish to fail to act.

Jesus tells about a self-indulgent son who became dissatisfied with home life. He demanded and received his inheritance and journeyed into a foreign land. There he squandered his money in "riotous" living. At last, when a famine had swept the country, he began to feel the pinch of want. He sought employment and was sent to feed swine. He even made a meal of the pods the swine were eating, but no one gave food (Luke 15).

In the misery of the circumstances he began to take inventory. Jesus said: "But when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare; while I perish here of hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight: I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:17-19).

The young man possessed the moral courage which led him back to his father. He confessed all and a happy father was then heard to say "This my son

was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24).

It is so difficult for us to "come to ourselves." Most of the time we seem to be examining someone else. I once read about a woman who went to a psychiatrist wearing a strip of bacon over each ear and a fried egg on top of her head. She said to him "I've come to see you about my brother."

The anonymous poet put it this way:

"Did you ever step outside of yourself? To watch
yourself pass by,

To try to see how you look to yourself
When no one else was nigh?

Did you see the faults that others see
When they look with the critical eye?
Or were you so blinded by love of self
You saw only perfection pass by?

"COMPLAINTS OF MEMBERS AGAINST MEMBERS"

Several years ago there was a little story in the "Minister's Monthly" about a preacher who had on his desk a special notebook labeled, "COMPLAINTS OF MEMBERS AGAINST MEMBERS." When one of his people called to tell him the faults of another he would say, "Well, here is my complaint book. I'll write down what you say and you can sign it. Then, when we have to take the matter up officially, I shall know what I may expect to testify to." The preacher says he kept the book forty years, opened it a million times and never wrote a line in it.

There is clearly a place for earnest, love-prompted criticism and people are not our friends if they fail to helpfully correct us when we make mistakes. But, there is a tremendous difference between constructive criticism prompted by genuine love, and mote-hunting.

The anonymous poet wrote "The Rumble of the Grumble" in which he said:

"In every church of any size,
You'll find the folk who criticize--
Who fuss and squall and climb the wall
O'er any little thing at all.
They fuss and fume and fret and find
Some self-styled fault with every kind
Of worthwhile effort made by those
Who daily won their working clothes.
Their motto is one word—"Defeat"
Unless they're in the driver's seat:
And if you'll notice, when they are,
They never even start the car.
Where are they when there's work to do?
Out "belly-aching" with a few
Disgruntled comrades weak and sick
Who, likewise, love to pluck and pick.
They mock and jeer, condemn and curse
Things others do. (Though they've done worse)
They'll quit and sit and throw a fit
Not caring if they cause a split.
But when it comes their time to do,
With other grumblers down below;
When Hell, with all of them, is ripe
They'll really have a cause to gripe,"

—From Way of Truth

Mote-hunting cheats the critic out of many of the joys of Christian friendships. All of us need the helpful, understanding correction of each other "in the spirit of gentleness, looking to they-self, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). Happy is the Christian who is ready to throw loving arms of tender counsel and correction about a weaker brother. Jesus said, "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). How friendless is one, who, unmindful of the beam in his own eye, is constantly busy hunting the faults of others.

One never builds himself by tearing another down. Such never rejoices at the success of a brother but allows himself to become puffed up with jealousy.

The solution to fault-finding and complaining is expressed in the following words by J.D. Carlyle:

"Be not concerned nor be surprised
If what you do is criticized.
There are always folks who usually can
Find some fault with every plan.
Mistakes are made, we can't deny . . .
But only made by folks who try."

"IT'S THE FIRE WITHIN THAT MAKES US BURN"

An English writer once said: "The early Christians did not go around saying 'Look what the world is coming to.' Rather, they went out with great joy and said to all men, 'Look what has come to the world!'" Someone has well said: "A crying need of the

church today is not pulpits that will draw so much as pews that radiate."

The Lord deserves and desires our untiring support with zeal and enthusiasm. Nothing displeases him more than for his disciples to become lukewarm. The whole Laodicean church was in danger of being eternally destroyed because of their complacency (Revelation 3:15, 16).

The Lord wants fervency. The Psalms are filled with shouts of praise. Psalm 150 declares that everything that breathes should praise the Lord. The zeal and enthusiasm that characterized early Christians evidenced a celebrating of a victory, not the mourning of a death. Luke says of Peter and John: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). Paul urged the Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." (4:4).

Enthusiasm is the magic spark that makes hard work easy and enjoyable. The opportunities of the world are waiting to be grasped by those who are in love with what they are doing. When we fall in love with the Lord and his word we will walk through the doors of opportunity to the salvation of the lost. We can never kindle fires in the hearts of others if there is no flame in our own.

The story is told of a man who was trying to tell an old Indian about electricity. He showed him the light bulb and how the bulb burned when it was inserted into the socket. He tried to explain about the generation of electricity, and how it all worked, and the Indian just didn't understand. Finally, the man in desperation took the Indian by the hand and stuck

one finger into an open socket. The Indian immediately withdrew his hand. As he thought about his experience, the light dawned and he exclaimed, "It's the fire within that makes it burn." How desperately we need to have some fires built within!

Fervency is contagious. The zeal and enthusiasm one shows just naturally has an influence upon others. It is said that an old preacher who always had an astounding number of people in his audiences was asked about the key to his success. His answer was. "I get on fire with my subject and the people come from miles around to see me burn."

No pot will boil without a fire under it. No business will ever succeed without zeal and work. Neither will the church ever function properly without enthusiasm. If you don't have it, find someone who does, and "catch" it.

HE REALLY MEANT TO

One of the great disappointments encountered by most is coming face to face with what 'might have been' had we taken advantage of opportunity.

Someone has written of a man standing by Niagara Falls once and seeing an eagle light upon a frozen lamb encased in a piece of floating ice. The eagle stood upon the carcass and feasted as it drifted toward the rapids. Now and then the eagle would proudly lift his head into the air to look around as if to say, "I'm drifting on toward danger but I know what I am doing. I will fly away and make good my escape before it is too late."

With great interest the man observed as the piece of ice and its strange cargo neared the awful crash and roar of the mighty falls. At last he saw the eagle spread his powerful wings and leap for his flight. But alas! While he had been floating and feasting on the carcass, his feet had frozen to the fleece. He leaped and shrieked in vain. The frozen lamb and the eagle went over the falls and down into the foam and darkness of death below.

He really meant to enjoy a good meal and then fly to safety.

Speaking to the Christians in Rome, but in words that warn everyone who "means to" but hesitates, Paul says, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Romans 13:11-13).

How many of the "resolutions" made for 1992 have you already forgotten about, yet, you "really meant to" faithfully observe them?

Most of us allow opportunities to slip from our grasp only to be so sadly disappointed that we failed to act. An unknown author worded it very accurately in these words:

AROUND THE CORNER

Around the corner I have a friend
In this city that has no end;

Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it, a year is gone,
And I never see my old friend's face,
For life is swift and terrible race.

He knows I like him just as well
as in the day when I rang his bell;
And he rang mine. We were younger then,
And now we are busy, tired men;
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name.

"Tomorrow", I say, "I will call on Him,
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But tomorrow comes and tomorrow goes,
And the distance between us grows and grows.
Around the corner! . . . yet miles away . . .
Here's a telegram, Sir, "Jim died today."

Yes, he really meant to. But good intentions do
not grow flowers, nor wash dishes, nor build houses,
nor save souls.

"Mr. Meant-to has a comrade,
And his name is Didn't-Do;
Have you ever chanced to meet them?
Did they ever call on you?"

"These two fellows lived together
In the house of Never-Win;
And I'm told that it is haunted
By the ghost of Might-Have-Been."

WE ARE WRITING OUR "BOOK OF ACTS" NOW

We were not there when Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20). But the fact that we did not hear him say those words does not make them any less true.

The responsibility of the disciples of Jesus is just as great now as was that of those who personally heard those words. Suppose we had been there? What would have been the results? Instead of reading such statements as: "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14), or, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4), with the efforts that characterize the average church member towards soul winning, we would read "And the Church died."

Why this serious charge? We can know what would have been done then by observing what is being done now. The average church member attends services fairly regularly, gives 3 to 4% of his income, lives a decent life, but little else. Few are there who engage in daily service unto the Lord. Few are there who are striving to seek and save the lost. If the book of Acts were an account of our efforts now, how differently would it read?

One of the greatest realities man must recognize is that he will face God himself. "So then every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God" (Romans

14:12). A godly companion, a faithful father or mother, or living friends who may have tried to encourage us will be of no help when we "appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

We are writing our "Book of Acts" now. We are preaching our sermons and wielding our influences. An unknown poet worded it this way:

"There isn't a word that a preacher can say,
No matter how lovely or true;
Nor is there a prayer that his eager lips pray,
That can preach such a sermon as you.
You vowed to serve Christ, and men know that you
did.

They're watching the things that you do
There isn't one action of yours that is hid,
Men are watching and studying you.
You say you're no preacher. Yes, but you preach
A wonderful sermon each day;
The acts of your life are the things that you teach
It isn't the things that you say.
So, Christians, remember you bear his dear name,
your lives are for others to view.
You are living examples, men praise you, or
blame,
And, measure all Christians by you."

If the Lord lets you live a thousand years, would you win any more souls than you have already won???