

ANSWER to Unanswered Prayer

CHAPTER ONE

“O God, where are You when I need You?”

Each day, millions pray. In China, Japan, Southeast Asia, prayers are recited in Buddhist temples, Shintoist pagodas; prayer wheels turn in dozens of Nepalese streams. In Europe, Central and South America; across the United States and Canada, millions pray each day. What happens to all those prayers? Where do they go? Does anyone hear them? Are very many of them answered? Do you pray? Are your prayers answered?

During World War II, Catholic mothers in Germany and France prayed that their sons would be granted safety, and victory. Priests recited petitions in the same language (Latin) to the same God, asking for the same thing. But, during the German advance into France, those prayers went up to God from opposing sides. Wasn't this a little confusing to God?

Each Sunday, tens of millions go to church; tens of millions more see religious programs on television. They pray. They engage in responsive readings; millions recite the “Lord's Prayer” each week. How many of those prayers are answered—really answered, in a definitive, perhaps even a spectacular way?

What about you? Do you pray? Are your prayers answered in a tangible, positive way, leaving absolutely no doubt in your mind?

Sometimes, failing to receive an answer to prayer can prove frustrating, especially to children. For example, a young lad named Peter once wrote a letter to God. You've probably seen samples of such letters—national magazines have published them, and they have been the subject of humorous comment on TV talk shows. Little Peter had been taught about God. He believed God was good, kind—that He was all-powerful, and could do anything. He saw his parents pray at home and in church. Then, disaster struck. When his teacher asked him to write a letter to God about it, Peter wrote, “Dear God: My brother Tommy was hit by a car. My mother prayed to you—and so did I. We begged you to let him live, but you wouldn't. He was only two years old, so he couldn't have sinned that bad. You

didn't have to punish him that way ... you could have saved my little brother, but you let him die. You broke my mother's heart. How can I love you, God?"

Peter's letter is exactly the way millions feel. Why does God hide Himself? Why is He so unreal to us? Why does God allow wars, sickness and disease, rape, murder, tragedy, accidents, death? For centuries, man has sought the answers to these painful questions. Where is God when you're really in pain?

Philosophers and theologians alike fail to provide us with ready answers. As a newspaper columnist wrote, "Suffering of innocent people is something we cannot understand."

"Surely, His ways are mysterious, and past finding out," intones the theologian, quoting scripture.

Pastors have sought for generations to comfort the bereaved at funerals—trying to provide some insight into the bitter question WHY? Why this or that person—why now? And why that way? Why are children born malformed, deaf, blind, dumb? Why crib death? Are there any answers, or must we remain forever helplessly asking "why"?

We humans tend to blame God for our failures and congratulate ourselves for our successes. When we're comfortable, successful, happy, we have no special need of God. But when we're sick, frightened, poverty-stricken, or experiencing the loss of a loved one—we cry out to Him in anguish of soul. We think of so many ways in which it all seems so unfair, somehow.

One man professed to be an atheist because he couldn't rationalize suffering and the goodness of an all-powerful God. He wrote, "If I had the power to fashion the universe and remake it nearer my heart's desire, there would be no blind, no deaf, no dumb; there would be no crippled, and each child born would live free of disease and possess a mentality capable of withstanding all the rebuffs of life. There would be no deaths by accident. There would be no earthquakes, cyclones or tornadoes. Unless and until such a condition comes to pass, and we may live free from disease, sorrow and suffering, there is no God in this vast universe worthy of homage." At first glance, this may sound like a logical enough position. But on second thought, what causes blindness, deafness, dumbness, endemic disease? What causes accidents—why do tragedies occur? The atheist didn't consider the element of free moral agency. Since there is a God, and God has

created we human beings with a mind; with free choice, He has given us personal control over our own lives.

Man has, in too many cases, invited God out of his life. God has cooperated. God does not produce “Monday-morning automobiles” (cars produced by assembly-line workers with Monday-morning hangovers) with twenty-five easily discernible factory defects—careless, hung-over workmen do. God does not force mothers to turn their attention to morning sitcoms or soaps while their children stray from the yard to dash into the street after a rolling ball; God does not produce careless, indifferent, slipshod workmanship in products which often betray their users. God is not the One who causes accidents—men are. Yet, when accidents occur, man is quick to call out to God for relief—sometimes bitterly indicting a seemingly uncaring Deity for aloofness.

But is it God who is aloof, or we humans who ignore Him, and His will in our lives? Would you want God interfering in your personal life on a daily basis? Think about it.

Are you a smoker? I smoked for about 8 years, and it was a terrible ordeal to quit. Finally, with God’s help, and by discontinuing some associations; quitting the bowling league, staying away from situations where I was tempted to smoke, I broke the two-pack-a-day habit I had during my years in the Navy. I quit in 1953. That was about two years before Dr. Cuyler Hammond released his report showing the correlation between cigarette smoking and lung cancer—and years before the explosion of filter tips, longer cigarettes, and all the advertisements about the amount of “tar” contained in each. Today, cigarette advertising is banned from television; a clear warning is required on each ad, or package, saying smoking causes lung cancer.

If you smoke, would you like God to prevent it?

Try to imagine the scene, if someone who smoked was not necessarily an atheist, but not devoutly religious, either. Perhaps our smoker believes God may exist, perhaps goes to church a time or two each year, watches a religious TV program now and then; thinks he has all the bases covered.

But, one day, he tries to reach for his shirt pocket to extract a cigarette. Suddenly, his hand is stopped short of his shirt by some invisible, powerful force. He is shocked, wondering if he is having seizure, a cramp, an epileptic fit. He

tries with the other hand. Just as he is about to extract the pack, his arm is stopped in mid-air by a powerful, unseen force! He seizes the arm with his other hand, tries to guide it to his shirt pocket. Again, some compelling force stops him from reaching his cigarettes! He calls to a friend, and asks him to reach his cigarettes. His friend tries it—only to be stopped by some sort of seizure. They look at each other in dumbfounded amazement. The smoker bends over, shakes his shirt, and the cigarettes fall to the floor. He tries to reach them. He can't. Some power prevents it. Sobbing in desperation, bewildered by what's happening, he asks his friend to light up, and blow smoke in his face. The friend lights a cigarette, and tries to blow smoke into his face. But the smoke simply disappears as it comes out of his mouth! Our smoker, bewildered, frightened, angry, frustrated, throws himself to the ground in a mindless frenzy! Finally, he is carried to a padded cell, placed in a straight-jacket, so he can't hurt himself, or commit suicide!

Unrealistic? Not when you think about it. Apply the same scene to a developing affair between a married person and a friend. What if their attempts at physical contact were somehow barred by the intervention of a powerful force—an invisible presence?

What if God prevented you from doing anything which was harmful to you? It might give you better health, prolong your life, prevent accidents—but it would also remove your free moral agency; it would take away volition; make you into a robot, an automaton. God is not interested in producing robots—He is interested in reproducing after His own kind; the family of God! And He wants the development of righteous, holy character, not the bovine acquiescence of a pre-programmed robot. The atheist was wrong. The very fact that we have free moral agency; the fact that God allows us to choose between good and evil proves there is a God.

Accidents, tragedies are heart-breaking, difficult to understand. But God does not cause them—He merely fails to prevent them, in the same fashion that He does not intrude into our lives in a forceful sense; does not prevent us from doing things that are harmful to us.

Is there a God? If SO, can you prove it? Is God a personal Being, who hears and answers prayers? Of course, such a question is deserving of a book, or several of them. But yes, there is a God, and you can prove it. How? By the laws of science;

by history, archaeology, by logic, and by the Bible.

There are seven proofs God exists. Each is deserving of a book to thoroughly explain, but in brief, they are:

(1) CREATION. Matter exists. The universe exists. It is. Our own galaxy, and our vast solar system, with our “orange dwarf star,” the sun, positioned precisely where it needs to be to provide stored energy for our fossil fuels, daylight, our seasons; all this is but an infinitesimal part of what is actually there—the universe. Our own galaxy is said to consist of two hundred billion, billion stars—many of them much larger than our sun. The good, green earth is said to be like one speck of sand in all the seashores on earth, in comparison to its place in our galaxy. No one doubts the universe, we merely stand in awe of it—heart-stopping, mind-boggling, breathtaking awe. Matter exists. We exist. Creation—the incredible array of interdependent, symbiotic life forms—it is. Your logical mind demands a Creator for a creation.

(2) LAW. And what of the forces that act upon creation? What of the laws of thermodynamics; of the conservation of energy? What of the laws which uphold the nuclear reaction in our sun which gives us heat and light? Think of the irrevocable, immutable, absolute laws of physics, chemistry, of the physical sciences. What of the cleavage properties of minerals? The laws governing how they form, or are broken down? What of gravity, the magnetic field of earth, inertia? Science must work within such laws to invent, design, and produce the wondrous machines that can make life so abundant. Aerodynamics is a case in point. Aircraft are designed so as to overcome drag by devices such as jet or propeller-driven engines and airfoils, or wings, which produce lift. Bricks can't fly—but airplanes can. Science must comply with existing laws, finding efficient means to obey principles and laws which are immutable, unchangeable, from creation. When those laws are broken, we suffer. Break the laws, and they break us. Get in harmony with them, obey them, and they bless us. Immutable laws—the laws governing the properties of creation itself—these require a great LAWGIVER.

(3) LIFE. You and I are alive. Billions of creatures, from man to huge blue whales; from micro-organisms to yellowfin tuna; from tiny shrews to elephants, we all share something we call “life.” Life is a true cycle. It is broken only by death, and its only beginning is through pre-existing life of the same kind.

Evolutionary thought proposes that randomness produced life. Do explosions in print shops produce dictionaries and encyclopedias? Think of the myriad forms of life—plant, animal, fish, bird, insect, micro-bacterial life. Does your logical mind believe life came from the not-living? No. It demands that life comes from life—just as you came from your parents, and they from their parents, and so on. Life requires a Great Life-giver! All life must come from a life SOURCE!

(4) DESIGN. Look around you at the incredible design of our universe, our solar system, the earth, and all of matter, all life forms.

Think of your own body; your mind. Our marvelously constructed bodies are an absolute miracle of design. Is anything superior, in the known universe, to the human hand? With it, we can perform fantastic feats; from concert violinist to skillful surgeon, from champion boxer to astronaut; from architect to artist—the human hand is a marvel of engineering design.

What of the eye? Have you ever bothered to renew the smorgasbord of knowledge you received during your years of formal education—to reacquaint yourself with the functions of your own body? Study an encyclopedia on the human eye; study our muscular, digestive, nervous, skeletal, circulatory systems. Study articles on our vital organs; glands that affect our growth, reproduction, physical health, digestion, mental ability. Think of the feather of a bird, the wing of a fly; the symbiotic relationship between blue whales and plankton, or krill. What of the food chain—the microorganisms that produce humus; soil that grows herbs, vegetables, and fruit; our digestive systems with bacteria that help us utilize our sustaining foods; our blood stream that carries life-giving oxygen and foods to our cells?

Wherever you look in nature, you see harmonious, intricate, breathtaking design. Such marvels of design require a Great DESIGNER! Intricate design is not the result of blind accident, of happenstance, any more than a Boeing 747 could grow like fungus in a field.

(5) SUSTAINER. What of the continual functioning of the universe itself? What of the controlled forces we see at work; from gravity to erosion—the exact place of the continental masses in relationship to each other; the earth's tectonic plates, great oceans with their powerful currents, polar ice caps, weather systems?

What keeps it all going? Why is it so dependable, so constant? Again, laws. The

sustaining of such laws—the seemingly guaranteed, aeons-long, continuous operation of forces and energies which, if they acted in capricious disarray, would eradicate man from this earth, are instead dependable, lawful, constantly predictable. Laws governing the conservation of energy; the continual intake of carbon 14 into living things from the sun; the gradual breakdown of radioactive carbon into lead; the deposition of rocks and forming of strata; the daily tides; the earth's annual journey around the sun, the moon's monthly journey around the earth; our weather and seasons—such laws operate like a finely-tuned Swiss watch. Why? How? All this requires a sustaining force—a Great SUSTAINER!

(6) FULFILLED PROPHECY. Another great proof God exists is found through studying the many examples of fulfilled prophecies in the Bible. There were many, many prophecies which portrayed the coming of Christ as Messiah; many others which were fulfilled in specific things He said, or did. The Gospels relate these—continual references are made as to how Christ fulfilled this or that prophecy, spoken or written centuries before.

Are you a doubter? Study the 11th chapter of Daniel with Rawlinson's Ancient History and other profane sources to hand. In this remarkable chapter, you will see generations of kings; the Seleucidae of Syria and the lesser Pharaohs of Egypt, the Ptolmeys, locked in bitter struggle over Palestine. Hundreds of years before the fact, God's prophet Daniel was given dreams and visions of what was to become history. He foretold the rise and fall of the ancient Babylonian Empire, the Persian Empire, the Greco-Macedonian Empire; the death of Alexander the Great and the division of his empire by his four generals; the rise and fall of the Roman Empire.

There are dozens of other examples. Theological libraries are filled with books attesting to the remarkable accuracy of the Prophets of old. Great city states and empires have come and gone—their emergence and destruction clearly set down in Bible prophecy centuries before it happened. Ancient Tyre, Sidon, Babylon, Rome all are mentioned, and in some cases, in fine detail. Bible prophecy and history cannot be separated.

Will skeptics deny history and archaeology? The monuments and ancient buildings of the near east and Mediterranean world bear silent testimony to many pages of fulfilled Bible prophecy. Rome itself was predicted to rise and fall—and experience successive revivals down into our time. Christ was the greatest of all

prophets—and who can deny that He prophesied of our own time, when He warned that if God did not cut short the days, a time would come when all human life could be erased from the earth?

He said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved [alive], but for the elect’s sake, those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:21, 22). Clearly, Jesus spoke of a time in which the destruction of humanity would finally become possible—our time, now. Yet, He gives us glorious hope in the face of awesome weapons of destruction—for He reaffirms that God does exist; that He will cut short the days of global chaos; that He will intervene to save mankind from himself.

Not only are there hundreds of fulfilled prophecies of the past; those which are absolutely, corroborated by history and the spade of the archaeologist, but there are prophecies which apply to our modern times, as well. Fulfilled prophecy is surely a proof God exists.

(7) ANSWERED PRAYER. Now we come to the most personal proof—a proof God exists that is absolute, incontrovertible, to those of us who have received dramatic, undeniable answers to prayer. Atheists and skeptics will of course deny answered prayer, placing it on the level of a placebo. Arguing about the historical accounts concerning Christ’s miracles is useless, for there are no living witnesses, and, in any case, the skeptic would discount them as unreliable. But to the believer—the individual who has experienced, seen, felt, known the answer to prayer in a vivid, undeniable, personal experience, the existence of a loving, powerful God is clearly proved. I know God answers prayers—I know, by the same token, that there are many prayers He seems not to answer—or perhaps defers to answer.

A few days after I had begun writing this book, my wife and I enjoyed a visit from my sister, Beverly. She brought with her from California two letters she had received from an old friend of the family—letters written by my mother. One had been written from Astoria, Oregon, in 1927, almost three years before I was born. In it, my mother told of an absolutely dumbfounding, inspiring, miraculous answer to prayer. I read the letter for the first time never having known of its existence before, only the morning before writing these lines. My mother related how she had been bitten on the arm by an Airedale dog; a rather serious wound. She went

to the doctor, who cleansed and bandaged it.

But a couple of days later, she drove a thorn from a rose bush deep into her little finger. It became infected, and she developed blood poisoning. Then, while under the doctor's care for this development, she contracted a severe case of laryngitis. She wrote to her friend that it had developed into what they commonly called "quinsy" at that time. The doctor lanced the infection several times, but it refused to heal up. She had a terrible fever, but she finally seemed to stabilize.

The doctor visited her several times. Finally, he said he would have to open the finger to scrape the bone, in order to rid her of the infection. Then came the day when my mother's jaw locked shut. She could neither eat nor drink; her body weight, a normal 102 or so, had gone down to 84! She was very near death, and the doctor plainly indicated such, not venturing how long she had. But a neighbor lady asked my father and my mother's sister, my aunt Bertha, if the family believed in "divine healing," or answers to prayer. My mother had been reared a Methodist, my father a Quaker. They said yes, they did. The neighbor lady told them of a "Christian family" who she said had "great faith," and who believed in prayer. She asked if it would be all right if they came over to pray for my mother.

My mom's letter, written so long ago, related how the man and his wife, together with the neighbor lady, joined my father and mother at Mom's bedside. He began to pray in a quiet, sober manner, almost as if in conversation with God, reminding God of His promises to heal—quoting scriptures which confirmed those promises. He pulled out a small vial of olive oil and anointed her forehead with oil, laying his hands on her head. Then, he thanked God for having heard and answered the prayer—even before he got up from his knees! He sounded sure, as if they already had received the answer!

My mom's letter related how she immediately sat up; her jaw loosened, she was able to drink something. Though it was winter, she got out of bed, put on her coat, and walked outside with my father, to take a brief stroll under the stars, thanking God. She had been confined to bed for so long, she felt she had to get up, and go outside.

She related how the large abscesses in her throat, swollen hugely both inside and out, had suddenly disappeared! The pain and fever left! She was immediately strengthened! She went back into the house, went to sleep—the first good, full

night's sleep in weeks, slept until almost noon the next day, and then got up and went about her household chores again. The doctor was dumbfounded—he openly admitted it was a miracle! A day or so later, my father's brother and his wife came to see my mother, expecting to find her near death.

When she walked out of the house to meet their car in the driveway, they looked as if they had seen a ghost, my mother wrote.

I had heard my parents describe this miraculous healing many times while I was growing up—but to see my mother's own handwriting in a letter she had written to a dear friend in Iowa; a letter which had been in the possession of her friend's family all these years—a letter I didn't know existed—and to read it now, well, I can't help wondering if God wanted me to put it into this book as a source of inspiration and encouragement to many who desperately need an answer to prayer.

Miracles do happen. Prayers are answered. I know. I wouldn't be here if they weren't! I literally owe my life to my mother's neighbor friends; to my mother's faith, and to God.

But there is much more to it than mere need; even desperate need. There are certain conditions to prayer—some requirements on our part.

Few seem to understand that God has made answered prayer conditional. That is, there are keys to answered prayer; formulas. In this book, using the outline of the famous “ Lord's Prayer,” we shall see what those formulas are. By the time you have finished this book, you will understand, as never before, why so many prayers seem to go unanswered—and you will understand how to receive an answer to your own personal, heartfelt prayers to God.

Hopefully, you will never again cry out, “O God, where are You when I need You?”

CHAPTER TWO

“Our Father...”

So begins the Lord's Prayer. Hundreds of millions can recite it in many different languages. But what does it mean to all those people? What does it mean to you?

The title naturally conveys a familiar relationship. We are told to address the God

to Whom Jesus referred as His “Father” as our Father. Why? Why not “mother” (as some may prefer), or “God,” or “Great One in the sky”? Why did Jesus tell us to use a family title, the name connoting fatherhood?

First, because God is the Author of all life. He is the ultimate Creator, even though Jesus Christ was the Divine Spokesman, or the Executive Member of the Godhead who did the creating—the Logos (Greek for “Spokesman”) who issued the command, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:14; John 1:3). Therefore, God is the Father of all humankind. He is not “Big Brother,” or some anonymous “First Cause,” but the actual Progenitor of the human race. As we have seen, God is the Lifegiver of us all.

To most of us, our own fathers come immediately to mind when using the name “father.” Probably, in a subliminal way, our own fathers—the kind of persons they are, or were—subtly color our impressions of just Who, or What we are addressing in heaven.

Unfortunately, only about fifteen percent of American families are a true family unit, with parents and children in traditional roles. Millions of ill-prepared single parents strive to rear children (fifty percent of which are illegitimate) without a father figure in the home. As our society drifts further from the God ordained family unit—the building block of any normal society—millions of new citizens have no true father role model; have no prior knowledge of their father. Millions do not know who he was.

But for those who do, and they still represent the vast majority, it is quite possible that he shaped their concepts about God. What kind of a father is (or was) he? Was he mild-mannered, easy-going, tender; brusque, harsh, remote; a stern disciplinarian or a kind, loving provider? Unfortunately, there are no schools for training fathers; no “licenses” issued to those qualifying, nor certificates of merit, nor degrees. Today, children beget children; fathers are too often teenagers.

Since the impact of the title “father” is largely shaped by our own experiences, it is quite logical that most of us tend to grope for concepts which will help us understand this Divine Being, this hidden, unseen God who wishes to be called “Father,” in terms of our own human experiences. Either our own father, or some older role model; a father in the neighborhood, an uncle, a grandfather, may have shaped our concepts of what “father” is all about.

A father, of course, is merely any male who has procreated (produced children), whether a boy of sixteen, or a successful businessman of forty.

Has there ever lived a son or daughter who has not found, in at least some corner of their heart, a place for love of father? To be sure, there are far fewer “good” fathers than there should be, but because he is life-giver, the one who engendered us, gave us our being, we carry to our graves some of his hereditary traits; his genes, some of his physical characteristics like our height, weight, color and texture of skin, color of hair and eyes, perhaps even marked talents and abilities. We are a mixed copy of our fathers and mothers. No matter what, we are here because of them.

When we refer to God as our Father, we are not only addressing Him as our spiritual Life-giver; we are also ascribing to Him the title of Beginner, or Author of all life—ours included. “Father” is a common title.

Francis Asbury is known as the “Father of American Methodism,” while Aeschylus is called the “Father of Greek Tragedy.” Americans know George Washington as the “Father of his country,” and doctors refer to Hippocrates as the “Father of medicine.” The father of the constitution? James Madison.

Your father was somebody. Once, when Margaret had apparently been voicing some negative feelings, her father wrote to her, “Your dad will never be reckoned among the great. But you can be sure he did his level best and gave all he had to his country. There is an epitaph in Boothill Cemetery in Tombstone, Arizona, which reads, ‘Here lies Jack Williams; he done his damndest. What more can a person do?’ ” (Harry Truman).

Fathers can be anybody. At least, to other people. They can be alcoholics, drug-abusers, rapists, arsonists, murderers; they can be doctors, dentists, lawyers, politicians, truck drivers, busboys, senators, farmers, aeronautical engineers, pilots, assembly-line workers, clerks, technicians, deliverymen, scientists, morticians, astronauts, or generals.

Fathers can be kind, generous, humorous; or bitter, pecuniary, selfish. They can be gifted with a sense of humor, or possessed of a violent, uncontrollable temper. They can be good husbands, providers, protectors, breadwinners—or lazy, indolent, selfish failures. They can be ebullient, positive, happy, fulfilled; or self-pitying, despairing, resentful. They can be an amazingly complex mixture of many

of the above.

Did your father beat you, molest you, abuse you? Did he love you, comfort you, encourage you? Did he never speak a single word against your mother in your hearing—or did he beat your mother, spitting epithets at her in the hearing of the children?

Theodore Hesburgh wrote, “The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother.” How true. Any person fortunate enough to have been brought up by loving, traditional parents in proper roles will have a fairly easy time understanding God’s words about the Heavenly Father of us all; understanding God as a kind, loving, merciful Father who wants only the best for us.

The ancient Latin proverb, “Like father, like son,” acknowledges the powerful influences of heredity and environment on each of us, the significant influence of our human fathers in our lives . Like many old adages and sayings (where there’s smoke, there’s fire), it is not necessarily true, but it has a measure of truth. One quotation that is especially poignant for me is that of Samuel Johnson in his book *Boswell’s Life*, (July 14th, 1763), who said, “There must always be a struggle between a father and son, while one aims at power and the other at independence.”

Often, famous men have had famous fathers. A well-known case in point is that of General Douglas MacArthur whose father, military governor of the Philippines, was a role model for him. Douglas was to write, “By profession I am a soldier and take pride in that fact. But I am prouder—infinately prouder—to be a father. A soldier destroys in order to build; the father only builds, never destroys. The one has the potentiality of death; the other embodies creation and life. And while the hordes of death are mighty, the battalions of life are mightier still. It is my hope that my son, when I am gone, will remember me not from the battle but in the home repeating with him our simple daily prayer, ‘Our Father, who art in heaven...’ ”

Harry S. Truman said, “My father was not a failure. After all, he was the father of the President of the United States!”

Other famous people have observed and commented on the relationship each had to his sire. Mozart, as a boy, was quoted as saying, “Directly after God in heaven

comes Papa, “ and Margaret Trumbell wrote, “No man is responsible for his father. That is entirely his mother’s affair.”

With his usual acid wit, the well-known pessimist and satyrist, Sir Bertrand Russell, in *Why I am not a Christian*, wrote, “The place of the father in the modern suburban family is a very small one particularly if he plays golf, which he usually does.”

In a lighter vein, fathers are said to be “men who don’t practice birth control,” and “a man who has just missed being a bachelor by an heir.” Perhaps it was a disillusioned father who said of Father’s Day, “It’s the day to remember the forgotten man,” or “a holiday when your son lets you wear your new necktie first.”

My father was 38 years of age when I was born. A generation apart, we had virtually no father-son relationship such as those commonly enjoyed by most youngsters growing up. We never went camping, hunting, fishing together. By the time I was old enough to do such things, my father was middle-aged, and totally involved in the demanding, time-consuming work of his ministry. He was in the home only for eating and sleeping; then, off to the office, or another trip somewhere.

Strongly authoritarian, he ruled his family with an iron hand. How well my two sisters and I remember the state of impending doom when our mother would say, “I’m going to tell your father about this when he gets home.” The result was two very badly frightened little boys, my brother Dick and I, sweating out the hours until the punishment our mother was unwilling to dish out was systematically administered by our father.

I really don’t remember the first time I ever heard the Lord’s Prayer, or read it, for I was very young. However, the name “father” never failed to convey to my mind impressions of what “father” meant from my own childhood experiences. Not that all dad did was punish. Far from it.

There was also the Dad who would give us a quarter now and then, or who, sometimes grumpily, would heat the water to a boil, pour it over and into the radiator on our old Graham, manage to start the balky, cold engine during one of Oregon’s typical winter mornings, and take us to school after Mom had allowed us to oversleep.

I can remember the rough wool of his jacket, the faint smell of his after-shave when we climbed into his lap on a rare occasion to enjoy a session of his reading the Sunday funnies to us. How well I remember the night I awoke, screaming, after a neighbor boy had told me a gruesome story about a haunted hospital; an ancient, deserted old building with bloody knives, rusty needles, syringes, operating tables, and ghosts in the elevators. I was probably about five. My screams brought my parents, who promptly told me to come and get into the bed with them. There, I was safe—and if my father's faint snoring kept me awake, it was not because it bothered me. Quite the contrary, it reassured me. Dad could deal with the knives and ghosts even if he had to haul out the ping pong paddle. Frightened little boys and girls always know everything will be all right if they are near their mother and father.

My human father was a man of great vision, passion, emotion; driving energy to succeed. He was generous to a fault—giving more of material things than of himself, but anxious to see the glow of enjoyment on the faces of his family or friends when he bestowed some gift or favor. Perhaps one of his worst faults was that of instantly leaping to wrong conclusions, failing to give his children (or anyone else) the benefit of the doubt. He was easily convinced by first impressions.

How many of us, whose fathers and mothers are no longer living, have so earnestly wished we could have expressed more love, more concern, more honor to them while they were alive? By the same token, what parent, if he loses a child, has not wished he could have expressed himself more deeply while the child was alive? Since we are seemingly so shy, so embarrassed, so remote in our feelings toward our human parents or children, can we learn the all-important lesson, before it is everlastingly too late, that God does not hear those who ignore Him in their daily lives? Do you thrive on love? Believe it or not, so does God! God wants our love! He wants our worship, our deep appreciation, our adoration! He does not respond to aloofness, to inattention!

Obviously, if you pray at all, you want God's undivided attention! Fine. When does He have YOURS? The Bible shows us that once-in-a-while prayers—prayers only in times of emergency, prayers only a few times a year—are simply not heard.

Think of the following analogy: As a transmitter of prayer, you are a spiritual dynamo or a power source. However, like the incandescent lights in your home,

you can only give out power as you receive it. As you know, electricity flows in a current. See the socket in the wall? Notice it has two holes in it, to establish both a positive and a negative contact so the current will flow in a continuous circuit. God is our Power source. When we are in constant touch with Him, we are imbued with spiritual power. Prayer is like a circuit. God gives us the spiritual power, and we communicate with Him on His “wave length,” called prayer.

Today, we enjoy a marvelous array of battery-operated mechanical devices, from portable telephones to tiny vacuum cleaners for our cars and boats. When we’re not using them, they are plugged in to a power source, or they finally run down and will not function. As a child of God, we need continual contact with Him, or we lose our spiritual energy, our spiritual power.

A desperate prayer every year or so has little chance of reception because the spiritual “batteries” that are operating the spiritual transmitter are too weak. Of course, we have to start someplace, so, even though terribly weak (from lack of prayer, lack of personal Bible study, lack of staying in communication with God), we can begin to pray again, and God will hear us. Naturally, analogies break down at some point, and the one above is not to suggest God will not hear us, even after years of lack of communication with Him, for He will! God will hear the most desperate sinner, if the sinner calls out to Him broken-heartedly, in deep contrition, and seeks contact with God. But “tired Christians” cannot expect dramatic answers to prayer if they seldom pray.

When you set yourself to really spend time with God in prayer, then you are “charging your spiritual batteries,” as surely as you are plugging in a portable electrical utensil of some kind to its power source. Those who pray only casually, perhaps once a year or so, should not really expect very dramatic results. Those who pray daily will probably tell you they get results— often!

Jesus said we are to address our Eternal Creator as if a personal Father, our Spiritual Progenitor. Is He listening? Is it difficult to talk to God? Is He so far away we can never hope to reach Him? Is prayer, after all, merely a spiritual placebo, a talisman we clutch in times of extremes? Or is God near enough that we can be heard?

Paul put it this way, “...for in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The Bible insists that God is not far from us, that His ears are always open

to our cries, that His eyes are upon us. We are told He is but a prayer away—as instantly available, nay, more so, than our closest friend over the telephone.

Jesus Christ instructed us to pray that we and our loved ones be accounted worthy to receive special, divine protection during calamitous wars, droughts, famines, natural disasters.

Speaking of frightening world conditions, the times in which we live, He said, “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).

Of course it is a temptation to pray only selfishly. I remember the story about a man who, receiving counseling about prayer from his minister, was told he had a bad case of the “gimmes.” It seems his prayers largely consisted of “Please gimme this, gimme that, gimme the other thing.” He was praying to receive more than he was praying for others.

Paul said many of our prayers should be directed away from self; should be concerned with others around us, those who affect our lives. He said, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty ... I will that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:1-8).

When we address God in heaven above as “Our Father,” we are coming to Him as His begotten child. Peter said we are to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). When we receive God’s Holy Spirit, after repentance and baptism, we are begotten as His child! Read 1 Corinthians 12:13, together with Romans 8:9-15.

Christ was Son of God, called the “First-begotten” and the “Firstborn from the dead” (Romans 8:29). John, the disciple closest to Jesus in a personal sense, wrote of Him, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made ... He was in the world ... and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to

become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name ... and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-14).

The genealogies of Matthew's first and Luke's fourth chapter clearly establish Christ as the Son of God. His life's work, His preaching, His miracles, and especially the fact of His resurrection, add positive proof that He was who He said He was—the only begotten, the first begotten of God—the very Son of God.

Because Christ was God's own Son, He referred to Him as "The Father." As we shall see in the chapter concerning God's names, He has many, many other titles, several names. Yet, when we pray, Christ says we must address Him as our spiritual Father.

Some doubt that Jesus was a real person. Many scoff at the miracles of Christ, say He could not have been the Son of God, and thus set aside the origins of the Christian religion. But men don't willingly die for what they know to be an hoax, the perpetration of a myth. Yet, hundreds went to their deaths, refusing to disavow the miraculous things they had seen, refusing to impugn their personal experiences with Christ, choosing torture and death rather than defilement of Christian conscience.

That Jesus Christ lived, that He was an authentic historical figure, is one of the most substantiated facts in all history. His life, death, burial and resurrection are central to the entire concept of Christianity, and therefore to Western Civilization.

Jesus Christ was the First-begotten from the Father; the first time in all history a human being had been injected into the human race who was not merely human, but also of divine origins.

Christ wants us to pray to our Father in heaven in a child-like, innocent, humble, supplicatory manner; trusting, hopeful, anticipatory; devoid of pride or vanity. On one occasion, when the crowds surrounding Him attempted to present their little children to Him so that He might bless them, His disciples tried to discourage them, thinking Christ had no time for children. But He said, "Suffer [permit, be tolerant of] little children, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:13-14).

On another occasion, His disciples were arguing about who should be the greatest

in His Kingdom, and "...Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me' " (Matthew 18:1-5).

Notice well those words! Christ said we must become converted, changed, begotten of God as His children before we may enter His Kingdom. It is only those who approach God as converted, meek, humble little children—In child-like trust and innocent wonder, who are truly communicating with God.

Vanity, selfishness, pride, evil motives, these cancel communication with God as surely as if one dialed the wrong frequency on a radio transmitter. God simply does not listen unless we approach Him as an humble, trusting little child.

This is a vitally important key to answered prayer. Are you converted? Have you truly repented of your sins? Have you asked God for forgiveness? As we shall see, this continual seeking for daily forgiveness for our shortcomings is the quintessential element in successful prayer.

Is it only a coincidence that the name for "father" is the first word in the Hebrew language and the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet? "Father" in Hebrew is Awb. In English, we must progress to the sixth letter and through hundreds of words, until we come to "father" in a dictionary. Not so in Hebrew. It is first. Number one.

The Bible stresses the absolute primacy of God the Father. Jesus reveals that He and His Father, though One in spirit, purpose and mind, are nevertheless in a Father-Son relationship.

Christ said repeatedly He spoke not of and for Himself, but insisted the Father gave Him the messages He delivered; that the Father was the Supreme authority. How can one expect an answer to prayer unless one acknowledges the absolute supremacy of God in one's life? Can you go to God with urgent requests unless you trust in Him absolutely? Can you trust Him without knowing Him, knowing His purpose in your life? If you are truly converted, the most natural way to address God is to simply call out to Him as an heavenly Father.

Paul put it this way: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [Greek, “son-ship”], whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’ ” (Romans 8:14-15).

No human being can enter into the Kingdom of God without prayer. None of us can fulfill his personal destiny, the purpose for our existence, without discovering, and communicating with, the true God. Prayer is as essential to us spiritually as eating and drinking is essential physically. It is our spiritual sustenance, our life’s blood. Without prayer—answered prayer, two-way communication with God—we will shrivel and die spiritually as surely as flowers and shrubs will die without water.

Jesus instructed us to pray. He intended that we voice our innermost feelings; our guilt, our hopes, dreams, desires; our most personal frustrations and anxieties—that we come clean with God, baring our souls in the deepest, most private communication.

He also intended that our opening words of prayer establish contact with God. As a jet pilot, I am very familiar with the Air Traffic Controller system. Without it, flight operations in the United States at altitudes above 18,000 feet are impossible. See those wispy contrails of moisture in the sky from a passing jet? Each one of them is in constant communication with a ground controller in some nearby sector who sits before a radar screen upon which is a blip of light which represents that airplane.

Beside that light is a computer-generated readout obtained from the flight plan and the transponder code from the airplane, identifying the aircraft by number, giving its altitude, its ground speed, and other information.

When the jet has progressed to the point that another radar sector can better receive its electronic image, the controller issues a command, “United heavy 456, contact Albuquerque Center on 134.45.” The pilot (or, usually, the co-pilot) acknowledges the command, switches radio frequencies, and says into the microphone, “Albuquerque Center, this is United 456, level three seven zero.” The center acknowledges, and the crew knows the controller on the ground has identified the blip on his screen, sees it in clear relationship to all the other electronic blips, has heard audible confirmation that the transponder readout of

the jet's altitude is accurate, and can keep all the aircraft in his sector at their assigned altitudes, at appropriate distances from each other, avoiding disastrous collisions and loss of life. Ham radio operators use the same thing—certain frequencies—to contact other ham operators half a world away.

Opening a prayer with the humble words “Our Father,” is like establishing positive communication with a controller. We must be on the right “wave length” to communicate with God. Actually, our own spiritual state; whether or not we are willing to obey God, whether we are asking according to His will; our personal life's current condition—our attitude—these are as highly significant in communicating to God as having the right frequency on a VHF radio transmitter.

Isn't it more than mildly curious that Jesus did not say we should immediately state our own names, addresses, and social security numbers when we pray? But He didn't. God's great mind is vastly superior to the minds of all humans and all computers combined. When we establish contact with God, He instantly knows exactly who we are, where we are, what we are doing. So the expression “Our Father” is far more than a mere “religious” title of some sort; it establishes a contact with God; it acknowledges that we are His offspring. It is the way He wants to be addressed.

Jesus Christ intends we learn all there is to know about our Heavenly Father; get to really KNOW Him, through the scriptures, and through Christ's own examples. Jesus Christ was the “stamped impress,” or the exact similitude, the “carbon copy” of the Father.

The apostle Paul wrote to the scattered Jews of the Diaspora, “God, who at different times and in various manners spoke unto the patriarchs by the prophets, has in these later times spoken unto us by His Son, who He has appointed Heir of all things, by Whom He made the Universe. Who, being the very brightness of His glory, and the express image [exact replica] of the Father's Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had, by Himself, purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1-3 paraphrased).

The Greek word for the word “image” is *karakter*, from which we take our English word of similar spelling, with all it conveys. Paul was inspired to say that Jesus Christ was an exact replica of the Father; that His personality, His character, were as if a mirror image. The more you learn about Christ, His teachings,

examples; His lifestyle, His miracles, His tenderness, compassion; His anger at posturing religionists; His feelings toward the sin-sick and afflicted, the more you learn about the Father in Heaven.

His own disciples were curious about this “Father” of whom He so frequently spoke. Once, overcome with curiosity about Jesus’ frequent references to His Father, one of His disciples asked, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be sufficient for us.” But Jesus answered, “Have I been with you for so long a time, and yet you have not known me, Phillip? He that has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:8-9, paraphrased). Thus, we learn that God has “human” form, or, more to the point, that we human beings are made in the image of God.

The Bible says His eyes are upon those that seek after Him, speaks of His arm not being shortened that it cannot help in time of need, speaks of His face shining upon the just.

The Bible gives us many examples of men’s encounters with angels. They appear as human beings, as in the case of Christ’s appearance to Abraham, and the two angels who rescued Lot. So man-like did they appear that the citizens of perverted Sodom lusted after them (Genesis 19:1-5).

Moses, overcome by curiosity, asked God to show Himself. God declined, but, after insistent appeal, allowed Moses to see His hind parts as He passed by—saying, “No man can look on the face of God and live.” In the first chapter of Revelation, Christ is pictured in His resurrected glory as having head, torso, arms, legs, feet. God’s Word says He made man in the image of God, that God has the same shape and form as do we humans.

Unfortunately, the average person who recites the “Lord’s Prayer” may know little or nothing of Jesus’ examples, His teachings and instructions, His personality, His life’s record. He may not know, for example, that Christ was an ordinary-looking person, impossible to pick out of a crowd; that the Bible says He had “no form or comeliness, that when we see Him, we should desire Him” (Isaiah 53:2).

If we expect answers to prayer, we must come to know to Whom we are praying—really communicate with Him. How can we expect an answer to prayer if we are praying “vaguely,” as if in bluffed images? Can the jet pilot contact the ground controller by simply dialing any frequency out of the hundreds that are

available? Can you call a friend by dialing random numbers on your telephone? Can you write to a relative by addressing your letter, "Dear Someone, somewhere"?

The key to answered prayer is to establish contact. Prayer is not empty ceremony, it is powerful, personal, private communication. It must be a two-way communication, or it is meaningless!

And remember, Jesus Christ didn't say, "IF" you pray, He said, "WHEN" you pray! Jesus Christ set an example of prayer. He prayed for literally hours at a time, rising early in the morning to go to a private place, climbing a steep mountain to escape His disciples and the crowds, finding a place to be alone with His Heavenly Father in earnest prayer.

Christ prayed until He perspired with the effort, prayed with groans and cries, prayed aloud, or prayed within Himself, in His mind. The Gospels are replete with examples of His life of closeness to God—His life of prayer.

Christ made His prayers personal. On many an occasion, it was as if He interrupted a human conversation to speak to His Father in heaven.

At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus had listened to the frantic weeping of Mary, and all of Lazarus' family and friends. Because of their anguish, and because of His own pain upon seeing their lack of faith (not because of a sense of "loss" or pain on his own part for He knew what was to happen), Jesus simply "...lifted up His eyes, and said, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.' And when He thus had spoken, He cried with a loud voice, 'LAZARUS, COME FORTH' and he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, 'Loose him, and let him go' " (John 11:41-44).

In this inspiring account, Jesus had been engaging in conversation with those surrounding Him; then, by merely shifting His gaze upward, began communicating with His heavenly Father.

A great miracle resulted.

Christ was in constant contact with God. He didn't need to "work up" faith, or

force Himself into a certain “mood” before talking with His Father. He merely addressed Him; began talking to HIM, instead of other humans nearby. He immediately established contact with God, because He thought of the specific Being with whom He had shared eternity; His mind was clear about what He meant when He addressed the “Father” in heaven; He was constantly in communication with Him through prayer, and not only prayer, but fasting with prayer. Christ met all the criteria for answered prayer; He was deeply imbued with the Spirit of God, He knew the Father, He was utterly selfless, and He was wholly trusting, faithful. Therefore, He was answered in dramatic, miraculous fashion. Christ understood how to pray.

God intends that we come to that same understanding; that we follow Christ’s example. God is not remote, aloof, impossible to know. On the contrary, He says He reveals Himself to us through His Son, through the pages of His written Word, so that we need not create a fantasy-figure, a vague, unreal “Someone” of our prayers, but pray to Him, personally!

To many of us, God has been like a “divinized” father-figure. Many speak of “The Man upstairs,” or “Somebody up there who likes me,” or the “Great Someone in the great somewhere.” Millions, of course, speak of God in slang and profane terms, cursing with His name, and that of Christ, as if in smug self-assurance there really is no God who stands behind His command, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Eternal thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.” Is there one out of a thousand who thinks of the true God, the Father of Jesus Christ, in an informed, intelligent manner, as he prays?

Prayer, after all, is the most private conversation possible. It is time for confidentiality, secrets, confessions, admissions, requests, urgent, heartfelt appeals. It is more intimate than writing in a diary, more personal than sharing secrets with a dear friend. Therefore, it is necessary to know Who we are addressing—really KNOW.

The next time you pray, go through a mental check list. Have you repented of your sins? Are you approaching God as a little child? Do you envision Him as the perfect kind of Father; the absolutely ideal, kind, generous, loving, forgiving, father you may never have had? Do you see Him, at the same time, as of awesome power and ability, able to punish and exact the consequences for sin, as well as able to be generous with His gifts? Do you hold Him in wondrous AWE, having

that Godly fear (not terror) that a small child might have for a father who not only loves, but disciplines?

God expects you to claim His promises, to come to Him as His loving, humble child. If you truly believe that He is your Spiritual Father; if you are as eager to confide in Him as you were to crawl into your father's arms as a little child—then go to Him—let Him know how you feel— call Him “Father” each time you pray, for that way, you'll always know He is listening!

After all, He says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask Him?” (Matthew 7:7-11).

What father is it who has been able to refuse a trusting, sweet, obedient, loving child who comes with a petition? Are you a parent; a grandparent? Can you refuse your own flesh reasonable requests? Nonsense. No, we're pretty much pushovers when our beloved children come to us in a moment of need. How many skinned knees, cut fingers, bruised lips have we tenderly dressed? How many times have we “kissed away the pain” of a crying child? How deeply have we hurt when our children are hurt, or sick? You cannot feel as deeply as your Heavenly Father feels toward you; human emotions simply fall short. So go ahead, claim God's love, claim His promises. After all, God listens to His own kids first, doesn't He?

CHAPTER THREE

“Who art in heaven...”

Where is heaven? An altogether familiar word to hundreds of millions, the term conjures visions of streets paved with gold, “heavenly mansions,” spirit beings playing on harps. Then there are the dozens of jokes about “St. Peter and the pearly gates.” Heaven is supposed to be the place where all our deceased loved ones, the “good” people, are.

She has a heavenly body—we had a heavenly time—it was a heavenly dish; we use the term in everyday conversation, and in slang. Many use heaven in supposedly

mild forms of profanity, in spite of the fact that Jesus Christ said we are to “Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne: nor by the earth, for it is God’s footstool” (Matthew 5:34-35).

All religions speak of some other-worldly paradise, whether it be a beautiful oasis, an island in the sky, or some utopian place of eternal bliss and happiness. Clearly, the Bible identifies “heaven” as the place of God’s throne. Yet, the word “place” is hardly applicable to our finite minds, for we are dealing with a spiritual realm of which we know only very little.

Most of us think of heaven as “up” there, somewhere. But “up” is a relative term, conveying the exact opposite meaning to Australians and Americans. The word “out” would be more correct. Out from our round sphere called earth in the midst of a solar system revolving about our orange dwarf star we call the sun.

Is the place of God’s heaven further away from earth than our own galaxy we call the Milky Way? Astronomers estimate there are two hundred billion, billion stars in our own galaxy, many of them larger than our sun. They tell us there are perhaps millions, or billions, of other galaxies.

To the layman, the most introductory study into the vastness of our universe is mind-boggling, incomprehensible. Yet, the God to Whom we pray is the Creator of all things, abides in heaven somewhere, and calls all those billions of stars and planets by name! Astronomers know where countless stars are. But where is heaven? No powerful telescopes, no space probes have captured the image of heaven on film, or transmitted it to earth stations on computer-enhanced images.

“I believe that Someone, in the great somewhere...” goes a line in the improperly named song, “I Believe.” (It should be called, “I Guess.”) The great “somewhere”? Is that where heaven is? Doesn’t the concept of heaven sound vastly far off, perhaps light years away – further than the other side of a black hole in the universe, when you stop to think about it?

When we were growing up, we were taught relative proportion. Remember the pictures and words about how far, how big, how long, how short, how tall? We studied pictures of mice and elephants together, of man and the great blue whale. We compared ants and the Statue of Liberty, an ocean liner and a locomotive, a bicycle and a 747. When Jesus gave us His outline for prayer, He said we should pray to our Father who is “in heaven”. He did not say this to confuse us, but

rather to give us a sense of comparison, of proportion.

It is good for us to realize that we are on this good, green earth; that it is a round orb, endlessly making its annual journey about our sun; making its daily revolutions, the moon faithfully completing each monthly trip around our earth right on time. It is good for us to contemplate the vastness of our universe as a testimony to the work of the hands of God; a glittering, awesome, incomprehensible, mind boggling proof of His creation—His limitless power. The solar system and the universe give us a sense of proportion! Ever stand next to the General Sherman tree in Sequoia National Park? This forest giant dwarfs puny man—It contains enough wood to construct forty five room houses; was probably a little sprig of a tree just after the flood of Noah!

As the story goes, a lady aboard a 747 commented to her fellow passenger, “Oh, look at all those people down there—they look like ants!” To which her companion replied, “They are ants, my dear, we haven’t taken off yet. “ A flight in an airplane can give us a sense of proportion; we see huge buildings, whole cities, as but specks on the landscape. An ocean journey, especially if one encounters a storm, can quickly reduce us to our appropriate size. Prayer is like that. Jesus intended us to pray to our Father “who is in heaven,” as a reminder of proportion; of how GREAT is God, and how puny, how small, insignificant and temporal, is man.

However, most of us quickly lose this sense of proportion once outside astronomy class. Oh, we know, intellectually, that we live on a round earth. We know there are other human beings about 8,000 miles from us, straight through the planet. But we are not, in a daily sense, truly conscious of the fact. We speak of the sun “going down” or “coming up,” not of the earth rolling away from the sun, or rolling toward it. We awaken in the mornings utterly unaware we have just completed an 8,000 mile trip; that we are now about 8,000 miles distant from the place we were, relative to the stars, when we went to sleep.

We know astronomy has debunked the superstitions of the dark ages about a flat earth, that our daily weather satellites bring back incredibly detailed pictures of our entire planet, with the cloud formations clearly seen. Still, most of us live as if blissfully unaware of our temporal place on a planet that has been likened to but one grain of sand in all the seashores of earth in comparison to the number of celestial bodies in the Milky Way.

When we pray, Christ wants us to get our minds on God, on heaven—away from this earth with its mundane concerns. He wants us to project our thoughts out through space to the very place of God's throne.

The Bible reveals there are three heavens. The first is identified as the mantle of air that cloaks the earth; our atmosphere.

The very first verse in the Bible says, "In the beginning, God [Hebrew: Elohim] created the heaven and the earth. " The Hebrew word for "heaven" is *shameh* (pronounced shaw-meh'), meaning "to be lofty," as the sky, or "aloft." It means the visible arch in which the clouds move, as well as the higher part of our universe where the astral bodies revolve, and is also used to refer to the place of God's throne.

The word has three different usages which are clear only from the context.

Notice a couple of examples: "And God called the firmament heaven" (Genesis 1:8). The Hebrew word "firmament" is *raqiya* which means "an expanse." The Bible says, "And God said, let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years..." (Genesis 1:14). Obviously, the word *shameh*, translated "heaven," is not here referring to the place of God's throne, but at once to our earth's atmosphere and to space—the physical universe.

Notice the usage of the word in relationship to our atmosphere: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven [*shameh*] were opened" (Genesis 7:11). There are many other examples. Genesis 8:3 speaks of the rain from heaven being restrained.

Most of the places in the Old Testament where the word heaven is used, it is *shameh*, and refers primarily to this earth's atmosphere, or to our solar neighborhood. When Elijah was "taken up into heaven," for example, he was transported into the sky, carried out of sight—not taken to the place of God's throne.

This is obvious, in the light of Jesus' positive statement, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). Also, speaking of Elijah, Paul wrote, "These all

died in faith, not having received the promises” (Hebrews 11:13).

Not understanding the three usages of the Hebrew word for heaven, many have assumed Elijah was taken to the place of God’s throne; instead, he was transported to some other place on earth, there to live out his days in peace. The Bible says he died “in faith, not having received the promises.”

Three different meanings are possible from the Hebrew shameh. The first is our atmosphere, the air surrounding our earth where the birds fly, clouds form, and aircraft navigate. Air is matter, of course, composed of various gases, and is very much a part of our earth. The second is our solar neighborhood and outer space. The third usage is the heaven of God’s throne.

In order to determine which is meant, one must discern by the context. Notice: “Then hear thou in heaven [Hebrew: shameh] thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest ... hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place... ” (1 Kings 8:39-43). So prayed Solomon at the dedication of the temple. He obviously refers to God’s throne, yet uses the identical Hebrew word for heaven which was used in connection with rain falling, or the heaven where the stars are, which is shameh.

Notice what Paul wrote: “...I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man... how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter...” (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

The language Paul heard may well have been the “new language” God will give the entire earth at the establishment of His Kingdom. He says, “For then I will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Eternal, to serve Him with one consent” (Zephaniah 3:9). The words were “unspeakable” in a beatific, holy sense.

In vision, Paul said he was given a glimpse of heaven itself. He called it paradise, said the language was unknown to him. He calls this paradise, this place of God’s throne, “the third heaven.” Paul was obviously acquainted with the other usages of the word shameh, or he would not have specified “the third heaven” when speaking of the heaven of God’s throne.

Our heavenly Father is a Spirit Being. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

God exists in another dimension from ours—the spirit world. The method of communication with God our Father, who is Spirit, must therefore be spiritual, not physical. Radio and television are physical. One could dial in any frequency known to man on powerful transmitters and never be heard of God. He is available only on spiritual wavelengths; He is instantly available when we meet those spiritual criteria. Addressing Him as our Father; acknowledging that He is in heaven—envisioning heaven; seeing, as clearly as we can, God's surroundings, His majesty, His greatness; this is what Jesus intended.

We must communicate "in the spirit," not via the air waves. God is composed of Spirit—he is not flesh and blood, and if we are to reach Him we must do so in a spiritual dimension—prayer!

Think of some physical analogies. Perhaps we perceive radio and television as mundane, since they are so commonplace. And yet, radio and television waves that travel through space can teach us a great deal about prayer.

Right now, wherever you are, you are being bombarded by hundreds, perhaps thousands of unheard waves of sound. You have only to turn on a portable transistor radio set to prove it. Your human ear cannot detect these sounds, for they are emitted on frequencies not available to normal human perception. Yet, they are constantly bombarding you, filling the room where you are sitting, the automobile in which you are riding. So it is with spiritual communication.

Somehow, we are able to project our thoughts through spiritual channels directly to God's throne in heaven, directly to the great mind of God Himself, by being on the right spiritual wavelength.

Jesus did not use the analogy of radio to help us understand prayer. But if He had, He would probably have shown how each of us is like a powerful transmitter. He might have explained how we can select the right frequency with which to communicate our heartfelt thoughts to God—that conversion, baptism, the broken-hearted humility and contrition God desires in His children is prerequisite to establishing contact, as surely as selecting the correct frequency on a VHF

radio.

Perhaps He might have shown how, when we are truly “in the Spirit”—that is, thinking spiritually, our minds attuned to the things of God, and not the mundane concerns of this life— we can communicate with God as surely as a space satellite can communicate with a ground station.

It is an apt analogy. The human brain is capable of much, much more than we suppose. Many of us operate at about ten percent of capacity. We all know about strange “psychic” powers, about ESP, and kinetic energy. We have marveled at true accounts of how, during World War II, a wife screamed out in anguish at the precise moment her husband was killed overseas; how twins seem to know when something wrong has occurred even though separated by a continent; how our minds are capable of some kind of little-understood “spiritual” kind of communication.

Never underestimate the power of our human minds. God says “there is a spirit in man” (Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; Romans 8:16), and reveals that when He begets us with His Spirit, He gives us a new kind of spiritual power, of spiritual perception. It is not difficult to “tune in” to God. He is instantly able to receive our signals. We have but to worship Him in spirit, ensuring we have followed His required criteria of repentance—then approach Him using the formula Christ gave, and, instantly, He is receiving—He is listening.

Light travels at the speed of 186,282 miles per second. Without light, we could not live. It is our source of energy from the sun, and light from the sun is the source of the stored energy of the earth—the fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, representing billions of creatures of the distant past whose lives, flora or fauna, depended upon energy from that same sun.

The visible light we see is but a fraction of the waves of energy with which science is familiar, however. Electromagnetic waves transmit energy in pulses, or waves, up to hundreds of miles long; or in short waves of less than a billionth of an inch.

A serious study of light—what it is, how it works, how it affects our lives—can give one a perception of how prayer might work. Though He does not say so directly, Jesus’ instructions on how we should pray seem to imply that each human mind is like a powerful transmitter, that we have only to tune in to the proper

“wavelength”—in this case, a spiritual channel—and we can communicate with Almighty God in heaven. Of course, the properties of electromagnetic waves, from cosmic rays, gamma rays, X rays and ultraviolet rays to long wave radio frequencies are limited by our physical universe and known laws.

Is spiritual communication so limited? Or is there something beyond the properties of light and energy which belongs in another dimension from ours about which we know little?

Let’s take a look at that quotation from the apostle Paul again, in which he said to the doubting Areopagites, “God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needeth any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us: for in Him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’ ” (Acts 17:24-28).

Notice Paul said God is “not far from every one of us,” that He is immediately available, approachable. When we pray to Him as our Father who is in heaven, we need not be intimidated by the vast distances of our universe. First, God’s heaven may be far closer to earth than we imagine; second, our human minds, together with God’s Holy Spirit, may be capable of communicating in an instant, in milliseconds, directly to the mind of God.

We ask, “What does heaven look like?” Is it really all golden streets, heavenly mansions, and pearly gates? Listen to this description: “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me: which said, ‘Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.’ And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

“And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine [sardonyx] stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their

heads crowns of gold.

“And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

“And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts [Greek: zoon—“living creatures”] full of eyes before and behind” (Revelation 4:1-6). These living creatures are mentioned in greater detail in Ezekiel’s first and tenth chapter, where the throne of God was seen by God’s prophet Ezekiel.

He wrote, “Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month... as I was among the captives by the river Chebar [Kabour], that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God...” Notice the description of God’s throne: “And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself [Hebrew: “flashing continually”] and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire.

“Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf’s foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass.

“And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides; and they four had their faces and their wings.

“Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward.

“As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle...” (Ezekiel 1:1-10).

One must read this entire chapter for the whole description—for it is fascinating. That there is no doubt it is a description of the throne of God, even though Ezekiel was not allowed to look upon God’s face, is evident from the text. He said, “And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, as

the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above it.

“And I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of His loins even upward, and from the appearance of His loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about.

“As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Eternal. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of One that spake” (Ezekiel 1:26-28).

The Bible identifies the “four living creatures” as cherubim, created angelic beings who are at God’s throne, and who apparently accompany Him wherever He goes. The true cherub of the Bible is hardly a tiny naked baby with a bow and arrow, called “Cupid.” Rather, cherubim appear as huge creatures, having manlike characteristics, plus the faces of oxen, eagles, and lions.

These “host of the heaven” were worshiped anciently. They can be seen in form as the Sphinx, guarding the tombs of ancient Pharaohs; as the “Winged Bulls of Bashan,” and the winged bulls guarding the palaces of ancient Babylonian and Assyrian kings (replicas are in the Louvre, and the British museum). God placed a cherub to guard the way to the tree of life after Adam was ejected from Eden, no doubt giving rise to pre-flood tales of monsters guarding fabulous treasures, remnants of which tales are found in Jack and the beanstalk, St. George and the dragon, and other myths wherein a dragon-like creature, breathing fire, guards priceless treasures.

Apparently, there are dissimilarities between “seraphim” and “cherubim,” as will be seen from careful comparisons of Isaiah’s sixth chapter with Ezekiel 1 and 10.

God’s throne was also seen in vision by the apostle John, who, on the Isle of Patmos, received the prophecies of the Apocalypse. He says, “And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing’ ” (Revelation 5:11-12).

What? No St. Peter standing at the pearly gates; no angels playing on harps? Instead, a throne seen as set upon a translucent “sea of glass,” perhaps like quartz, or onyx; a brilliantly-hued, super-bright Personage on the throne. At His right hand, Jesus Christ in His glorified state. Before Him, twenty-four “elders,” or wise spiritual counselors. All about Him, countless angels. The picture of God’s throne is a stunning, awesome one—replete with multitudes of angelic beings singing in inspiring tones about God’s magnificence. When we pray, we should address God our Father in His heavenly setting letting our minds picture, as near as we can, the glorious magnificence of His throne. We should pray directly to Him.

John prophesied that God’s throne will eventually come to be on this earth! He wrote, “And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb ... the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; ... for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:1-5).

There are more than five hundred references to heaven in the Bible. By studying descriptions of heaven, the details the Bible gives concerning the throne of God, we may indelibly impress upon our minds the true biblical picture of heaven, replacing the myth, superstition, and vague unrealities of the past. In doing so, we remove one more obstacle to prayer—open up one more important key of access to God.

The phrase, “Our Father, who art in heaven,” is meant to be much more than mere sanctimonious rote – it is an intelligent address, a method of communication with God. If you were to write to our president, you would probably address your letter, “The President of the United States, The White House, Washington, D.C.” Your mind would envision the stately mansion in which so many of our presidents have lived.

So it is with addressing your prayers to God. Jesus intended you retain in your mind a vivid picture of the setting in which God lives; that you see Him as if in a blaze of super-bright light, brighter than several suns, surrounded by billions of angels, with the twenty-four elders at His left hand and His right. Of supreme importance, we must realize that the risen Christ is sitting at the Father’s right

hand, waiting for your prayers, eager to make daily intercession to His Father on your behalf.

The next time you pray, do so after looking up and reading for yourself several of the graphic descriptions of God's heavenly throne. Pray intelligently, with understanding. When you do, expect answers to your prayers! Claim God's promises boldly, as a trusting child goes to his father in perfect confidence his requests will be answered. Think on all you have learned in these few chapters, and use this knowledge!

CHAPTER FOUR

“Hallowed be Thy name...”

Do you know God's name? Millions speak of “God,” either in prayer, or profanity. But “God” is not so much a name as it is a proper noun, connoting divinity. A dictionary definition is, “God, the Maker and Ruler of the universe; the One Supreme Being.” As we shall see, this definition, leaves much to be desired. Millions assume, when they speak of “God,” that they refer to the One Jesus called “Father,” the Creator, as they suppose, of the Old Testament; the giver of the Ten Commandments; the God with whom the ancients dealt. This is untrue. As we shall clearly see, the Bible demolishes cherished myths, casually assumed tradition. Much more is implied by the word “God” than we may have realized.

The first place in the Bible where we encounter the name “God” is in the very first verse of Genesis, the first chapter: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth...”

The Hebrew word is Elohim, which occurs 2,700 times in the Bible. Its contextual connection is with the creation, and illustrates its primary meaning—that of the divine family of Beings who did the creating. Elohim is a plural word, and connotes more than one personage. Notice, “In the beginning was the Word [Greek: Logos, or “Spokesman”], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men ... He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God,

even to them that believe on His name,...and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-14).

This unmistakable reference to Jesus Christ plainly says that He, the member of the divine family called the Logos, or the "Spokesman" of the Elohim (more than one—a duality of persons) did the creating! It also tells us something else rather startling to familiar traditions and concepts: That, when Jesus tells us to pray to "Our Father," He is not telling us to address the God of whom we generally read in the Old Testament Scriptures! For, as shocking as it may appear, the Bible is replete with proof it was the One who became Christ who is the God of the Old Testament!

Notice further proof: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom He made the worlds [Greek: aion, or "ages"], Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high..." (Hebrews 1:1-3).

Therefore, the one personage of the dual name for God, Elohim, we see in the first verse of the Bible is that same One who was to come into this world: Jesus Christ of Nazareth! Remember, Christ said, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18).

Christ came to reveal the Father to the world for the first time. He said, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27).

The name Elohim connotes the Son as very God; as the living Word, who did the creating. Notice, "In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every creature; for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is

before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:14-17).

Notice contextual proof that Elohim means more than one person:

"And God [Elohim] said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness...' (Genesis 1:26).

The next name for God we encounter is Jehovah which is a name used in covenant relationship between God and His creation. The name means, "The Ever-living One; the Eternal; the One who was, and is, and is to come."

The name Jehovah is combined with ten other words in the Bible, forming ten different "titles" for the divine personages.

They are: (1) Jehovah-Jireh, meaning God will see, or provide. Read Genesis 22:14 for an example. (2) Jehovah-Ropheka, meaning the God who heals us. See Exodus 15:26. (3) Jehovah-Nissi, meaning Jehovah my Banner, or Shield. See Exodus 17:15. (4) Jehovah McKaddishkem, meaning the God who sanctifies you, or sets you apart as holy. See Leviticus 20:8. (5) Jehovah-Shalom, meaning the God who sends peace. See Judges 6:24. (6) Jehovah-Sabaoth, Jehovah of hosts, or multitudes. See 1 Samuel 1:3. (7) Jehovah-Zidkenu, meaning God our Righteousness. See Jeremiah 33:16. (8) Jehovah-Shammah, meaning God is there, emphasizing the nearness of God. See Ezekiel 48:35. (9) Jehovah-Elyon, meaning the Most High God. See Psalms 7:17. (10) Jehovah-Roi, meaning Jehovah my Shepherd. See Psalms 23:1.

It is fascinating to see how David was inspired to use seven of these names and titles for God in His inspiring 23rd Psalm! Read it in your own Bible. In verse 1 you will see number (1), above; in verse 2 Jehovah Shalom, or number (5) above; in verse 3, both number (7) and number (2) are used; and in verse 4, number (8); finally, in the fifth verse, both Jehovah-Nissi (3), and Jehovah-McKaddishkem (4) appear. Thus, in this moving Psalm, very possibly the one on Christ's lips as He died (see the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion, together with Psalms 22, which is obviously prophetic), seven names, or titles, for God appear!

There are many other names of God in the Bible: A few are, JAH, which is Jehovah in the special meaning of having become our Salvation; EL, which means "the

Almighty, “ and ELOAH, which is God in connection with His will and purpose, used primarily as “the Living God,” in contrast to dead idols.

The word ADON is one of three additional titles, all of which are generally translated as “Lord,” but which convey special meanings. ADON is the Lord as Ruler in this earth; ADONAI, the Lord in relationship to this earth, and ADONIM means, generally, the Lord who rules His own.

Jesus Christ said we are to show honor, respect, even awe toward the name of God, by including in our prayer, “Hallowed be Thy Name.” He intended that we come to understand the many names and titles of both Himself and His Father; that we come to know the usage of His names and titles as they relate to various situations. For example, if one were to pray to God for healing, it would be altogether appropriate to remind God that one of His very names is Jehovah (or Yawveh) Ropheka, God our Healer.

Notice the annunciation concerning the name of Christ, “... and she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

The name “Jesus” is a proper name, coming from the Hebrew Joshua, or Yashua. The two are perfectly interchangeable. The Je prefix in the name as translated into English is indicative of the Hebrew Jah, or Yah, together with the remainder of the word, and means “God our Savior,” or “God who is our Salvation.”

In this same passage, Isaiah 7:14 is quoted. Notice the verse from Isaiah, “Therefore the Lord [Hebrew: Adonai]Himself shall give you a sign; behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name ‘IMMANUEL.’ ” The name means the Lord as connected to, or in relationship with this earth, or “God with us.” It is so translated by Matthew, who writes, quoting Isaiah, “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name IMMANUEL, which, being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

It is fascinating to note that never, not once, during any personal conversations when the disciples of Christ were addressing Him directly, did they call Him “Jesus.” Always, it was “Master,” or “Teacher,” or “Lord,” as titles of great respect. Though they were to use the name Jesus in later writings, they never called Him by that name face to face.

The Third Commandment says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

Obviously, using God's name in profanity is a direct, flagrant violation of this command. Profanity turns God's face away from us; it insults His divine integrity, deliberately hurls epithets, curses, vile utterances toward God. It is a capital crime exactly on a par with murder, according to God's law, and will not go unpunished. God says the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Using God's name in profanity is a sin, just as it is sinful to use His name in monotonous repetition.

Man has found many devious methods of "pretending" not to swear, yet using similar sounding words and names, or using the first letters of "Jesus Christ" in profanity. Millions say "Jeepers, Creepers," or "Jeeze." They say "Jumpin' Jimminy," or "Jehosaphat," which includes a title of God. The slang words "Gee Whiz" and "Judas' Priest" are references, albeit supposedly "indirect," to Jesus Christ. People say "For the land's sake," or even use the name of the capitol city of ancient Judah, "Jerusalem" as a byword. Why? One wonders whether rebellious men have searched the Bible to see what God says don't do, and then proceeded to do it. Want an example? Notice the following passage from the famous Sermon on the Mount:

"Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:' But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is His footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King ... let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:33-37).

Yet, how commonplace are such expressions as "merciful heavens!" or "heavens, no!" How many times have you heard people using various oaths to proclaim their honesty? Even our childhood nursery rhymes teach us to ignore Jesus' commands; the little pigs, when refusing to allow the wolf into their house say, "Not by the hair on my chinny-chin-chin," but Jesus said we are not to swear "...by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black" (Matthew 6:36).

Could it be many of us who plaintively cry, "O God, where are You when I need you," have unknowingly severed contact with God as surely as if we had pulled

the plug on our reading lamp? Could it be we are overlooking the biblical requirements to successful prayer, short-circuiting our communication with God—placing barriers between ourselves and our divine Father in heaven, so He will not listen?

He says, “Behold, the Eternal’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:1, 2). The remainder of the chapter is a powerful indictment against all who have not repented of sin, who have not come to God as a little child: “We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar like bears, and mourn sore like doves; we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; in transgressing and lying against the Eternal, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood” (Isaiah 59:10-13).

God tells us any lack of communication is simply not His fault, but ours! He is there— waiting, listening, ready to receive our cries. Is He our Father? In other words, are we His begotten children, repentant, of contrite spirit and humble heart? Do we truly seek His will in our lives, as well as His special favor from time to time? When we acknowledge the awesome holiness of God’s name, praying “Hallowed be Thy Name,” we need to realize how truly great is God; to understand the limitless power which can be unleashed by His great name.

Great miracles were accomplished by Jesus Christ, and astounding miracles were performed for the apostles. In each case, it was through recognition of the awesome power inherent in God’s name! Jesus absolutely promised His disciples would accomplish even greater works than He did—through prayer, through faith, and through the powerful name of Jesus Christ!

Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it!” (John 14:12-14).

“In my name” also connotes asking according to His will and purpose; asking according to His authority.

Striking examples of the veracity of this promise occurred in the first few years of the early church. For example, Peter and John, who recorded the words above, were entering into the temple only days after the resurrection of Christ when they saw a crippled beggar. Read the Bible account of what happened: “...and a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called ‘beautiful,’ to ask alms of them that entered into the temple.

“Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, ‘Look on us!’ And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

“Then Peter said, ‘Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk! And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:1-9).

Notice that the cripple did not seem to know who Peter and John were—only that they were worshippers, about to enter the temple. Notice too that he did not expect to be healed; he looked expectantly at them, expecting “to receive something,” obviously a small amount of money. This miracle was performed for the purpose of evangelism as is clear by the following texts. The crowds were amazed; a great discussion arose. Peter then began another of his stirring messages, referring to the miracle they had seen.

Was there ever a greater way to gain the attention of a crowd? Peter said, “Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we made this man to walk?

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up ... whom God raised from he dead. And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know; yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all” (Acts 3:12-16). Though we may only remember it from childhood Bible tales, the account of Moses’ calling; how He came into the

presence of God at the burning bush is fascinating, stirring. Israel was in slavery. Moses, like all his compatriots, was a product of the Egyptian society; he had been raised by a daughter of the reigning Pharaoh. After fleeing for his life when it was discovered he had killed an Egyptian for mistreating one of his fellow slaves, Moses encountered God, who appeared to him in a bush which seemed to burn, yet was not consumed. The interesting story is found in Exodus, the third chapter.

After God instructed Moses to take off his shoes, He said, “ ‘I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God..” A few verses later Moses asked, “... behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, ‘The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you’; and they shall say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say unto them?”

“And God said unto Moses, ‘I AM THAT I AM;’ and He said, ‘Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.’ And God said moreover unto Moses, ‘Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations’ ” (Exodus 3:6-15).

The Hebrew for the expression “I AM THAT I AM” is ‘Ehyer ‘Asher ‘Ehyeh and means what it says, in the sense that God proclaims He is the One who is self-perpetuating, with life self-inherent within Himself; the One who was, who is, and who is to come.

A fascinating reference is made by Christ in the New Testament to this name of God, another obvious proof that the Member of Elohim who did the creating was the One who became Christ. Christ was confronted by the leaders of the synagogue following a sensational healing of a man born blind. The entire chapter is an incredible study in human bigotry, fear religion, how churchmen can sometimes keep their members in a constant state of concern over being “put out” of their church. Finally, the argument became so heated, the Pharisees accused Christ of being illegitimate. Jesus managed to raise their anger to white hot heat when He said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

“Then said the Jews unto Him, ‘Thou are not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I AM!’

“And they took up stones to cast at Him...” (John 8:53-59).

This is unmistakable reference to the same name used by the same personage of the God family to Moses. It enraged those who heard it, for they knew He was clearly stating He was God in the flesh.

To us today, it is another confirmation of the absolute divinity of Christ — His pre-human origins—that He was the God of the Old Testament, the One who dealt with the patriarchs and prophets, the One who appeared to Moses, the One who wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger.

What’s in a name? Today, many prospective parents find names in books of names for babies; perhaps name their children after relatives, or others they have known and admired. Many are named for famous persons; many are named almost haphazardly. Humorous stories abound about families so large their frustrated parents began calling them “A1, A2, A3,” and so on. But God names things what they are. He called man Ish in Hebrew, merely meaning “Man.” “Woman” was Ishah, or the one who came from Ish. “Adam” meant, literally, “red clay.”

God’s names are meant to convey to us His many divine attributes; His love, mercy, patience; His kindness, gentleness, goodness; His magnificent power; His eternal character. In the Oxford Press edition of the King James Bible, with the concordance, there is a section under “Proper Names” devoted entirely to the many scriptural examples of the qualities of the divine family.

Is your name important to you? Do you know what it means? Are you proud of your name? The word “name” conveys reputation, and quality of character. When we speak of a man having a good name, we mean a good reputation. Surely, when you name your children, their names become who they are. When we speak a name, our minds instantly give us the complete understanding of who we mean, depending on (note this well!) how well we know that person. If it is your spouse, then your usage of his or her name conveys an immediate picture of the total person. That’s the way Jesus Christ wants us to address God. He wants us to come to know Him—to understand how thoroughly, how completely, God knows us!

David prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Psalms 139:23-24).

When we read the Psalms, like Psalms 51, David's heartfelt prayer of repentance after the affair with Bathsheba, we come to understand why David was "a man after God's own heart." God simply loves a broken and contrite heart, a prayer of repentance, a deeply felt, sincere, personal prayer for forgiveness.

Constantly, David exulted in the name of God. He prayed, "Bless the Lord [Hebrew: Jehovah, or Yahveh, The Eternal] O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Eternal, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things..." (Psalm 103:1-4).

And again, "Praise ye The LORD, praise, O ye servants of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and evermore" (Psalm 113:1-2). Here, the Hebrew expression is Hallelu-Jah. Psalms 111 through 113 are known as the "Hallelujah" Psalms. Each is a moving call to prayer, praising the great name of God. The 111th is an acrostic Psalm, and includes the phrase, "Holy and reverend is His name." This is one reason I have never accepted the title "Reverend," though I am an ordained minister. The Bible says His name is holy and reverend; I doubt that any man's name is to be revered. There are dozens of references to God's name in the Psalms; David continually praised the name of God; thought on His great qualities of character. David is the only man in history who earned the rich accolade, "A man after God's Own Heart." Was it because he was able to deeply repent when he had sinned; because He continually prayed to God, constructed dozens of poems set to music, praising His holy name?

When Jesus said we should pray "Hallowed be Thy Name," He intended we know the great and holy names of God, and to know that those names and titles help us to understand God as our Father in heaven, to really come to know Him.

The first thing we usually say to someone when we meet for the first time is, "Hello, my name is..." We then call them by name. God wants us to know His great names, to appreciate their great significance. Perhaps, after reading this brief chapter, you will be much better equipped than before to put real meaning

into your prayer the next time you say, “Hallowed be Thy Name...” You might want to remember that God is our Protector, our Provider, our Banner and Shield; that He is our Life-giver; that He is our Savior. Think on His names; pray to Him directly— by name. After all, He knows who you are!

CHAPTER FIVE

“Thy Kingdom come...”

When these words are recited in responsive readings in church, what comes to mind? For over thirty years in the ministry, I have noticed how many tend to “blank out” literal meaning of our language when it comes to “spiritual” sounding phrases, biblical language.

It is as if when biblical language is used, words suddenly take on an utterly meaningless, esoteric, “other-worldly” sense, like they don’t really convey the same sense to our minds that those same words might if spoken by the layman.

For example, if one were having a conversation with Prince Charles of Great Britain, and said to him, “I hope you are King, one day,” hastening to make sure he understands you wish no ill towards his mother, Queen Elizabeth, both would understand precisely what was meant. If one said, “I believe your reign will be the most magnificent in the history of Great Britain,” it would be equally understood, if a little pretentious.

But when we utter those same words toward God—asking that His prophesied Kingdom come to this earth, do we really know what we are asking?

Just what is the Kingdom of God? Is it merely a figurative phrase which means, in some vague “spiritual” sense, “heaven,” where God lives? Are we merely intoning an oft-repeated phrase which means something like “right on, Lord,” in the same way an Englishman might sing, “Rule Britannia?”

As the story goes, a little girl was being instructed by her Sunday school teacher about the three Hebrew children and the fiery furnace; how the astrologers came in before king Nebuchadnezzar and said, “O king, live forever.” The teacher asked, “And then what happened, Susan?” The child furrowed her brow, thought a moment and then with sudden inspiration said, “So right away, the king lived forever!” Is “Thy Kingdom come...” spoken like that? Like a childish fantasy, or a

spiritual mystery?

Most professing Christians believe they go immediately to heaven when they die. Then why pray for God's Kingdom to come to this earth, if that's what we are really doing when using the Lord's Prayer as our outline for prayer? Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 5:3). But why did He also say, virtually in the same breath, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)?

Jesus spoke continually of His coming Kingdom. He uttered many parables about it, showing its character and nature. Many prophecies portray His coming Kingdom—some in fine detail, even to the point of answering such questions as "Will there be cities in God's Kingdom" and, "What happens to those who remain alive, as human beings, when Christ comes"?

So, why not investigate this fascinating subject without preconceived ideas, traditions, or casually-assumed concepts? Let's take a careful look at what the Bible actually says about this wondrous Kingdom of which Jesus spoke so often, the Kingdom He said we are to pray for!

John the Baptist was characterized as a type of Elijah, who was to "prepare the way" for the coming of the Messiah. John's ministry was a great one, coming to the attention of tens of thousands. His preaching was fiery, impassioned, urgent. Thousands were moved to repentance, receiving baptism, calling out to God to forgive their sins. Notice what Matthew recorded, "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, 'Repent ye; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Isaias, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight' " (Matthew 3:1-3).

John's message was about the Kingdom of God. He preached about the imminent appearance of the Messiah, saying the One who would follow Him was much greater than he; that he was "unworthy to loose the latchet of His shoes." He said Christ would powerfully stir them, sifting the wheat from the chaff; bringing to light the innermost thoughts of the heart, calling upon God's people to repent. John portrayed Jesus Christ as a coming King, who would one day rule over all the earth.

Christ's message was also about the Kingdom of God. Millions have been taught

to revere Christ; we have heard impassioned evangelists telling us to “receive” Christ. Many have supposed the “gospel” (which is merely a strange sounding “religious” word to most) is a story about Jesus Christ; mostly concerned with His person, what He did, His miracles, His parables, His examples; His life’s ministry, death, burial, and resurrection. The word “gospel” seems synonymous with “religion,” as in “gospel singers,” and “gospel music.” Many assume the Gospel is a “story about Jesus.”

But, notice, “And from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!’ ” (Matthew 4:17). Jesus was a Preacher. His message? It was a good news announcement (the meaning of the word “gospel”) about the Kingdom of God. Notice again, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23).

Matthew’s account refers to Jesus’ message as the “Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven,” while Luke’s parallel account calls it the message about “the Kingdom of God.” The two terms are interchangeable—the message was about God’s great government; His law-abiding, reigning Kingdom, which Christ prophesied would come to this earth. Is the Gospel, then, only a message about the person of Christ, or does it include much, much more? Make no mistake. The Gospel indeed includes a message about Christ. He is absolutely central to the Gospel; He is its focal point, the Messenger who brought this wondrous message to earth from His Father, and Who is its central character. Yet, there may be another aspect to the Gospel many have missed: the story about the Kingdom of God.

What is that Kingdom? We speak of the “Kingdom of Great Britain,” or this or that kingdom of history, and we know we speak of a political entity consisting of certain peoples ruled by a monarch. Each such kingdom must consist of at least four things: (1) a King, or Sovereign; (2) territory, over which that Sovereign reigns; (3) subjects, or citizens living within that territory; and (4) laws—a system of government through which the Sovereign rules.

Using the four main parts of every kingdom, let’s see some Bible examples which will help us obtain the meaning from the words, “Thy Kingdom come.”

No doubt, you are familiar with the annunciation of Christ’s impending birth. It is

a favorite story at Christmas, recited in thousands of church services. “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her and said, ‘Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord [The Eternal] is with thee: blessed art thou among women.’

“And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

“And the angel said unto her, ‘Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be Great, and shall be called The Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: And He shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever; and of His Kingdom there shall be no end’ ” (Luke 1:26-33).

Is this mere “spiritual salt and pepper” to flavor a verse in the Bible, or does this annunciation from a powerful archangel mean exactly what it says? David sat on the throne which God said would “never depart from Judah,” the throne promised to Abraham’s seed as an eternal inheritance resulting from His faith in God.

The throne of David was reconfirmed to David as a perpetual throne, which God said would never pass from this earth. The question concerning just where this throne may be today is one which should properly require a full book, or perhaps several, to explain. However, this has already been done in the past. Suffice it to say, God swore by Himself that David’s throne would remain in perpetuity, with a member of the same lineage—the seed of David himself seated upon that throne until Christ should return to this earth in glory, as King of kings.

A strange prophecy in the 22nd chapter of Isaiah about Shebna, the treasurer of Judah during the reign of Hezekiah, confirms this, as does the prophecy of Ezekiel 21:25-27 concerning the many “overturns” of this throne, until it would reside in a distant land far from its original setting, and there be “no more overturned,” until “He come whose right it is.”

The point is, the archangel said Christ would “inherit the throne of His father David, and of His Kingdom there would be no end.”

That Jesus Christ is prophesied to come back to this earth is absolutely cast in concrete, so far as Scripture is concerned. There are literally dozens of references to that fact. Notice the first message to ever come to earth when Jesus was taken up following His resurrection: "...Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven [the sky]? This same Jesus, Which is taken up from you into heaven [God's throne], shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1: 11).

Christ said, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to His works" (Matthew 16:27).

During His last supper, Jesus promised, "... I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3). When Christ comes again, He is coming back to this earth. Notice a few striking proofs: "Behold, the Day of the LORD [Jehovah, or Yawveh] cometh... then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations... and His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east ... and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee..." (Zechariah 14:1-5).

John saw visions of the coming Kingdom of God on the Isle of Patmos, at the very end of the first century. His famous "Apocalypse" (Revelation) contains many references to Christ as King of the coming Kingdom. "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war ... and the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11-15).

One of the major promises Jesus Christ gives to those who become His fellow-servants is co-rulership over the nations of this earth during His one thousand year reign. He said, "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers; even as I received of my Father" (Revelation 2:26). And again, "To him that overcometh will I grant

to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

John also saw a vision of the millennium—the one thousand year reign of Christ—in which it was made clear that those who repent, who live lives of overcoming, as Christ said, shall join with Christ in administering God’s great government. He wrote, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

Jesus Christ came to this earth for many reasons. He came to bring a message from God the Father called the Gospel. The word Gospel merely means “good news” or “happy announcement.” The good news is that mankind will not perish from this earth in a thermonuclear blast, that God will step in to save mankind before that ultimate disaster occurs. The good news is, we can repent, beg forgiveness of our sins, turn to God’s way of life, live a life of overcoming, and have opportunity to share with Christ in setting aright the chaotic turmoil on this earth; to abolish from earth sickness and disease, poverty, squalor, crime, drug abuse, wars; every evil.

Christ also came to call and train His disciples, delivering the Gospel to them, commissioning them to carry on after His return to His Father; to preach the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God in all the earth as a witness unto all nations (Matthew 24:14).

He came to disqualify Satan as present evil world ruler (Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4), and to qualify as future Ruler of earth (Revelation 3:21). Christ came to live a perfect life, condemning sin in the flesh, proving it is possible for humankind, with the power of God, to resist Satan, overcome the world, and conquer human nature. He came to die for the sins of the world, to become the Savior of mankind. He came to fulfill many Old Testament prophecies concerning His Messiahship, and to proclaim many prophecies concerning the end of the present world civilization (Matthew 24; Luke 21; Mark 13).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the soon-coming KING of God’s great Kingdom for which we are to pray.

The second main part of every kingdom is territory. We have already seen many biblical proofs that the territory of God’s coming Kingdom is on this earth, which

is why Christ instructs us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come.” Notice several additional proofs:

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God’ ” (Revelation 21:1-3).

Conditions to become extant on earth are described in vivid detail in Isaiah 11: “But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked ... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Eternal, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:4-9).

There is simply no mistaking the import of these verses. God’s Kingdom will rule on this earth. There are no bears, adders, poisonous snakes, lions, wolves, and goats in heaven. This passage plainly describes the conditions to prevail on earth after the beginning of the millennial reign of Christ.

Notice further, “The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain [biblical symbol for God’s government] of the Eternal’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains [over all other physical nations, great and small], and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

“And many people shall go and say, ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Eternal [Jehovah, or Yawveh], to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths:’ for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Eternal from Jerusalem.

“And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:1-4).

Micah prophesied, “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Eternal shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it.

“And many nations shall say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Eternal, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths:’ for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Eternal from Jerusalem.

“And He shall judge among many people and shall rebuke strong nations afar off: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Eternal hath spoken it” (Micah 4:1-4).

Angels, as if voicing the exultation of the saints who are to inherit God’s Kingdom are heard to sing... “and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5: 10).

It is plain, then, that the Bible teaches the Kingdom of God will reign right here on this earth for one thousand years following the six thousand years allotted to mankind. Christ is the King of His Kingdom; the earth is His territory, where He will rule.

And the subjects of His Kingdom? First, those who are begotten of God’s Spirit; who are the children of God. Notice, “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive, and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds [this earth’s atmosphere] to meet the Lord in the air [this earth’s atmosphere]: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). And we shall be with the Lord where the Lord will be, which is right here, on this earth.

Notice further, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits

of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Notice again the scripture we read in Revelation, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment [rulership; power to reign as co-rulers with Christ] was given unto them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

Clearly, the citizens of God's Kingdom are, first of all, the divine family of God; Jesus Christ, as the Author and Beginner of life, the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Under Christ, the saints of all history. He said, "And ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God..." to the people of Palestine. Christ is called the "Firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29), who shall also be resurrected to eternal life at His Second Coming. As we read in 1 Corinthians the 15th chapter, it will be "each man in his own order," Christ, who is the Firstfruits, and "afterwards, those that are Christ's at His coming."

Those who are to be subjects of this great world-ruling Kingdom are the remnants of all nations on this earth—perhaps billions of human beings. Notice: "And the Eternal shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be One Lord, and His name One ... and men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited" (Zechariah 14: 11).

Later, God says, "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Eternal of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

Christ is the King; the earth is His territory, and the nations of this earth are His future subjects. Obviously, the nations are not subject to Christ today. This is not a world of God's design. He has allowed mankind the free moral agency to select his own governmental systems, economies, religions. God is not the author of this world's societies. But He will be, in the future.

The fourth part of every kingdom is the legal system by which it rules—its system of government, or the laws regulating such kingdom. As we have already seen in several scriptures, God says "The law shall go forth out of Zion." God's laws

consist of the Ten Commandments as Christ magnified them, plus many other statutes and judgments.

The Bible is a book of law in one sense, a legal document proposing a covenant between God and ourselves. It spells out the great rewards for obedience; proposes that God become our God, and we become His people. It proposes eternal inheritance in His Kingdom for our willingness to humbly submit to His rule of law in our lives. Jesus Christ greatly enlarged upon the Ten Commandments, making them infinitely more binding, exalting the strict letter of the law to a spiritual plane, in His famous Sermon on the Mount. The laws of God are summarized in the great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Eternal thy God with all thy heart, and all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The "Golden Rule" is perhaps a hackneyed phrase to most. But it is, after all, the very basis of God's system of law. We literally are expected to live by "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" and not by bread alone (Matthew 4:4). It is God's will in our lives that we should "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

God's perfect laws will be enforced during the millennial reign of Christ. And what a happy, joyous time that will be!

You see, God's perfect laws are the laws and principles that produce everything we really want; success, happy marriages, healthy children; peace in our land, good weather, good health, long lives, thrills, excitement, enjoyment, fulfillment! When we break His laws, they break us. We don't need to "know" about gravity and inertia in order to be severely punished if we are involved in a fall from heights, or an automobile crash. These inexorable laws take their toll whether we know of them or not. And so it is with God's laws.

God's spiritual laws are hidden, unseen. Few seem to know they are breaking God's laws involving human relationships when their marriages fail, when true friends are turned away, when reputations are destroyed. Few seem to know we are breaking God's laws involving our health, our physical well-being, when we eat fatty foods, accumulate too much cholesterol in our veins, and develop heart disease. Anciently, God commanded Israel "Thou shalt not eat the fat." It has taken science thousands of years to begin telling us the same thing.

When we pray for God's Kingdom to come, we should think on the marvelous world that will be in the future—the world of God's love, His laws which are set in motion for our good. Think of a world without hunger, without disease, without war! Christ will impose His government over all this earth so there will be no such thing as crime, no more desertions of mates and abandonment of one's own precious children; no more divorce and broken homes. No more drug addiction, no pornography! When you study the scriptures about God's great Kingdom, contrasting it with conditions on this earth today, it becomes very meaningful to pray—and to really mean it when you pray, "Thy Kingdom come!"

We are familiar with such terms as "the plant kingdom" or the "animal kingdom." We speak of the "kingdom of man." The Kingdom of God is not only the coming government of God to be put in place on this earth under Christ as world ruler. It is also the governing, ruling family of God, for God is reproducing after His own kind, enlarging His family, begetting tens of thousands, ultimately millions, of additional children to be born into the family of God.

The nations of this earth are original families grown great, into nations. Many political entities are "melting pots" of various races, as America, Britain, and others, but it was not always so. Many of the nations of the "third world" still represent original tribes; family groups grown great into a political, geographical entity.

The Kingdom of God is not only futuristic, in the sense of Christ's coming Kingdom to rule on this earth; it is also the growing FAMILY of God, into which Christ says we can be born.

Now do you see? There is a great deal implied when we pray for God's Kingdom. Christ said "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17-23). He said, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye might be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:36).

And what a beautiful prayer! When we pray for God's Kingdom, we are asking God to hasten an end to every possible evil; to hasten the glorious, utopian reign of Jesus Christ on this earth! We are showing God our earnest desire for world peace; for an end to war, human tragedy—for an end to death!

When we pray "Thy Kingdom come," we are once again expressing our loyalty

toward God, our trust in His promises, our belief in Jesus Christ as King of kings, our confidence He will return to this earth in triumphant glory, to bring world peace at last!

Finally, we are praying for God to hasten the day when we shall be given His ultimate promise—eternal life! The greatest event in all history will be the moment of the establishment of God's glorious KINGDOM on this earth. No wonder Jesus said we should continually pray for that day!

CHAPTER SIX

"Thy will be done..."

It is easy to recite these words in a quick responsive reading. They certainly sound pious enough, unthreatening. After all, none of us consciously hopes to be out of step with God, deliberately opposed to the divine will—except perhaps atheists and agnostics. Even those not especially religious, who have no special interest in church-going, like to maintain a personal philosophy of a sort, comforting themselves in the thought they are not really a "bad" person, that they have a unique, comfortable relationship "with the Man upstairs."

How often have I heard it? One will embarrassedly acknowledge, "Well, I ain't been no saint—but I think the Lord will understand when the time comes..."

These plaintive gestures toward a God of convenience are undiluted human nature. It seems natural to forget God in our daily lives; then turn to Him in a sudden frenzy of need, calling out our self-pitying complaint, "O God, where are you when I'm in pain?" We do not deliberately intend to treat God as a piece of treasured bric-a-brac to be placed on the shelf to grace a breakfront, to be polished for display on special occasions. It is not that we plan to treat God as if He were our servant, instead of the other way around.

Many seem to believe God is like the Genie that startled Aladdin when he polished the ancient lamp. We have but to rub the lamp with the magical words, "Our Father who art in heaven..." or even an informal, "O God, help me!" and expect God to come trotting to our aid.

For centuries, man has asked, "Why does God allow wars? Why, if God says He is good and merciful, does He permit babies to be born blind, deformed?" A rather

abrupt and perhaps slightly insensitive answer would be the analogy of homosexuals praying to God in self-righteous indignation, "O God, why AIDS?"

Why, indeed? Let God answer, "Wherefore God gave them up to [allowed them to have; permitted them to exercise their own wills] uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who exchanged the truth of God into a lie [margin], and worshiped and served the creature [including man; themselves!] more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature; and likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet [fitting]" (Romans 1:24-27).

God allows the natural consequences of man's actions to obtain. He has set in motion natural laws; forces, energies. God is the Creator of this universe, of earth, and all life upon it, including micro-bacterial life. When man breaks God's laws, those laws come crashing down upon him, not only in a spiritual sense at the judgment, but here and now!

Men lust for power, covet the possessions of their neighbors; they harbor hatreds because of racial, linguistic, cultural differences. They are especially intolerant of the religious beliefs of others. In all this hatred is the disease of war. War stems from the lust for power, among other passions. God allows wars, accidents, sickness, because those things are the natural outcome of God permitting the free exercise of human nature. Is anything more pitiful than a newborn baby that is deformed, or blind? Have you ever seen a pregnant woman smoking, drinking, eating harmful foods? Widespread information is available today about the direct cause-and-effect relationship between alcohol and a developing fetus. And what about venereal disease? It is known that syphilis causes blindness in babies. God does not cause sexual promiscuity, remember. He has chosen not to prevent it. You see, the Ten Commandments are not preventive legislation. God commands. But He leaves the choice up to us.

Remember our scenario of the smoker who found God interfering with his habit? It is the same right across the gamut of all human activity contrary to the expressed will of God. We may cry out our complaints about the effects of certain

causes, but we would be enraged if God forcibly removed our free volition—took away our freedom of action. In other words, we would be extremely upset if God removed from us the opportunity to commit the cause that produces the wrong effect!

To be brutally frank, we seem to want God to allow us to sin, but to remove the penalty!

What you are about to read from your own Bible may appear a little shocking at first. Yet, upon reflection, you will see the logic in what Jesus said. He had launched into a discussion of false prophets, as He did on many occasions. He said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” He then gave the analogy of judging a religious leader in the same fashion as one would judge a tree, or vine—by the fruit it produces. Speaking of false prophets He said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:15-20).

Now, notice what may appear to be a startling statement at first reading: “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).

Why startling? Because it is obvious the recognition of Christ as Savior, believing on Him, calling out to Him by name is not sufficient. Yet, millions have heard the strident voice of evangelists pleading, “Only believe!” Many seem to believe that they may be saved by merely “believing on the name of Jesus.” Not so. Christ said “...even the demons believe, and tremble.” No, God requires much more than lip service.

What are those requirements? Christ said, “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:50).

The Bible is the written will of God. It can be likened to the “handbook” about mankind. It is revealed knowledge, information we could find from no other source. God’s Word does not purport to be a text on science, engineering, chemistry, or architecture. It is a text, instead, which explains who and what God is, and all about mankind! It tells us why we were born, why we were put on this earth, what is the purpose and ultimate destiny of every human creature.

Doing the will of God is not threatening. It does not mean a life of asceticism, of abstinence, of “Don’t do this, and don’t do that.” The will of God toward us is that we live life to the full, that we meet with success, reward, happiness, fulfillment! Notice: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health...” (3 John 2).

God is portrayed as a loving Father, One with vast resources, great wealth—not only in material things, but in great and good gifts which could never be purchased with money. However, like any loving Father, He wants only the best for His children. Because of His vast knowledge and experience, He knows we tend toward many things that are going to bring us the wrong results!

God knows there is a cause for every effect. If we would listen to Him, we could learn the cause of all the suffering, heartache, trauma, sickness and disease, failure, poverty, crime and wars which stalk this earth. There is a cause for lung cancer. Millions know one of the main causes—cigarette smoking. Yet, they persist in slowly polluting their lungs, perhaps robbing themselves of many years of life. Many cling to stories about various long-lived individuals (George Burns and his famous cigars are an example) who seem to sail merrily through their 80’s with no difficulty, and continue to smoke. Yet, when hundreds of thousands of Americans go to their deaths through the years, suffering the slow agonies of lung cancer, perhaps undergoing chemotherapy, radiation treatment, surgery, only to be followed by a lingering death under massive sedation, both they and their loved ones call out to God—sometimes in heartbroken desperation, asking Him to spare their lives.

There are causes for broken marriages, failed businesses, poor health, alienated children, group and tribal instincts which lead to political ferment; causes which produce wars! The protracted struggle in the Mid-East is an example of the centuries-long, implacable hatreds between two of the great religions, two separate racial groups. After a few decades, the hatreds wax so white hot no one remembers the first “incident” which triggered the constant acts of terrorism; interminable war.

By the same token, there is a cause for the right result. We know what causes good health: plenty of exercise, a good, balanced diet, and avoidance of harmful substances. But do we know the cause which will produce happy marriages, obedient children, successful lives? Those causes are set forth in God’s Word,

which is His written will as expressed toward us.

God's Word contains plenty of information concerning the state of marriage! Several of the Ten Commandments bear directly on the family. God says, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long on the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Could close family ties, honoring parents and grandparents—familial love and respect—be a cause for longevity? Gods Word says it is. He commands, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife." Unfaithfulness is probably the major cause of ruined marriages today; yet, virtually all entertainment—the motion pictures, television, magazines, books—tend to treat casual sex, and its effect, divorce, as something to be done, something virtually "natural."

Millions of young people have "live-in" mates, with no true bonds of marriage, and upwards of fifty percent of babies born in our inner urban areas today are illegitimate.

The cause for all this chaos in the family unit—the building block of society—is that God's laws are being broken. Broken laws mean broken lives. We break them, they break us—it's just that simple.

God's Word says much about rearing children. It portrays proper roles for father and mother, and strongly encourages the closest possible family ties. Christ said divorce is a sin, that it should be avoided! This is not to say God cannot forgive sin, for He can, and will, when we call out to Him in real repentance. But, when we repent, God wants us to quit sinning. He will not save us "in" our sins; He will only save us "from" our sins!

God's will toward us is benevolent, kind, solicitous, loving, caring. David said over and over again, "For His mercy endureth forever." There is nothing fearful or "bad" for us in the expressed will of God.

Too many have equated the will of God with one or another of the organized religions. Recoiling from offensive religionists, from this or that television evangelist they may feel is not exactly sincere, some make the mistake of throwing out the baby with the bath water. But we must not compare human beings to God, no matter how "religious" they may seem. Usually, the successful, well fed, second-martini-for-lunch-bunch have little time for God. That is, until they develop some terrible disease, or their business collapses, or their marriage

is destroyed. Why? Why not go to God when times are good, and pray they'll stay that way? God wants us to prosper. It is not His will that we suffer heartache, sickness, want. Like any loving Father, He wants us to be happy!

Many seem to feel God's ways are drab, dull, uninteresting; that He gave us "Ten don'ts" by which we should live. They seem to believe "fun" and "sin" are synonymous. Not so. Christ said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10).

What kind of a God is our "Father" in heaven to whom we should pray? Notice what He says, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

Do you really want God's will in your own life? Notice Jesus said we should pray, not for our will to be accomplished, but God's. No one came face to face with this choice in a more bitter moment than our Savior, Jesus Christ.

After His lengthy final supper, His discourse to His disciples following the Passover, Christ and His disciples went out of the city to the Mount of Olives.

There, He went a distance away from His disciples and prayed in an agony of intensity. He knew the minutes were fleeting; He knew Judas Iscariot had fled the dinner a few hours earlier, that armed men were on the way to arrest Him. He knew what this dark night would bring. With perfect clarity, He could see His own body being ripped and torn by a cat o' nine tails, a crown of thorns cruelly jammed down on His head, lacerating the scalp. He could picture the agonies awaiting Him as they pounded spikes through His hands and feet, hoisting Him into the air on a stake to die a slow, pain-wracked death for the sins of the world.

Did Christ merely toss off this horrible ordeal with some Godlike "macho," some super human reserves of courage and bravado? Note well the biblical account: "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, 'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me...' "

Here, Christ was plainly asking His Father if there was some other way this fateful hour could be resolved. His total humanity comes clearly into focus; we see Him as lonely, forsaken— facing torture and death, praying with all His might that God could find some other solution. In asking this, Christ was clearly expressing His own will, His own point of view. But instantly, with no pause in His praying,

He quickly said, "Nevertheless not my will, but Thine, be done!" Let's read the rest of this stirring passage: "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:41-44).

No wonder God's Word says, "When He had, by Himself, purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

Probably, we tend to pray for our will to be accomplished without realizing it. After all, most don't pray except in emergencies, tragedies, when we hurt, or when we are frightened because of the suffering of a loved one. By the time many get around to prayer, the die is already cast. They only pray in times of desperate need. They are surely going to be asking, "My will be done—my request be granted; my desires be fulfilled," if they are only moved to pray in a dire emergency which stresses those needs.

It is not easy for those who rarely pray to ask for God's will to be done. Actually, prayer and Bible study are inextricably linked. It is impossible to draw close to God in prayer without drinking in of His written Word. In that Word, we learn of His will toward us we learn how to ask "according to His will."

Prayer, after all, is petition. It is not easy to get on our knees with hearts filled with urgent requests, and ask, instead, that God's will be done—and not necessarily our own. It is especially difficult if His will in some matter proves to be the opposite of our own. Notice the experience of the apostle Paul: He had a terrible affliction. There is strong indication it was a disease of the eyes, perhaps cataracts. On one occasion he signed one of his letters in very large characters to attest to its authenticity (Galatians 6:11), leading to the assumption he had great difficulty in seeing.

He related how he had asked God to remove this affliction: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations [referring to the vision he had seen of heaven], there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness' " (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

I know people whose strength is made perfect through weakness. Paraplegics,

who spend their entire lives in motorized wheelchairs, can make those of us who have normal use of our limbs shrink in stature spiritually, when we see their courage and their faith. There are innumerable examples of incredibly courageous people who have found seemingly bottomless reservoirs of strength in terrible adversity. After knowing God's will was different from his own, Paul meekly said, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong!" (2 Corinthians 12: 10).

What an incredible example! Yet, is there any more beautiful example than the one we read concerning Christ Himself.? This is the epitome of selfless prayer, of beseeching God for HIS will and purpose to be accomplished, subjecting our will entirely to His.

Let's face it, most of our lives are taken up with pursuing our will and purpose. The vast majority of our waking hours are spent in three self-directed purposes: self preservation, self determination, self perpetuation.

We cannot ask that God's will be done unless we are willing to submit to His will. What does He require of us? He tells us we must repent of our sins. And what is sin? God says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Paul wrote, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect WILL of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

God's will toward us is that we come to Him as His children; that we ask forgiveness of our sins, receive baptism, and become a begotten child of God through receiving of His Holy Spirit. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," said Peter to thousands on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:38).

Paul says, "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk [live] in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). God says we can change, that

we can start afresh, begin anew! He is willing to wipe clean the slate of our sins and mistakes, blot it all out as if it had never been, allow us to begin a new and different way of life as if a new-born child without a single bad mark against us. It is His will to give us of His Holy Spirit to help us overcome the trials and troubles that seem too big for us.

There is a story about the man who supposedly died, and, when confronted by Christ in His Kingdom, said, "Lord, I want to thank you for helping me through life. I looked back along the trail, and noticed two sets of footprints almost all the way, so you must have been right there beside me. But, tell me, Lord, why, when I got to those rocky, steep places did I see only one set of prints?" To which the Lord supposedly replies, "Because that's when I had to pick you up and carry you."

Each of us possesses a natural human mind prior to conversion. In other words, we are concerned about material things, those things that are of this mundane world—carnal, physical, natural. We have no spiritual perception if we have only a natural, or carnal, mind. Oh, we may be "good" people, the way this world would look at it—we may be trustworthy, faithful, hard-working; we may possess qualities of character which cause others to admire us. But, unless we have repented of sin, we still possess what God calls a "carnal" or fleshly mind. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

It is impossible to ask for God's will to be accomplished in our lives if we are not yielded to God's laws, if we do not sincerely thirst for God's purpose to be accomplished in our own personal life. Such a prayer cancels itself out immediately, for it is obviously insincere. We must not ask for something we do not truly desire, something we are not willing to receive. God is eager to answer the prayers of His children if we pray according to His will. We have only to sincerely want His will in our lives in place of our own.

It is peculiar to human nature that we want other nations to obey God's will; we want our neighbors to obey God's will, but, for some reason, we tend to avoid applying His will in our own lives. We wish with all our hearts that the Soviet Union would yield to God's laws, that they would "beat their swords into plowshares," dismantle their nuclear arsenals, and turn all those tanks into tractors so they could feed their population. We wish they would disband their

multi-millions of Red Army soldiers, that they would immediately cancel their plan for world conquest, order all their spies home from nations around the world, and live at peace and harmony with all nations. We wish all child abusers, pornographers, dope dealers, rapists and murderers, would repent of their sins, turning their lives over to God in an agony of self- abhorrence for what they have been, and allow God to totally change their lives.

We could wish that others around us obeyed the golden rule, that our neighbors were kind, considerate, law-abiding; we could wish they were perfect examples of the will of God in daily action. It sure would be nice to live in a region where all our neighbors were in submission to the will of God, wouldn't it?

Yes sir, what a world it could be if all our neighbors obeyed the will of God! What a world it could be if the Soviet Union turned to God with their whole heart—as a nation!

But, on the other hand, we have been talking mostly about us, you and me, in this chapter, haven't we? Maybe we become frustrated over being unable to change the Soviet Union, or stop abortion, or crime, or prevent wars. But there is something important we can change, with God's help. Us!

CHAPTER SEVEN

“On earth, as it is in heaven...”

Heaven is depicted to us as the most glorious, beautiful, peaceful, harmonious, fabulous, rapturous paradise possible to imagine. Adjectives fail to encompass the picture we see of God's heaven in the Bible. God reigns supreme; He is the absolute Authority, but God is a benevolent, merciful, forgiving Monarch. In heaven, we see order instead of chaos, beauty instead of ugliness, system instead of confusion; the epitome of all that could possibly be desired in the most perfect state.

God is the supreme RULER in heaven. But His rule is not arbitrary; not selfish, egocentric— It is not rule for the satisfaction of the One doing the ruling, but government for the sake of the governed. God is the greatest possible expression of self-government, for He rules Himself! God is perfect character. There is no higher power which prevents God from making mistakes, sinning, falling short. God is self-ruled to perfection!

It is this perfect character God wishes us to attain. He is ruled best who is ruled least. This is a principle of God.

And what is perfect character? It is the ability to discern the difference between good and evil; discern right choices from wrong choices; to clearly perceive the end result of all human actions, and the will power to force oneself to choose the right!

God is reproducing after His own kind. He is engendering children on this earth who are to mature through overcoming every human challenge, to finally be inducted into the family of God. He seeks to make each of us into one of His children, to give us eternal life. We are but a physical prototype of what shall be, a clay model made in God's image. It is our human destiny that we should become members of God's family.

In order to produce perfect character in us, God knew it would require the free exercise of personal choice—free moral agency. Character is not created automatically, but developed through a lifetime of imposing self rule on one's own human appetites, overcoming the downward pulls and tugs of the flesh, overcoming Satan and evils in society, through the powerful help of God's Holy Spirit.

When we pray that God's perfect will, His system of government come to this earth, we need to acknowledge this world's societies and institutions are not, in the main, of God's design. God has given mankind 6,000 years to learn the lesson that man cannot achieve utopia through his own carnal struggles, that he was made to need God in his life, and in his society. When we pray God's will be implemented on this earth as it is in heaven, we need to pray with the fullest comprehension of the sharp contrast between the two; the awareness of just how far man's societies have departed from the will of God.

Today, this world is in chaos. Enough nuclear explosives exist to destroy the world perhaps twenty times, and the big powers are building more. Proliferation of nuclear weapons continues at an alarming pace; nations such as India, China, Israel, South Africa, have the bomb. Dozens of smaller, third-world countries possess nuclear reactors which produce plutonium; many of them are nearing production of nuclear weapons.

If we were all the same color, spoke the same language, worshiped the same God;

if there were no chauvinism, racism, nationalism, we would still face the greatest problem looming before mankind—that of overpopulation. As the sub-Sahara attests, millions die from malnutrition, starvation and disease each year. The population of the world will double a few years into the next century; double again about thirty-five years later. There is no way to avoid food wars from engulfing much of the impoverished third world.

America and Western Europe, together with Japan, find themselves in the first-class passenger compartment of our spaceship earth, with about 90 percent of the remaining passengers in the economy compartment, separated only by a flimsy drape. Will the suffering, hungry, squalid, diseased, angry billions of the third world long be content with their plight?

Overpopulation is the most sinister of all global problems, for it recognizes no racial, political bounds.

Global pollution continues apace; solid waste, air pollution, water pollution. Thor Heyerdhal reported that, during his epic voyage from Egypt to South America aboard a papyrus-reed raft, he was never out of sight of flotsam injected into the oceans by man. Not once, during his thousands of miles of drifting through the Mediterranean and across the central Atlantic, was he out of sight of garbage, cans, bottles, oil slicks, plastic wrappers—some evidence of pollution in our oceans. We are all familiar with the deadly canisters of toxic poisons dumped into the oceans following World War I; the nuclear wastes being dumped into the oceans today, supposedly safely encased in concrete; the daily pollution of our seas by the effluent from thousands of rivers and streams; the huge oil slicks from accidents involving super tankers; pollution from oil production accidents off shore. Globally, man pollutes his environment through nuclear accidents like Chernobyl, or destroys life in the rivers and seas as deadly hydrocarbons are leached into the streams and rivers, and into the seas from farms using oil-based herbicides, pesticides, fungicides and chemical fertilizers to raise crops.

The diminution of strategic materials is of great concern. World reserves of fossil fuels, germanium, molybdenum, aluminum, chromium, are being used up rapidly. Not only is the list of endangered species long and growing longer, but the rapid depletion of raw materials is also of grave concern.

No new fossil fuel is being formed. Perhaps billions of years ago, at the “great die

off” of the dinosaurs, billions of tons of animal and vegetable material were buried deep beneath the surface of the earth in cataclysms unimaginable to the human mind. Oil, coal, natural gas—these are the relics of a bygone age, another world—the waste of a period of time on our earth when the continents (no doubt, in completely different configuration) teemed with life of a different kind. Each day, as we burn millions of gallons of this fossil fuel, we edge nearer that time when there will be none left. Our earth is finite, like a space capsule that carries its own fuel, oxygen, water and food. No new fossil fuels are being formed; no mass burials of billions of animals is occurring today. How many years are there before man depletes his energy supplies?

Of grave concern is nuclear war by accident. Can the big powers continue to play the deadly game of stockpiling ever more destructive nuclear weapons, the while making futile gestures at arms controls, living in that gray area between the peace which can seemingly never be achieved and the war which must never be fought? Many a novel has pictured a nuclear submarine captain going mad or a nuclear bomber hijacked; a conspiracy of generals to launch a nuclear war. Are each of these scenarios so far-fetched? In our war of nerves, there are human beings in those nuclear submarines, armed with enough missiles to wipe out many large population centers. Can human beings always be trusted to remain stable, even when placed under almost unimaginable strain?

The socioeconomic picture of our globe is not inviting. Hundreds of millions lack the basic necessities of life; food, clothing, shelter. Even among the industrialized nations, vast disparities exist between the privileged and the disenfranchised, the well-to-do and the poor, the majority and the minorities, the overstuffed and the hungry.

Clearly, the good green earth is not a place of great tranquility. Daily reports of the protracted wars raging—Iraq and Iran, the latest car bombing in Beirut, the latest terrorist incident in Europe, the latest airplane bombing or hijacking, the latest blast in Belfast. These and our daily crime reports tell us man has not learned to live alongside those with different color, different language, different religion.

But it was not always so. Once, this earth was a place of beauty, harmony, perfect peace. It looked like a vast garden from one pole to the other. The Bible proves there was an earlier creation, long before man—a pre-Adamic creation perhaps

several billion years in the past. A great archangel was placed over the earth named Lucifer, which means “shining star of the dawn” or “light-bringer.” He is one of the three archangels mentioned in the Bible, along with Gabriel and Michael.

The Bible depicts the whole world like the “Garden of Eden,” with Lucifer and millions of angels given responsibility for the earth. Let’s see what happened:

“In the beginning God [Hebrew: Elohim] created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Genesis 1: 1-2).

The Hebrew words for “without form and void,” or shapeless, in confusion, are *tohu* and *bohu*. Yet, the Bible tells us, “For God is not the Author of confusion...” (1 Corinthians 14:33). Also, notice Isaiah 45:18: “For thus saith the Eternal that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain [Hebrew: *tohu*], He formed it to be inhabited.” God clearly says the picture we see in Genesis the first chapter of this earth completely submerged under the seas; a picture of chaos and confusion, darkness, lifelessness, was not the original condition of earth. God did not create it that way.

The key is found in the word “was” in the phrase, “The earth was without form.” The word should be translated, “The earth became without form.” The Critical and Experimental Commentary says “...Dr. McCaul has shown that the verb ‘was’ is, in some twenty places in this chapter, used as equivalent to ‘became,’ and that elsewhere it has the same significance...”

The Critical and Experimental Commentary article on this chapter contains three possible explanations for the reconciliation of Genesis 1: 1-2 with science. It says, “The third scheme of reconciliation supposes the intercalation of a long and indefinite period between the original creation and the state of things to which the second verse refers. An immense interval, of which no record has been preserved, succeeded, during which the earth passed through the various changes which geology has traced, accumulating the successive strata, with their entombed inhabitants, which its bowels contain; then, at some undescribed period in duration, it became the subject of a superficial catastrophe, by which it was thrown into general dislocation and disorder, overrun by an inundation of waters,

and darkened, by an accumulation of thick, vapory mists” (Critical and Experimental Commentary, Jamieson, Vol. 1, p. 3).

But how, why? Geologists know this earth has been subjected to many ages of chaotic disarray. The majority of all rocks are sedimentary, or water-deposited. Fossilized ripple marks in stone, the evidence of ancient seashores, the aeons-long formation of coral atolls suggest that our earth was subjected to countless inundations; that monster storms ravaged the continents over millions of years. The movement of continental land masses along the tectonic plates of this earth is now fairly well-known. Anciently, our continents were in far different arrangement. How else did seabed fossils come to be easily visible in the tops of the Rocky Mountains; the Alps?

Somehow, from the early picture of absolute beauty, splendor and peace of which we read in the Bible, the earth was destroyed. But how?

Jesus said, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven” (Luke 10: 18). This was said in response to the joy His disciples evinced upon returning from their first evangelistic journeys. They were exulting because they discovered the name of Jesus Christ caused demons to obey them, that they had power over evil spirits through His name. When Christ said He saw the fall of Satan like a brilliant streak of light plummeting down to earth, comet-like, He was once again attesting to His pre-human existence with God the Father. He was showing He was present when a titanic struggle took place, and Satan, defeated, was cast down to earth. He was showing His disciples they had power over Satan’s cohorts through the use of Jesus’ name.

John wrote, “And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew a third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born” (Revelation 12:3-4). Later, John said, “And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7-9).

Study those words carefully. If they are to be understood literally, we may be looking at the answers to age-old questions about the chaotic condition of our solar system; the bleak, lifeless, pock-marked surfaces of Mars, Jupiter, and the other planets; the ravaged surfaces of their moons and our own.

We also see that heaven was not always the place of supreme tranquility it is today. There was a time when a battle took place so unimaginable, so gargantuan in scope that it defies the mind of the most inventive science-fiction writer.

We may be looking at evidence of the original "Star Wars!"

Now, let's see what the Bible says about this event. Isaiah 14 is a chapter dealing with type and anti-type: Satan, and the king of Babylon. All the Bible commentaries and Bible handbooks acknowledge that the language of the middle verses of this chapter means Satan. Notice, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! [Shining star of the dawn] How art thou cut down to the ground which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, 'I will ascend unto heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars [symbol for angels] of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the MOST HIGH' " (Isaiah 14:12-14).

This verse reveals much about Satan's origins. It tells us he was an archangel with a name which meant "shining star of the dawn," and that he was on this earth, below the heights of the clouds. Notice further information in another chapter of the Bible dealing with type and anti-type, this time between Satan and the prince of Tyre: "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou was created.

"Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou was upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire.

"Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee" (Ezekiel 28:12-15).

The Ark of the Covenant, carried by the Levites in the wilderness and later placed in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple, was constructed with two angelic beings called "cherubim" whose outstretched wings almost touched over the "Mercy Seat." This was a picture of God's throne. As we have seen, there are "cherubim and seraphim" about God's throne. The reference to Lucifer apparently shows an earlier position of great station, next to the throne of God. Then, we see he was assigned to this earth when the whole world was of beauty. Finally, we see the metamorphosis from wise and beautiful to jealous and scheming, the struggle of Lucifer to unseat God; his defeat, together with one third of the angels of heaven, and his violent expulsion from heaven. Lucifer was cast back down to this earth at the climax of a battle so titanic, so vast in its proportions, that the human mind cannot begin to imagine it.

Now, see what we have learned: The earth was originally not in chaotic disarray. The picture of the creation of Genesis 1 is not the original creation, but the re-creation of the physical surface of this earth and the creation of man, together with most known types of animals and fish of the present world.

Both the Bible and geology tell us there was an earlier creations time when this world teemed with life, when the frigid, northern areas of permafrost and frozen tundra were in fact semi-tropical (mastodons have been unearthed in Siberia; they were warm weather mammals), when weather patterns were completely different. Our present-day fossil fuels are derived from this ancient world of teeming life.

Space does not permit a thorough discussion of the deposition of coal beds, oil reserves; the graphic story of fossils in the rocks; how the dinosaurs, and vast numbers of other species suddenly disappeared, as if from some gargantuan catastrophe. One very possible theory has to do with a comet, or gigantic meteor smashing into the earth with the force of hundreds of multi-megaton H-bombs, spewing into earth's atmosphere billions of cubic yards of pulverized rock and dust, bringing about an immediate ice age. The initial shock would have destroyed all life on earth, caused earthquakes of unimaginable intensity, brought about tidal waves thousands of feet high, literally rocked the earth in its orbit.

Is that how it happened? We cannot know for sure, but we do know that our solar system shows mute evidence of massive destruction in the past. No new craters hundreds of miles across are being formed on our moon. Was the earth

impervious to these showers of asteroids and comets? Probably not.

Both astronomy and geology tell us of mind-boggling catastrophes in the past history of our solar system; of the explosion of stars, and the forming of new ones; of the coming into being of planets, and the destruction of planets. Radiocarbon dating of fossils generally concedes the earth to be about four and a half billion years old. Did God place Lucifer here, with about a third of the angels, in that distant age? Did their rebellion and the ensuing war in the spirit world result in the destruction we see? There is strong indication it did.

God's Word shows Satan was expelled from heaven, that he was "cast down" to this earth. Here, he is called the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). He is called the "adversary," the "accuser of the brethren," and the "tempter."

All of us are aware of stories about the devil. We eat "devil's food" cakes, and take pictures of "the devil's punch bowl" at the seashore. Most believe he appears as an evil-looking man with spade beard, pencil-thin mustache, smallish, wicked-looking horns, a red body stocking and a pointed tail. Not so. The Bible says he appears "as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11: 13-15) and warns Christians about his subtle religious deceptions.

God's Word reveals Satan is largely responsible for the chaos on this earth, that He influences nations of people, heads of state. Can anyone truly understand the mind of a totalitarian leader like Adolf Hitler apart from Satanic influence? Those close to him told of a mysterious power that seemed to emanate from him; of his towering, demonic rages. Somehow, he exercised a magnetic, evil influence over millions. His pogroms against the Jews, his incredibly inhuman "final solution" for millions in his death camps, his demoniacal military genius—these and other traits strongly suggest that Satan himself possessed Hitler's mind.

Clearly, God's will is not being accomplished on this earth today. The societal structures of man are not of God's making; not pleasing to God. Man's civilizations are based upon the human emotions of vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. They are wholly carnal, filled with competition, strife, avarice, cunning, vengeance, hatred. That is why God wants us to pray "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" When we utter these words, we need to see the desperate plight of this war-weary, sin-sick world; to see it from God's

perspective!

God is able to hear the piteous wails of the starving; the crying of deserted, lonely and abused children; the screams of the wounded and dying in the bloody conflicts of man. God sees the inhumanity, the callused disregard for human rights and simple human decency by despotic human leaders. God sees and hears it all—those terrible things we see but glimpses of in our daily news.

God is working out a great purpose here on earth, a purpose in which your life figures prominently. He wants us to know that we'll never escape this human experience alive, that we have a personal destiny to fulfill, that we were put on this earth to become something so wonderful, so beautiful, so powerful, that our minds cannot encompass it. We were made in God's image as a physical prototype—to ultimately be born of God, to become His children, members of His own family! He wants us to see that there is the alternative of eternal life over eternal death, that we have only to repent of our sins, call out to a loving Father in heaven for His divine grace, and He will hear; He will induct us into His family if we surrender our wills to Him, and begin to apply His laws in our lives.

I doubt there has ever been a morning so beautiful a husband has turned to his wife and said, "Dear, isn't this a lovely day to go out and shop for a casket and a burial plot?"

No, we tend not to think of such things, choosing to pretend, as it were, that we are rather permanent, impervious to the madness of human folly, accident and happenstance that demand the lives of others all around us. But any day—any day at all—is a good day to seek our God, to pray to Him. He says, "Is not this the fast [spiritual service] that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that you cover him; and hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Eternal shall be thy reward. Then shalt thou call, and the Eternal shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say 'Here am I!' " (Isaiah 58:6-9).

Some day, in the not too distant future, God's way of life will be imposed on this

earth. What a great day it will be to read in the headlines how factories are progressing in converting guns to hoes and rakes, tanks to tractors, bullets and bombs to useful tools. God says, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.' And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

Christ's outline for successful prayer, the "Lord's Prayer," as we call it, instructs us to pray for that glorious day!

Pray for God's perfect will to be accomplished in your own life first; then pray it will be accomplished in others! But you must really want what you pray for. You must learn to pray, as did Jesus Christ your Savior, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done, right here on earth, here and now, just as your perfect will is always loyally and faithfully done in heaven above!" God loves prayers like that. Study David's prayers, and you will quickly find why he was called "a man after God's own heart." What a description! How would you like it to be said of you? It's possible.

CHAPTER EIGHT

"Give us this day our daily bread..."

Why pray for just barely enough to last the day? Why not pray for enough food to last a lifetime? What about security, comfort in our old age? Is it contrary to God's will to be "survivalist" in our outlook; to store foods, emergency supplies, batteries, gasoline, water; to look out for ourselves so far as the future is concerned? Did Jesus really mean what He said about praying only that we receive, each day, enough for our daily needs?

Christ emphasized the importance of relative values. There is quite a contrast between those who have settled the big questions first, such as repentance, conversion, baptism—surrendering their will to God and making His kingdom their primary goal in life—and those who never truly get around to asking the big questions in the first place.

Christ knew most are concerned about purely material goals. He said, "No man

can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other: or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Mammon is an Aramaic word, meaning "riches."

Jesus Christ knew human nature right down to the core. He understood perfectly the driving forces which motivate most men: vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, vengeance; the purely materialistic goals which most strive to achieve. It was the abandonment of these false goals Christ urged; the acceptance of His example, teaching, and His sacrifice for our sins. Christ is not urging poverty. He is not saying it is a sin to be materially comfortable. God is not especially attracted to the poor over the rich; it is the other way around. The wealthy rarely have time or need for God; the poor recognize their need.

Is it God's will that His people be poor? No, Christ said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10). Many of the most famous men in the Bible were wealthy. Abraham was the owner of thousands of head of cattle and sheep. His household numbered many servants. Likewise, Isaac and Jacob, who inherited much of their wealth from their parent, and continued to prosper. David was king of Israel and Judah, lived in a palace for a fair part of his life; yet was a "man after God's own heart," because he never coveted wealth. He had not obtained the throne through political machinations, but was appointed by God because of his qualities of character.

God says, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children..." (Proverbs 13:22). Not only does God expect His people to prosper, He expects them to build a significant enough estate that they leave an inheritance to their grandchildren.

The apostle John wrote to Gaius, a generous, apparently well-to-do member of the church, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2).

God is the owner of all wealth: "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Eternal of hosts" (Haggai 2:8). God is our multitrillionaire heavenly Father who owns the universe. He has set down principles, which, if they were industriously followed, would result in material success as well as moral and spiritual well-being. With God it is a matter of priorities. Which comes first: material gain,

success in business, money, or God's Kingdom?

I knew a multi-millionaire who had all the things money can buy: mansions, limousines, fabulous art collections. He made his money in mining, then branched out into the stock market and real estate. By the time of his death in the 1950's, he was reputedly worth over 200 million dollars. I saw him from time to time in the last years before his death—lonely, reclusive, miserable. His only son had killed himself during a lawsuit between father and son over money. His wife had died several years earlier. During his last years, he was seen going into pawn shops, bargain basements, run down stores in the skid row section of Los Angeles, purchasing various things at random—old shoes, lamps, objects which he didn't need, and couldn't use. When he died, a lonely old man, his home was auctioned by the managers of the estate for less money than it had cost to build the iron grillwork fence and stone walls around it.

I knew some students who he hired to maintain his considerable grounds. Yet, even though they were only being paid \$1.75 per hour, he refused to pay them after a week's work for some petty complaint or other. When the mansion in which he lived was renovated in later years, it was discovered there was a huge tank in a basement room adjacent to an indoor swimming pool, and that the tank had been tapped directly into the city's main water supply. He had received millions of gallons of unmetered city water over fifty years. He had money, the trappings of material success. But, like so many others, this was never enough. He could neither buy nor steal what he coveted the most: happiness. Contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction, these were denied him.

J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men in the world, was once quoted as saying he would give all his millions for just "one happy marriage." Like many of the very wealthy, he discovered true friends are hard to find. Unfortunately, the wealthy must forever remain suspicious of the true motives of friends.

Yet, despite the countless examples of wealth coupled with misery, no matter how thoroughly documented, those lacking wealth cheerfully quip, "So let me be miserable in style!" It is impossible to convince those who have never possessed much money that it can be a powerful evil. They simply believe they know better. The lust for money is condemned in the Bible, and called a "root of all evils." With this lust for money comes every assorted form of crime and violence known to man. It is the subject of countless novels, motion pictures, television shows. Those

who write for the public know money, power, sex are what sells.

The most common form of idolatry in modern professing Christianity is the lust for money. Sometimes, it seems money is the main thing on many television evangelist's minds, much to the discomfort of many of their viewers. Personally, I have refused to follow the common tactics of fund-raising used by most; in more than thirty one years of radio and television evangelism, I have never asked for one cent over the air, in any personal-appearance campaigns, or even in our own church services. I sincerely feel the Gospel simply cannot be for sale. Yet, I recognize the right of others to ask. The desire for money, power, fame, importance, can become a powerful temptation. It is a subtle idolatry, not remotely realized by millions of churchgoers who would be shocked if Christ Himself were to point out their improper priorities.

A false god is whatever gets between you and the true God. What drives you? What motivates you? What really turns you on? The tables at Atlantic City and Las Vegas are garrulous testimony to the "get rich quick" philosophy of millions. Casino operators know as well as clergymen that gambling can become compulsive—a powerful lust that is as pervasive, as tenacious as drugs or alcoholism. Many a business has been destroyed, families broken, reputations sullied by inveterate gambling. Millions look for the fabled pot of gold at the end of the rainbow—that's why many states have turned to lotteries in a desperate bid for infusing new life into sagging state economies.

Remember the account of the black janitor in New York who found the sack of money that had tumbled out the back of a Brink's truck? An honest man, he immediately returned the bundle, which contained many hundreds of thousands of dollars. He was rewarded—a couple or three thousand, as I recall. The story made banner headlines all over the country—and then his miseries began. People began ringing his telephone, cursing him, calling him foul names, saying he was a "dumb s.o.b." His wife was plagued continually while he was at work by similar calls. People began driving by his home, honking their horns and shouting gross obscenities out the window. His children were terribly ridiculed, persecuted in school. Finally, he had no recourse but to move to a different city, lose himself, change his life. His neighbors couldn't understand that kind of honesty.

Of course, the ones who persecuted this gentle, decent, and honest man were viciously angry because they wished with all their hearts they had been the ones

to discover the Brink's sack. It would have been the stuff of their dreams. They hated the honest black janitor. They were jealous. They were also thieves at heart, consumed with avarice.

Millions worship at the altar of success. They drive themselves relentlessly, sometimes sacrificing personal health, mental tranquillity, friends, even marriages, in order to gain material success. Jesus' command that we pray for God's sustenance one day at a time has to do with the poison of idolatry; worshipping things, the things money can buy; worshipping power, success.

What is success? There was a newspaper story about a distraught, mentally disturbed man in New York who gulped down poison just after he had poured lighter fluid on himself, quickly slashed his wrists, then struck a match and jumped out a multi-storied building to his death. This man wanted to make sure he was successful—at suicide. But success is measured in this world by the size of one's bank account, not the quality of one's character. There are many filled wallets and empty lives.

Jesus spoke a parable concerning success. He told of "...a certain nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds [a sum of money], and said unto them, 'Occupy till I come.'

"But His citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom he had given the money, that He might know how much every man had gained by trading.

"Then came the first, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.' And he said unto him, 'Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.' And he said likewise unto him, 'Be thou also over five cities.' And another came, saying, 'Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin, for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layest not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.'

"And he said unto him, 'Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down,

and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?

“And he said unto them that stood by, ‘Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.’ (And they said unto him, ‘Lord he hath ten pounds,’) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him.

“But those mine enemies, which would not that I reign over them, bring hither, and slay before me” (Luke 19:12-27).

In a parallel analogy, the “Parable of the Talents” (Matthew 25:14-30), Christ said the money was given to each servant “according to his several ability.” The lesson is clear that Christ is speaking of Himself as the Nobleman. We are the servants, to whom Christ has given individual gifts—our own personalities, abilities, natural talents. Each of us is expected to produce according to our natural abilities. It matters not that one is more able than the other, the proportionate degree of success is the same! The servant who hid his talents like money in a mattress was the one who was chastised.

Those to whom Christ delivers the largest sums are expected to be busily occupied in becoming a success. Here, Christ is not impugning increase; He is not disparaging gain. No, He is encouraging it!

Notice the underlying approbation of the free enterprise system. The wealthy landowner has the perfect right to commission employees as he likes. He has the right to strike separate bargains, sign different contracts, deliver different commissions, according to his assessment of each man’s natural abilities.

Obviously, Christ is using successful enterprise as a type of building character; overcoming sin. Not everyone starts even. Some have inherently more natural ability than others. Still, their reward is the same, spiritually, if they overcome to the best of their natural ability. Christ is not disparaging money. He is using money as an example of Christian overcoming, showing it is a matter of priorities. Those who covet wealth are guilty of idolatry. Idolatry and covetousness are sins, which are punishable by eternal death, loss of God’s Kingdom! Learning how to handle material success, how to handle money wisely and generously is a powerful test of character, a measuring rule which is used by God to determine our fitness for His Kingdom.

Jesus Christ was not an ascetic. He did not enjoin upon us lives of abstinence, poverty, failure. God does not glory in the lack of accomplishment, inability, indolence, laziness; He is not impressed by the vanity of the poor. (Yes, even poor people can have vanity coupled with hatred of the wealthy, it is one of their main defenses against pangs of conscience, a method whereby they can convince themselves their plight is always someone else's fault, which, in some cases, it is.) These two parables show Christ expects His servants to prosper. God does not automatically reject those who are successful.

David's son, Solomon, became king over Israel. He expanded the Davidic kingdom; built a magnificent temple to God, palaces, public buildings. He had a throne of pure ivory carved for himself, imported peacocks and apes, exotic animals from India; imported metals from the British Isles. His kingdom was magnificent to the point of breathtaking splendor. Queen Hatshepsut of upper Egypt, most probably the "Queen of Sheba" of the Bible, related how her visit to Jerusalem had "taken her breath," when she saw the beautiful buildings, balustraded, terraced gardens, flowing streams, reflective pools, fountains, the fabulous treasures of Solomon's temple and palace.

Solomon was one of the wealthiest men of all time. He wrote of the entire experience of amassing his wealth. "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

"So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour ... then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11). The book of Ecclesiastes is an object lesson in priorities. Time and again, Solomon mused on the fact that "one event happeneth to both the wise and the fool," meaning death; he pondered the final end of those who had spent their lives in amassing wealth,

only to leave it to others, and to go down to the dust of earth in the same fashion as the poor. Finally, he said, "Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 2:17).

Solomon almost became a candidate for suicide. But, as he continually said, his philosophical pursuits were governed by the retention of his unusual amount of wisdom which God had given him. Even though giving himself over to every sensual pleasure; drunkenness, sex, sumptuous banquets, concerts; the trappings and entertainment of kings; he retained his insightful wisdom. At the end of it all he wrote, "Let us hear the conclusion of the matter: fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole of man." (The words, "duty of" in the KJV are italicized, indicating translators added them later). When Solomon spoke of "vanity and vexation of spirit" he used an expression which means, literally, "striving after wind." He knew the lifelong struggle for material wealth was like trying to seize a handful of air in one's grasp.

Solomon came to see relative values. Since death is the common occurrence, recognizing no class, no position, no amount of material wealth, he came to understand that each individual should live to the very best of his ability; that the "whole man" was only attainable through the keeping of God's commandments, study of God's word; discovery of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Without understanding the purpose of human life, Solomon came to see, life was merely a "striving after a handful of wind."

Yet, for all his wisdom, Solomon's heart was turned away by his many wives and concubines during his old age (1 Kings 11:1-9).

Jesus Christ did not imply we should live in a state of uncertainty concerning our next meal, that any degree of material success, any accumulation of wealth, is inherently wrong. With Christ, it was all a matter of priorities, of emphasis. He gave the parable of "Lazarus and the Rich Man" to illustrate the sin of calloused disregard for the plight of the poor (Luke 16:19-31). Christ also spoke of the deceitfulness of riches in His famous parable of the sower. The seed that fell among thorns was analogous to "he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he become unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

Again, it is a matter of emphasis. Christ said, "Therefore I say unto you take no [anxious, worried] thought for your life; what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and body than raiment?" Then followed His examples of how God clothes the beautiful flowers of the field; how He feeds the fowl of the air. Christ asked, "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"

"Therefore take no thought [the Greek word means "anxious thought" -conveys fear, worry, concern], saying 'What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

"Take therefore no [anxious] thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"(Matthew 6:25-34). Notice Christ says God knows we have need of "all these things." It is a matter of emphasis. Where are our hearts and minds? Are we so busily concentrating on making ends meet, earning a living, or attempting to amass wealth, that we have no time for the very purpose for our lives? God wants our priorities straight first, then He promises to supply our every need.

An outstanding example of wrong priorities occurred when Jesus offered a very wealthy young man a discipleship. The youth asked Christ, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And He said unto him... 'if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments!' He saith unto Him, 'Which?' Jesus said, 'Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' The young man saith unto Him, 'All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?' Jesus said unto him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.'

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, 'Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall

hardly [with great difficulty] enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.' His disciples were dumbfounded at this saying, but Jesus said, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible' " (Matthew 19:16-26).

God does not say it is impossible for the rich to enter His Kingdom, He merely says it is extremely difficult. Why? Priorities. Christ warned, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." How many truly secure rich people are there? How many are consumed with worry, anxiety? How much is enough? The sorrowful human examples are legion; history is replete with the common human tragedy of the utter devastation wrought in human lives through great wealth. How many "stars" have there been who have simply been unable to handle "stardom," and whose lives were ruined as a result? Priorities. If we know and are busily fulfilling the purpose in our lives, no amount of wealth will corrupt us. But if we are pursuing success, glamour, fame, wealth; the things money can buy as ends in themselves, then we shrivel up inside; we become avaricious, cunning, deceitful, utterly selfish. These base human motives bespoil the beautiful character God wants to see developed in us as surely as a vial of acid will ruin a great painting. Again, it is a matter of priorities.

In a stinging condemnation, James indicts the indifference of the very rich toward the poor: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.

"Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth [Lord of Hosts]. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned the just; and he doth not resist you" (James 5:1-6).

Here, James cites fraud, murder, deliberate exploitation of labor as crimes which resulted in ill-gotten gain. This is not a general condemnation of anyone who happens to have material substance, but an indictment of those who cheat, steal,

and murder to become rich. As such, it is a perfect indictment against organized crime, against those who become super-rich trafficking in drugs. This is wealth accumulated at any price, riches no matter what.

Christ's instruction to pray for our sustenance "one day at a time" becomes much clearer in the light of James' statement, "Go to now [Or, "come on, now,"], ye that say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:' Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, 'If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that,' but now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing [boasting of the future without regard to God] is evil" (James 4:13-16).

Priorities again. If the would-be businessman were to take God into His business as a partner, saying, "If it is God's will, I will go to such and such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain," and if he means he will conduct his business according to God's will, as we saw in chapter five, then His priorities are straight; he is placing God and His Kingdom first in his life! Such a man will not profit illegally. He will not attempt to achieve success through cheating his neighbor. He will not evince calloused disregard for the poor.

When Christ says to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," He wants us to remember His vitally important statement, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). He wants us to remember the terrible fragility of our lives, our temporality. The prayer of the righteous thinks first of the needs of others, addresses the needs of the poor, the sick, the diseased, the crippled and helpless, the lonely, the injured and the dying. Then, the prayer of the righteous asks, "Give us only that of which we have need," in a selfless, giving, sharing attitude of concern toward fellow man.

Here and there, we have been amazed at the examples of the super rich who seemingly could not give away their money fast enough. There are inspiring accounts of magnanimity, altruism almost beyond belief. Such examples prove it is possible to become very wealthy without allowing money to corrupt character.

It is not wrong to go to God with a request on our lips; to include the words, "Give us..." in our prayer. It's all a matter of priorities.

There are not a few examples of extremely wealthy, successful men who retained

sight of moral values; whose wealth, instead of corrupting them, made them great. Such a man was Andrew Carnegie.

Carnegie was born the son of a small businessman in Scotland; his father owned a handloom business. Unfortunately, the competition of steam power forced the Carnegies out of business in about 1848, and they decided to emigrate to the United States. Young Andrew was only 10 years old when he got a job as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory at 20 cents per day. He was a precocious lad; his keen mind brought him to the attention of a supervisor in the engine room where he learned how to be an engine tender. Next, his arithmetic and good penmanship earned a promotion to clerk. Then he got a job as a telegraph messenger, which, due to his curiosity about Morse and telegraphy, resulted in a job as telegraph operator. Meanwhile, he became a part-time newspaper reporter, specializing in the telegraphic end of the news.

That resulted in his appointment as telegraphic train dispatcher to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Later, he became personal secretary to the general superintendent of the railroad, Colonel Thomas A. Scott. When Scott became vice president of the line, he named Carnegie superintendent of the Pittsburgh division. Learning of the booming sales of the Pullman sleeping-car system, Carnegie shrewdly invested in the Woodruff Company, which held the original patents. His soaring dividends went into carefully selected oil lands around Oil City, PA. When the Civil War broke out, Carnegie was put in charge of eastern military railroads and telegraph lines.

Carnegie saw, in about 1862, that wooden bridges were going to be replaced with iron ones. He organized the Keystone Bridge Company, which constructed the first iron bridge across the Ohio River. Later, as a result of this experience, he left the railroad to construct the Union Iron Works, which included furnaces and rolling mills. By 1888 he had acquired a controlling interest in eight other steel works around Pittsburgh, mostly due to the practice of using slack periods to improve plants and purchase new equipment, so he was ready instantly when business picked up again. This placed him far ahead of his competitors. His profits soared, and by 1899 he consolidated all of them into one gigantic company, the Carnegie Steel Company. By 1901, Carnegie retired from business life and transferred his company, valued in 1901 dollars at \$500 million, into the still larger United States Steel Corporation, formed by J. Pierpont Morgan.

Carnegie began to write; to travel. His book *The Gospel of Wealth* caused quite a stir on both sides of the Atlantic, for he had developed a philosophy which said, in brief, that the very wealthy should be governed by a sense of argent oblige; that the accumulation of material wealth and prosperity carried with it an obligation to use that wealth for the public good.

He set himself to give his money away wisely—realizing this was no easy task; that money is power, authority; that it can ruin lives as well as enhance them. Carnegie established institutes and foundations; the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh was originally endowed with \$24 million, and included a museum of fine arts, a music hall, a museum of natural history, and an institute of technology with a library school. He established the Carnegie Institution of Washington to encourage scientific research; the Carnegie Hero Fund Commission to recognize heroic acts performed in every day life; the Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching; the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, with gifts of \$22 million, \$10 million, \$15 million and \$10 million, respectively.

He became a renowned and successful author, writing many books, including *Triumphant Democracy*, *Problems of Today*, and *An American Four-in-Hand* in Britain.

Carnegie died at the age of 84, having lived a life of success; of travel, study, creativity, energy, productivity, and generosity. He gave away huge sums of money, such as the \$135 million he gave to establish the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the purpose of the “advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding.”

The accounts of fame and fortune corrupting we mortals are more plentiful than those relating largess, but Carnegie’s example proves it is possible. Christ does not smile on poverty for its own sake. It is not “righteous” to be poor, any more than it is automatically evil to be rich. Character is what counts.

It is a supreme test of character to get on your knees and pray, “...and give us this day our daily bread...” and really mean it!

CHAPTER NINE

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...”

God wants us to pray for forgiveness. It is one of the most vital prerequisites to successful prayer; when we are repentant over our personal shortcomings, calling out to our heavenly Father for forgiveness, He is eager to listen. David said, “The Eternal is gracious and full of compassion” (Psalms 111: 4). One of God’s great qualities is that of mercy.

What response do we want from our children when they have committed some grievous error? Isn’t it deep contrition; genuine remorse? The attitude of broken-hearted repentance is something God almighty loves to see in His children. He says “...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor [Hebrew: “lowly, humble”] and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:2).

When Christ said we should pray for forgiveness, He specifically said “debts,” or “trespasses,” which mean, in a generic sense, “sins.” And what is sin? “... Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Christ magnified the Ten Commandments by His famous “Sermon on the Mount,” and by all His teaching, and life’s example. He said though murder was a capital crime, carrying the penalty of death by stoning under the letter of the law; hatred in one’s heart toward any fellow human being was an equal sin; God counts it murder, and the penalty is death. Christ made the Ten Commandments much more binding, lifting the law to a spiritual plane.

It is a sin to break even what Christ called the “least” of His teachings. Sin is not a vague something that is “displeasing to God,” nor is it a list of taboos concerning personal tastes and life styles, any more than righteousness is turning around three times a second, sprinkling salt over one’s left shoulder, and mumbling a mantra while balancing on one leg. “Debts,” or “trespasses,” are infractions of God’s law as magnified by Christ. They are human actions stemming from human attitudes that are disrespectful toward God and harmful to fellow man. Some kinds of sins hurt in three ways: They hurt our relationship with God; they hurt our fellow man, and they hurt us as a natural consequence.

God’s laws are established for the good of mankind. They are not negative; rather, they are the formula for everything we really want; physical well-being, happiness, success, a long life!

When we break God’s laws, we incur a double penalty. “The wages of sin is death”

(Romans 6:23). The death which is the penalty for sin is not the event which happens to us all, good or bad. God says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Death is natural. It is the one great event common to all human beings, but this first death is not the penalty for sin. Yet, the Bible says the wages of sin is death. What is the answer?

Christ said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life ... the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

"For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:24-29). The Greek word for "damnation" is better rendered "judgment."

The resurrection from the dead is one of the most clearly and oftstated doctrines of God's Word. The entire 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians deals with this important subject. Notice only a few excerpts: "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up if so be that the dead rise not ... but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept ... even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:12-23). Toward the end of this chapter, Paul says, "Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep [die the first death], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:50-52).

The Bible says those who are the “dead in Christ” will rise to meet Christ at His coming, and shall reign with Him in His glorious Kingdom for 1,000 years. Notice: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them; ... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

But what about those who are non-Christian when they die? What about the third world countries: the billions of human beings in the Soviet Union, China, Southeast Asia, Africa, who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ? God’s Word says, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:4-5).

The wages of sin is not the “first death” which happens naturally to every human being, including the finest people who have ever lived. No, the final payout for sin is described in the latter part of Revelation 20: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life, and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books, according to their works.

“And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [Greek: hades, meaning the grave] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death” (Revelation 20:12-15).

The answer is, God Almighty has decreed there is coming a resurrection from the dead, both for the just and the unjust. The first resurrection we have seen described takes place at the second coming of Christ, and is the resurrection of the “dead in Christ.” Christ said, “Ye shall see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, and ye yourselves cast out” to those who plotted His murder. The second resurrection takes place at the end of the millennial reign of Christ, and is a great, general resurrection of all who have never heard the name of Christ; who have never had opportunity for salvation.

The metaphor, “death and the grave are cast into the lake of fire”, is grim warning of the final fate awaiting those who will not repent; who remain incorrigibly contrary to God’s will, His purpose in their lives, His holy laws.

It is given to all men once to die, but this is not the penalty for sin, per se. Though one may die as a direct result of sin (as murder, or suicide), the penalty for the perpetrator is not this first, physical death. The penalty for sins not repented of is

death for all eternity, a most horrible death, final destruction in a lake of fire.

Notice the dead are said to be judged out of things “written in the books.” The Greek word for “books” is biblos and, transliterated, means “Bible.” How are we, this living generation, judged? God says, “The time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin with us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17). We are judged today according to the standard of God’s written Word. God will not change His method of judgment. He says He is the “same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) and “I change not...” (Malachi 3:6).

Remember, judgment is not synonymous with “sentencing.” The childhood picture we were given was as if there is some mysterious book, probably kept by angels, which contains every evil deed we have done; that, when we face “St. Peter at the pearly gates,” angels consult this terrible record of all our personal sins, and it is decided whether we “go up, or go down” to heaven or to hell. Not so. The Bible says Christians are judged over the period of their entire lives by those things written in the Biblos, meaning the Bible, the written standard of God. God does not change His method of judgment. Those coming up in the great, general resurrection will also be judged from the Bible, just as we are being judged today.

Furthermore, since Christ tells us to pray for forgiveness on a daily basis, that means we can have a daily “clean sheet” so far as any record of evil deeds is concerned! What is that worth to us? Of what value is it to know that Jesus Christ, as our Intercessor, sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven to make daily intercession on our behalf, turning to His Father and saying words to this effect: “Father, I understand that person; I understand those temptations, those sins—I ask you to forgive that person.” God says, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true [as the tabernacle in the wilderness], but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).

If you have little confidence in your own prayers, how much confidence can you place in the prayers of Christ Himself? He said, “Neither pray I for these alone [His disciples], but them also which shall believe on me through their word” (John 17:20). Jesus Christ is our personal Emissary in heaven; our own personal High Priest. He is there to make daily intercession on our behalf, if we will only call out to God the Father in His name. No wonder Christ wants us to repent of sin! Can

any man, no matter how impassioned, no matter how eloquent, accurately portray for us the awful consequences of unrepentance, or portray for us the breathtaking splendor of God's Kingdom as an opposite reward? Our personal shortcomings and sins are the most important obstacle to successful prayer! God says, "Behold, the Eternal's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities [sins] have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity" (Isaiah 59:1-4).

God wants us to come to Him in a continual attitude of contrition for our human failings, always cognizant of our sins. John, writing to Christians, said, "If we [we, who are Christians] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10).

When we pray.... "and forgive us our debts [sins], as we forgive our debtors," we are automatically acknowledging the conditions God has imposed on our own forgiveness. What are those conditions?

Peter asked, " 'Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?' Jesus saith unto him, 'I say not unto thee until seven times: but, until seventy times seven!' " (Matthew 18:21-22). Christ immediately followed this rejoinder with a parable about forgiveness; how a king forgave a huge debt to a man, who, now relieved of his debt, discovered a friend who owed him money, and promptly had him jailed because he couldn't pay. The result was that the king discovered the matter, and threw the first debtor into the dungeon. Christ concluded, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother's trespasses" (Matthew 18:23-35).

When Christ gave His outline for prayer we call "The Lord's Prayer," He said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14).

That's pretty plain. When we forgive, God hears our prayers for forgiveness. If we

harbor resentments, grudges, spites, petty hatreds, remembrances of carnal human hostilities between ourselves and any other fellow human being, it cancels out our prayers as surely as pulling the plug to our lamp. God simply does not hear us if we have the slightest resentment in our hearts, the slightest lack of forgiveness toward fellow man. The bulk of the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount, in which we find Christ's outline for prayer, is taken up with the same subject.

Christ said, "Judge not [condemn not] that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 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 of thine eye:' and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:1-5).

"Mote-casting" is a favorite pastime of many Christians. Somehow, we delight in gossiping about the frailties, mistakes, inadequacies, faults, poor taste, or lack of social graces we see in our own friends and neighbors. We tend to see with the sharpness of an eagle's piercing vision the tiniest infractions committed by others. Yet, we tend to be blind to the same things in ourselves. It is this peculiarly carnal, human tendency to criticize our neighbor that God wants rooted out of our character. What if God were spiteful, petty, vindictive? None of us would be alive! But no, He is generous, kind, good, longsuffering, patient, tolerant, eager to forgive. If we are to be inducted into God's own family, He wants us to be like He is!

Jesus Christ wants above all things for us to repent of our sins. He tells us to pray for forgiveness on a daily basis, for He knows we can only live life "one day at a time." Even as He tells us to ask for our physical sustenance; protection from sickness, accident and disease on a daily basis, so He encourages us to remain in a daily state of contrition toward God.

We all know the biggest little word in the English language: "if." Christ tells us we will be forgiven IF we are willing to forgive others. The key is in the phrase, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors!"

Peter said the three-fold key to salvation is, "Repent, and be baptized every one of

you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Jesus said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," and, "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

David was a man after God's own heart because He was repentant when he had sinned. Motion pictures have depicted David's affair with Bathsheba; his calloused decision to send her husband, Uriah, to the front lines in an impending battle, sure to result in his death. A child was engendered as a result of his adultery, and God allowed the child to die. When God caused David to see clearly his great sins, adultery compounded by murder, David cried out in anguish of soul.

The 51st Psalm has come down to us as an example of repentance. David cried, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness: ... wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight: ... purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow ... hide thy face from my sins, and blot out mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:1-10).

This entire Psalm should be read by any of us who seek God's forgiveness, for it is a moving example of a truly repentant man, who had to come face to face with his own monstrous guilt, whose sins had so sickened him he felt self revulsion, anguish of heart over them, who cried out to God for forgiveness. No wonder God said David was a "man after God's own heart." God shows us He loves to see contrition in His children, even as we want repentance in our own child. We don't punish to exact vengeance. We don't punish, or take away privileges from children to "get even." No, we are so solicitous of their welfare, we want the most salubrious possible result of necessary constraints—heartfelt contrition!

The apostle Paul was a man of great hatreds prior to his conversion. Armed with letters of authority from the chief priests, he was on a mission of hate, compelling Christians to blaspheme the name of God under torture. He was seeking to stamp out the new Christian religion through force of arms. Yet, when on the road to Damascus, he was suddenly stricken by a heavenly light; heard a thunderous voice saying, "Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?" Blinded, he could only grope for someone to assist him. God sent one of His servants, Ananias, to lay

hands on him and say, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized ... and straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; is not this he that destroyed them which called on His name in Jerusalem, and came hither for the intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ (Acts 9:17-21).

Paul, as he came to be named, became one of the most dedicated, humble, hard-working Christians of whom we have record. He was used to write fourteen books of the Bible. But never once during his ministry did Paul forget who he had been, what he had done; he said, "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme" (Acts 26: 11), and cried out, "For I am the least of the apostles, that I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9).

Paul never became forgetful of his old sins, even though he knew he had God's forgiveness. He was a beautiful example of one who, though forgiven, never became intolerant of other men's sins. He wrote, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that I do ... now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:14-24).

Paul wrote, "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering,

for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Timothy 1: 12-16).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth died to save each one of us. Paul knew his own life's work was set forth as an example of Christ's love and mercy; that we, today, can come to understand the depths of God's forgiveness. We, you and I, are among those "which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting."

We know, then, that God only forgives us as we forgive others. We also know He won't hear us if we have a spirit of lack of forgiveness, or if our own sins have canceled out all communication with God.

How to receive an answer to prayer? First, repent of our sins; call out to God for forgiveness. Do as Peter said, to those who had been so stricken by what He said about Christ on the Day of Pentecost, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). When you repent, go to God feeling deeply, with the clearest possible introspection, a genuine emotion of self-disgust, self-revulsion over what you have done, what you have become! A part of what we have been, as carnal human beings, is vindictive, spiteful, short-tempered; desiring vengeance! These motives are prominent among those of which we must repent. Once we have repented, then forgive! Forgive others from the heart, even as you want God to forgive you! Forgive!

Think of a few people you know—family members, business associates. Do you know anyone against whom you have certain hard feelings; old grudges, resentments, hostility? If so, get on your knees and ask God to help you come to an attitude of love and forgiveness toward them. Are you easily irritated? Do people make you angry in crowds, in restaurants, lanes of traffic, the check-out line in the supermarket? Are you easily tempted to sneer at the foibles of others?

Take a few moments to think introspectively about the kind of person you are. Do you tend to overlook the faults of others? Are you tolerant, not easily angered? Do you encourage those who make mistakes, such as your own children, or do you tend to criticize, saying, "You stupid child! Look what you have done! What am I going to do with you?" When you should have said, "That's all right darling, I'll help you clean it up, and then I'll show you how not to make the same mistake next time!"

Can you honestly say you don't hold anything against anyone? If so, you can go to your private place of prayer and pray in confidence, asking God to forgive you this day for your daily infractions against His perfect will; "as I am willing to forgive others," and really mean it!

Remember, prayer is a time for secrets! You can confess things to God that cause the most bitter anguish of soul. He will keep your secrets. After all, He saw you when you committed that particular sin anyway—God, Christ, and several million angels—and they've never told anyone about them yet, have they? God knows our every act, hears our words, knows the thoughts of our hearts. So when you pray for forgiveness, get specific! At the same time, get specific about your forgiveness toward others. When you think about Mary, George, Helen, or John, think of specific things that might have irritated you; realize they are people made in God's image just like you are; think of them as God does. Remember, Christ said He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Paul wrote, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

If God has loved us at our worst; allowed His own Son to die for our sins, what right have we to harbor feelings of anger toward any other human being?

When Jesus spoke of forgiving one's brother, He likened it to bringing a gift to the temple. He said, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift before the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

Do you sincerely want to receive an answer to prayer? Then do as Jesus Christ says, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke 6:37).

Want to make a new start, a new beginning? Then get in touch by letter, telephone, or in person with someone you love, but against whom you have had some bad feelings. Tell them you want to apologize. Tell them you've been wrong to be unforgiving. Ask them to forgive you; you'll be surprised how quickly old wounds will heal! Then, go to God on your knees and ask Him for forgiveness as part of your prayer requests. God can't turn away from His own children when they come in that attitude. He says so!

CHAPTER TEN

“And lead us not into temptation...”

The Greek word for temptation is *pierasmos*, which means adversity, a trying situation, putting to proof, discipline, provocation. Actually, the phrase would better be rendered into our modern English: “And allow us not to be led away of temptations.” God emphatically says He will not tempt us!

Notice what James, the Lord’s brother, wrote, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him.

“Let no man say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted of God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man!

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

“Do not err, my beloved brethren [by thinking God tempts us] every good gift and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:12-17).

At first glance, it appears Christ is telling us to pray that God will not lead us into temptation; as if we would be tempted of God if we did not pray otherwise. But no, we find the Bible says God is neither tempted, nor will He deliberately tempt anyone.

Satan is called “the tempter.” He is called “the god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2). Peter described Satan as a “roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour, whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). Satan is a very real being. He has destructive powers which he can use insofar as God allows (read the example of Job’s trials—how Satan caused the death of his family and servants), and is aided by literally millions of fallen angels called “demons.” These powerful spirit beings are able to influence, and sometimes even possess, human minds. There is simply no question whatever of the existence of these spirit cohorts of Satan.

Christ encountered many who were possessed of demons, and cast the demons out, restoring these afflicted humans to their normal, rational state.

God promises His children protection from Satan and his demons. He says, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). James also wrote, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). We need not be in fear of demons or Satan, but we do need to be aware of their power, of their evil influences. God says it is the demons who fear; that, in the presence of Christ and His Spirit, they must shrink away in fear.

There are three major sources of temptation of which we should be aware: Satan, society, and our own human natures.

Remember the Bible's description of our natural, fleshly minds? We are "not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" in our natural human state prior to conversion (Romans 8:7). Human nature contains vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, avarice, cunning, selfishness, and, now and then, beneficence, selflessness, and surprising humanitarian instincts. How many hundreds of books are there concerning the human mind; our ego, our psyche, our mental, psychological and spiritual makeup? Human nature is a mixture of good and evil. The most evil person who ever lived might contain certain good qualities; the finest may contain various evil qualities.

When we were born, we were an altogether sweet, precious, innocent, beautiful little life to our parents. They showered love and affection on us; showed us tender concern, the finest care. We did not learn how to reciprocate this outpouring of loving concern until many years later. Some never do. No, for all our innocence as a little child, we were mostly a collection of unbridled physical appetites.

As an adult, when we are uncomfortable, hurt, hungry, cold, or tired, we express ourselves in controlled ways. We may be vindictive toward one who has hurt us, or we may snap at someone, "For Pete's sake, (why do we say that—why not "For John's sake," or "For Elmer's sake?") close the door, I'm freezing to death!" A spouse might snap at a mate, "Will you turn off that light, so I can get some sleep?" But normally, we don't explode in mindless tantrums over minor discomforts. By adulthood, we're supposed to have outgrown all that.

As a child, we simply yell. We fill our lungs with air, kick, wave our arms about, and scream out our hurt, frustration, anger, and self pity. What parent has not moved with compassion to see the lower lip of their tiny infant curl downward, the eyes fill with tears, the plaintive wail of absolute self pity, as if to say, "You must hate me terribly, to make me feel this way?" Babies have no sense of fairness. They wail as if their little hearts will break even as Mom is doing everything in her power to coddle and love them.

As a little child, we are completely unacceptable to normal society. We are blissfully unaware of all social graces. We cannot control our bodily processes. We drool, burp, spit up, urinate and defecate with gleeful abandon—and unless our parents are quick to clean us up, we will play in it all if they let us. We do all of this happily unaware that it is unacceptable behavior. Why? Because we are, at this stage, a collection of appetites and emotion. There is no character development as yet, only human functions and uncoordinated motor facility.

The first area of development is physical. Then, we begin to grow mentally. Like punching information into a computer, our little minds begin to absorb knowledge and experience like a sponge. The last way most people grow up is emotionally; some never do. The rarest maturation of all is to grow up spiritually, through repentance, and receiving God's Spirit.

Everything we know; about history, philosophy, science, theology, was "programmed" into our mental computer by our teachers, parents, friends; by influential people around us and through experience. Many of us have never taken the time to study and think through our religious concepts; many merely inherited them through parents and friends. We tend to trust the "professionals" when we look for help in real estate, tax returns, or purchasing a car. It is the same in religion. Somehow, we have acquired a false concept about God; about just what it is He is supposed to be doing here below. That's why we cry out "O God, where are You when I need You?" We tend to feel our troubles are somehow God's responsibility, that He could do something about them if only He would.

As carnal humans, we do not really single out God in heaven above for our anger. At least, most of us don't. But indirectly, in our self-pitying, self-conscious, egocentric plunge through life, we tend to lash out at God. "Why me?" "Why does everything bad happen to me?" In our petulance, it is as if the very elements have contrived to thwart us. All "Sunday hackers" in the golf world know this is so.

They do not doubt for a moment that the weather, the ball manufacturer, the club-maker, the lie of the land, the root beneath their ball, or the fellow on the adjacent green who said something during their backswing all conspired to ruin their shot. They can be heard fervently cursing these and other factors, or making extremely harsh and repeated reference to divinity as they hook, slice, shank and skull the ball around the course. Few recognize the real problem—the loose nut on the end of the shaft!

Psychologists know most—that's right, most human beings are afflicted with a vast inferiority complex. It is virtually axiomatic that some of the greatest achievers in society were those with the largest inferiority complexes; those who sought to prove to themselves and the world at large they were not as inferior as they believed themselves to be. Inferiority can be a driving force which produces boundless energy in some people, forcing them to struggle continually for success.

God's Word shows this is not God's society; this present world with all its evils is not of God's making. He is not generally intervening in human lives today. It is only when we come to realize God is not a God of convenience; He is not a part-time "helpful Genie" to bail us out of trouble, but otherwise remain somnolent and avoid restraining us from our own self-willed choices; only when we understand that mankind has invited God out of its social structures that we finally see this present evil world in its true perspective. We are just "out here," taking our chances like anyone else, unless and until we repent of our sins, and come to God the Father through Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Then we can use the outline of the "Lord's Prayer" in a daily sense, and we can expect dramatic results! Want to overcome temptations in your life? God will help you, as long as you are willing to do your part.

What are the temptations Christ says we should pray to avoid? We know the most obvious ones, surely; stealing, cheating, robbing, lying, plotting revenge or murder. But most of us are rarely "tempted" to commit a crime. The temptations most common are those of appetites. Our human appetites involve the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and feel. As Solomon said, "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled" (Ecclesiastes 6:7). When are we truly "filled" with sated senses? Solomon wrote, "All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecclesiastes 1:8).

The lust to see can become an obnoxious human passion in some cases. We're all familiar with "rubber necking" motorists who cause horrible traffic snarls on the freeways when they go ever so slowly past an accident to see the jangled metal, bleeding bodies, and general chaos. The desire to see this or that distant place, beautiful scene, or smoking disaster, has led millions of humans like thundering herds of stampeding wildebeests to rush here and there in order to fulfill the desire of the eye, to see! "I want to see, Daddy!" we yelled as children, when standing in the third rank as the circus parade went by. Satisfying the desire to see is not a sin in itself, of course, any more than eating is a sin, or an inordinate temptation, so long as we eat those things which are healthful, and which do not harm us. God says He is the heavenly Father "...Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things" (Psalms 103:5). It is only when the desire to see becomes lust, when appetite leads to careless disregard for others, that the exercise of our physical senses becomes sinful.

The "desire of the eyes" becomes a sin when lust enters; when lust has conceived. It is this lust which supports a multi-billion dollar porno industry. The basest of all examples is the kind of under-the-counter home video or film which actually portrays a real murder which is committed during some orgiastic sex scene.

The desire to fulfill our appetites leads to an enormous host of sins, spiritual and physical. Drinking, smoking, overeating; these can cause lung cancer, heart disease, diabetes, cirrhosis of the liver, gout, kidney stones, a number of other diseases, and are directly linked to substances we ingest in order to satisfy sensual cravings.

And what is more tempting, to those possessing a "sweet tooth," than a big, three-scoop banana split laced with syrupy sauces? What is more tempting to a voyeur than an X-rated book store or nude peep show? What is more tempting to an alcoholic than a bottle of Glen Livet Scotch? Physical temptations of the appetites are as commonplace as breathing. They come to us in a daily barrage of advertising, human contacts, and our own physical senses. As Freud understood, one of the most powerful appetites in the human creature is that of sexual fulfillment.

Two of the Ten Commandments deal directly with sex. One says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and the other says, "Thou shalt not covet." The breaking of God's laws governing sexual behavior has led directly to the gradual destruction

of our homes and families. Our nation is only as strong as our homes. When this essential institution is in chaotic disarray, our society itself is in deadly peril. As we learned earlier, only approximately fifteen percent of our homes in the United States are traditional, with father and mother in Godgiven roles. Much of entertainment, much of literature, seems aimed at satisfaction of the sensual pleasures of sex. The effect of all this is divorce, abandonment of children, desertion of mates, child stealing, millions of single parents, and soaring statistics concerning murders within the family. Homicide is increasingly "home-icide," for police statistics tell us the most common murders are among family members.

If you sincerely desire to be in control of your own life; to make your own decisions, coolly, calmly, and rationally, then you need to sit down and make out a private list of your most acute temptations. Those you recognize, at least.

Are you overweight? What are your favorite foods? What substitutes are there? Have you read any of the many books available on eating right, altering your diet, starting an exercise program? Have you had a complete physical exam in the last year to determine your level of blood cholesterol? Millions of Americans seem to ignore the many warnings, and the body count of the dead from heart attacks continues to climb. Even young athletes, who outwardly appear to be in supreme physical condition, can drop dead of stroke or heart attack, because of our high fat diet. Anciently, God said, "You shall eat no manner of fat" (Leviticus 7:23). He knew what He was talking about.

Do you smoke? There are many Schick centers; help is only as far away as the yellow pages. There are many books and magazine articles on the subject. Do you sincerely want to break the habit? You can, with God's intervention, plenty of will power, and some human help, as well.

Singling out one temptation at a time and overcoming it is an exhilarating experience. God loves an overcomer! Christ said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

One of the most frightening and ominous of all temptations common to Americans today is that of drugs. Does any of us need to be told about the enormity of the problem; of the new, purer form of cocaine called "crack" which has killed top young athletes, and which is powerfully addictive, probably from its very first

use? Millions of Americans are hooked on drugs.

Are drugs part of your own problem? If so, the first step to overcoming it is to admit it. Many lie to themselves, play clever little games about how they are able to “handle it.” Reformed alcoholics and drug addicts can tell you about the clever little lies they uttered to their innermost psyche: “I can handle it.” Most go through protracted periods of denial. They deny they have a drinking problem. They deny they have a problem with drugs, telling themselves they are in complete control, that they can handle it.

Recognizing the lies, admitting you’re in trouble, can be the first major step toward overcoming such a powerful addiction. Of course, at the addiction state, we are far beyond what James talked about concerning temptations. He said a man is enticed of his lust, remember, and that when lust has become action, then sin ensues. And sin, says your Bible, “brings forth death!” Do you have certain temptations you hope with all your heart you can overcome?

It is important that we pray specifically about temptations. Single them out. Talk to God about them. Tell Him how badly you are “hooked” on this or that temptation in your life. You see, Jesus Christ of Nazareth was tempted too! Surprised? But why should you be? Christ was human; He was all man. Every common temptation of the appetites and senses was experienced by Christ. But with a difference! He overcame the temptations. They never became lust, and lust never conceived into sin. Yet, He experienced the tug and pull of appetite, of the temptations common to every one of us. Notice, “For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:16-18).

Jesus Christ had all the normal, robust appetites of any other 30-year-old Jewish man of His day. He could look on the beauty of young girls and experience powerful attraction—yes, temptation! He could see the hatred directed toward Him and be tempted to answer back in kind; He could see and smell foods He knew He should not eat; He could desire to sleep until late into the morning, when, instead, He would rise up early, go to a private place, and pray.

Whatever passions, emotions, sensory desires are common to us all—Jesus experienced. But He never sinned! Temptation never got the better of Him. It never became lust! Study the 4th chapter of Matthew, and the account of His temptations from Satan himself, during a time when Christ was at His very weakest physical condition, having fasted for forty days and forty nights! This is an account of a titanic battle being fought, a struggle of will, for the dominance of this earth. Christ met every villainous temptation and challenge of Satan; conquered Satan, by the power of God's Holy Spirit, and Christ's own Spirit of obedience to His Father in heaven.

Many fail to understand that God is not intervening in this world except in special cases; that He hears and answers prayers for those who obey Him; that answered prayer is not for everyone.

Have you ever known people who were bitter toward God? I have. I knew of a deeply religious young woman who lost a child at birth. She could not reconcile the loss of her child with the loving, kind, merciful God of whom she had heard. She felt betrayed; as if God had singled her out for especially harsh treatment. Beside herself with grief and agonizing loss, she screamed out against God. I heard later that she became so severely mentally disturbed she had to be institutionalized. A rare case? Perhaps. Yet, there are many of us who have difficulty reconciling personal tragedy with the concept of a God who is loving, kind and good.

Soldiers involved in the stinking carnage of warfare, shockingly and brutally brought face to face with the fact that war is not the way the movies portray it; that it is not glamorous or heroic; that it is only gnawing, mindless fear, the shrieks of wounded and dying buddies, the stench of death; many such men have completely lost all faith in God; many have denied His existence. Others have experienced the exact opposite effect. Many have found God on the battlefield. Many have been unable to account for their survival except through God's help.

Why is it so difficult for some of us to see that God is not the Author of man's sins? That God is allowing us free choice; He is not actively intervening in this world in any general sense; He is not preventing the wretched effects of the evil causes man sets in motion? Is it because we have somehow believed God is desperately trying to save this world, now? Many envision a spiritual "tug o'war" between God and Satan; they believe God is desperately trying to save as many

souls as possible; that the Devil is trying to keep them “lost.” Impassioned evangelists paint vivid pictures of the pangs of hell, cry out for people to be saved as if the very next day would be too late. Perhaps all this religious hype has contributed to the very common assumption that this is God’s world, that He is actively involved in it, that He is trying very hard to save this world.

But the Bible says otherwise. Satan is described as having deceived all nations (Revelation 12:9). Christ said humanity is spiritually blinded of its own choice, and that God has allowed man to go his own way, apart from God. Humanity has invited God out of its societies, and God has cooperated.

Christ did not try to save all those He could during His human life span! When His disciples were puzzled because Christ spoke to the crowds in riddles, they asked, “Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, ‘Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given ... therefore I speak unto them in parables, because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaias, which saith by hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross and their ears are dull of hearing, LEST at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.’ ” (Matthew 13:10-15).

Christ also said, “None can come unto the Son, except the Spirit of the Father draw Him.” Although many have assumed Christ came to save everyone He could, He specifically stated He clouded and concealed the meaning of His words; “lest they be converted!” God has a time schedule; He is working out a master plan here below. It was not God’s intention that Christ attempt to save the world during His physical life; nor is it His intent to save this world now. The concept of a spiritual “tug o’war” between God and the devil is untrue. It pictures God as weak, ineffectual. If God wanted to save the world now, He would be doing it.

It is only when we understand God’s great master plan for salvation that many of the myths and superstitions melt away. The tendency for many to feel resentment toward God for seeming aloofness stems directly from their erroneous concept that God is actively intervening in this world now; that He is desperately trying to save it. But no, He is now inviting a few, here and there, who will hear His voice,

and who will repent of their sins, receive baptism, and His Holy Spirit. He is not trying to save Japan, China, Russia, India, all of Africa and Southeast Asia nor any other nation, per se. The billions are deceived; believing in false religions, false gods. The Creator of heaven and earth is not trying to change that just yet. He will change it, in the not too distant future, probably in the lifetime of most of us living now.

God is not intervening to punish sinners, any more than He is intervening to save them. He is presently following man's own choice, which is a "hands off" policy. It is only those who invite God into their lives who experience divine intervention. He seldom interferes, otherwise, except in major world events as He must, from time to time, to see to it His purpose is fulfilled.

Somehow, churchmen have instilled in us the concept that God "punishes" us for the slightest infraction; that, when some terrible thing happens, it is God, punishing us for our wrongdoing, sitting in His heavenly armchair zapping us with His lightning bolts of divine wrath.

Believing God is a God of convenience—that He is waiting, watching, to step in at the last possible second and save us from our own tragic mistakes—many turn on this "God" of their imagination, begin to scream out their indignation at the supposed slight. They cry out, "O God, where are You when I need You?" To which God might well reply, "The same place I am when you don't seem to need me."

Should we have a bit of religion; believe in God "just in case." Many live their lives in complete ignorance of God and His laws they have never read the Bible, let alone studied it; they don't have the slightest concept about the real Jesus Christ of the Bible. Then, when tragedy strikes, they suddenly call out to God, crying in desperation for His divine intervention. I have always wondered if there are any atheists suspended by one leg from a rope in a deep coal mine, or drifting helplessly on a life raft in the middle of the South Pacific. Most people, regardless of personal philosophies, seem to turn to God in prayer when terrible tragedy strikes.

Does God single out some for special punishment? Does God take out His wrath and vengeance on those who are especially wicked?

Jesus ran head on into such reasoning. He had been told of a couple of cases of

mass death; one, a tragic accident, the other, mass murder.

Luke wrote, "There were present at that season some that told Him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, 'Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish' " (Luke 13:1-3).

What did He mean? First, it is plain these unfortunate victims of Pilates' soldiers were not "sinners above all the Galileans." Jesus said so. But their deaths were meaningless. They died, not for some great cause; not as martyrs for a special purpose, but ignominiously, anonymously. We know nothing else of this incident except what we can glean from the sparse details. Here was a mass murder; yet Christ said God had nothing directly to do with it; God was not exacting vengeance because these were more evil than anyone else.

Christ gave another example: "Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:4-5). An accident had occurred. Perhaps ancient mortar had crumbled, and a cascade of stones came down; a section of wall from an ancient building buried eighteen men beneath tons of rubble, killing them. It was a well-known tragedy; Jesus speaks of it as a familiar event. Yet, many had been "supposing," searching for answers, pondering the meaning of this mass death. Surely it was more than just bad luck? Surely, there must have been some terrible sinners among them? No doubt, there had been much gossip about supposed causes, suspicions concerning divine wrath.

But Jesus said God simply had nothing to do with it. These men were the victims of time, and chance, and circumstance. They died meaningless deaths; they were not Christ's disciples, not converted, not yet begotten members of God's own future family. Their deaths were tragedies, like so many thousands of tragedies down through the centuries. Did Jesus mean if we repent, we will not die? No. It is given to all men to die once; the Bible is a book about the deaths of its heroes, a book of martyrs for great causes. All the apostles died; many of them were martyrs. But we have no record whatever of any of them dying through accidents, or in purposeless, mindless slaughter. Paul was martyred. Tradition says Peter was crucified upside down. James was beheaded. Steven was stoned to death.

These men stood for a great cause; lived lives of overcoming, hard work, and a powerful witness for Christ. They were allowed to die, yes. But their deaths were not random, happenstance, accidental.

Without God in our lives, we are just “out there,” taking our chances like anyone else. We are like so many faceless, anonymous human beings; a part of the mad rush for material goals; the massive tide of cursing, crying, bawling, complaining human beings struggling toward material goals, living our lives filled with short-range objectives; sometimes betrayed by our machines, or run over by our toys. When those things happen, it is not God “zapping” us because we are especially evil; it is merely time, chance, and circumstance. But Jesus says when we become converted God makes a difference between us and those who do not have God’s protection.

When Jesus says we are to pray “And lead us not into temptation,” He means we should ask God for special strength to resist the temptations that come to us every day. God will not lead us into such a situation, even if we do not pray to that effect, for God clearly says He will never tempt us.

God promises to help us overcome temptations. “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer [permit] 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).

Are you tempted to sin in various ways, against God, against others, against your own mind and body? God understands. Christ sits at the Father’s right hand, turns to Him and says, “Father, I understand that temptation, for I experienced it.” In Christ, we have an experienced High Priest and Counselor, an Intercessor who is there to help us. Take your private, personal temptations to God in prayer. Christ said, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation” (Luke 22:40), and Peter wrote, “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of temptations...” (1 Peter 2:9).

And remember, temptations are only the first step toward sin. After temptation comes lust. When lust has conceived, and some action takes place, it is sin. That’s why Christ says pray to avoid and overcome temptation because prevention, after all, really is the best cure.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

“For Thine is the Kingdom...”

At the conclusion of His sample outline for prayer, Christ said we should acknowledge the absolute supremacy of God in earth and in heaven. The beginning of this acknowledgement is the admission that the government of the whole universe is securely in God’s hands.

When we have reached the point of recapitulation in our prayers; we have prayed for forgiveness, we have forgiven others, we have made known our most urgent heartfelt needs— especially the needs of others first—we then begin saying, in effect, “Father, I know you can do this; I know you will do it, because you are in control. You have the absolute authority; you are the Ruler over all!” We acknowledge God is on His throne, that He is the Omnipotent God, that He is able to answer our prayers.

As we saw in chapter five, the Kingdom of God is very real; it is to be established on this earth at the second coming of Christ to rule for 1,000 years. We saw that God’s Kingdom consists of Christ as King; subjects, both human and spirit; territory, meaning this earth and the whole universe; and laws by which His Kingdom governs.

Why then, does Christ say we should begin the conclusion of our prayer with the seemingly repetitious statement, “For thine is the Kingdom?” Is this merely “spiritual salt and pepper,” some spiritual-sounding flavor to prayer? Far from it. As startling as it may sound, one of the great purposes in Christ’s sojourn on this earth in human flesh was to qualify as future World Ruler; to overcome the power of Satan who is the present evil ruler of this earth—now disqualified, but not yet removed!

You may not have realized that Christ’s encounter with Satan in the wilderness was, in fact, a struggle for rulership of the world!

Let’s notice what the Bible says: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, ‘If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.’ But He answered and said, ‘It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by

every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.'

"Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, 'If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' Jesus said unto him, 'It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Eternal thy God.' "

Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and shewed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, 'All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.' Then saith Jesus unto him, 'Get thee hence, Satan;' for it is written, 'Thou shalt worship the Eternal thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.' Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him" (Matthew 4:1-11).

All of us have engaged in tests of physical strength at least a few times in our lives; perhaps athletic contests, lifting weights, arm wrestling, or some other test. Have you ever worked as a ditch-digger for eight straight hours? Ever been so physically exhausted you threw yourself into bed and slept for about nine hours without turning over? Long, arduous hours of hard labor can be exhausting. But mental struggles can be even more enervating! A battle of the will can leave you as physically weak as a test of physical strength! In Christ's great struggle of mind and will power, He was pitted against the most subtle, wily, seductive spirit on earth. And this when Christ was at His weakest, near starvation.

This was a clash of wills. Christ could never have overcome Satan's temptations without having fortified Himself with many hours of fervent prayer! By fasting coupled with prayer, Christ was extremely close to God; imbued with God's Spirit. Yet, when He met Satan in this great contest for mastery of the earth, He did so with His spiritual reserves only; God did not Personally intervene; no angels came to force Satan to leave. Now, notice the variety of temptations, and notice Satan's boast that he is presently in charge of the governments of this world. Satan first tried to probe into Christ's mind, to see if the slightest bit of ego or vanity was there. He said, "IF You be the Son of God..." disdainfully, contemptuously. Have you ever had someone scorn you, ridicule you, attempt to "put you down"? Ever had someone act as if you are beneath contempt, completely unimportant? It rankles, doesn't it?

What would be the response of most of us, especially if we occupied an important position? I am reminded of the story of the young recruit who had barely received his haircut and dungarees at the U.S. Naval Training Station in San Diego when he was put to work mopping and waxing the hallway in the Administration Building. The Commanding Officer of the Station, an Admiral, came down the hall, and the boot said, "Hey, buddy, gotta match?" The Admiral smiled, took out his lighter, and lit the recruit's cigarette. Just then, a Lieutenant who had been hurrying down the hallway, and who had seen what had happened, shouted, "TenSHUN!" at which command the boot snapped to attention. "Why you stupid meathead!" raged the Lieutenant, "Don't you realize this is the Commanding Officer? How dare you speak to an officer like that!" and proceeded to make exceedingly uncharitable references to the boy's probable genealogy. The Admiral watched with a bemused smile, and as the boot stammered out a thoroughly frightened apology, said, "That's all right son, just make sure you don't ever do that to an Ensign!"

If you have traveled abroad very much, you may have run into the kind of pompous vanity that seems common among some men in uniform, such as customs officials, or military personnel of some third world countries. When you see their chests full of medals, especially if they are in a tiny country which has never been involved in a major war; when you see the large bands of gilt leaves on their caps, the gleaming epaulettes, doesn't it make you wonder? What major campaigns, what great battles, what personal acts of heroism do all those medals represent? The "Battle of Ougadoogou Swamp?"

How well I remember a rumpled official in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, many years ago, who, to show his contempt for Americans, sent my Spanish professor and me to the back of a long line of those waiting to pass through customs control after we had arrived at the customs window first. His swaggering authority was hugely impressive—to him. It seems axiomatic that the less the authority, the more those carrying such authority tend to be impressed by it.

Make no mistake. Satan knows human nature pretty thoroughly. He is fully aware of the generous amount of ego and self importance that beats within many human hearts. The slightest lack of proper respect toward authority can bring surprising rebuke in many cases.

But one who possesses real authority does not find it necessary to continually

prove it. Nor does he (or she) find it necessary to explain it or defend it. A strongly authoritarian person is usually filled with feelings of inferiority. True authority comes from within, comes from strength of character, from a cool assessment of one's own abilities. A person with large responsibilities, and therefore authority, does not need to continually display it.

Satan was attempting to bring about an angry, petulant retort when he said, "IF thou be the Son of God..." The carnal reaction would be "What do you mean, IF?" No doubt followed by a rebuke and an immediate reassertion of position, of authority. But Jesus Christ was utterly devoid of vanity and pride. He recognized Satan's ploy instantly. He was not for an instant led away by the temptation to put this sly upstart "in his place," as most might have been. No, instead, He quoted Scripture to him.

A word about Satan's attempts to quote Scripture: At first blush, it almost appears that this is the classic "religious argument," with two individuals each attempting to get the better of the other by quoting Scripture. One recites a text to prove a point; the other comes back with a different text which seems to knock out the first one. But is the Bible really capable of just any interpretation? Can we quote one scripture to destroy the meaning of another? No, far from it. The Bible is the most perfectly cohesive book that has ever been written; in its original languages, it is absolutely flawless.

When Satan quoted a section of one of the Psalms, trying to tempt Christ to throw Himself down, he deliberately twisted the meaning of the scripture promising God's protection. Christ knew the devil was perverting the verse; for God will not protect anyone who deliberately casts himself down from an height. The verse is a promise to protect God's own people from accidental falls, not to prevent them from deliberately tempting God!

Then came the moment when Satan told Christ he, the devil, was the master of all the kingdoms of this earth. Notice that Christ did not rebuke Satan for his statement, nor contest it. By His silence, we can see He took no issue with Satan's claim that Satan had the power to give the governments of this world into another's hands.

Satan is called "The god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), and is described as a serpent who "deceiveth the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

It was after this final test that Jesus issued a command! Previously, He had met the devil “on his own turf” so to speak. He was so hungry He must have been near death. Most of us would have had neither the physical stamina nor the mental and spiritual tranquillity necessary to endure forty days of fasting. But now, Christ issued an order, and the devil had no choice but to slink away in surly obedience.

Satan had no recourse. He clearly understood the magnificent display of character; of spiritual power Christ had illustrated. He was defeated, and he knew it! Christ had won this great struggle through the power of God’s Holy Spirit. The whole point of Christ’s fasting was to move all human, physical strength aside, to overcome Satan’s greatest temptations by the power of God’s Spirit, and not by any human feats of strength!

There are many interesting points to notice. First, the number forty is always used of a period of testing in the Bible. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years before entering the promised land which was a symbol of our life on this earth—a lifetime of tests and trials—prior to entering God’s Kingdom. There are details gleaned by carefully comparing Luke’s account of this event with that of Matthew which prove there were not necessarily only three temptations. Nor are we to assume these temptations took place over a period of brief moments—about the length of time it takes us to read the account in the Bible. This clash of wills may have lasted for many hours, or several days.

Notice that when the agonizing trial was over, “Angels came and ministered to Him.” Christ was exhausted. He needed water, food. Now that He had successfully passed every test, won the greatest battle of His life, did God actually perform for Him the very miracle Satan had so slyly suggested? We cannot know, of course, but when the Bible says angels ministered unto Him, it means they accomplished more than simply patting Him on the back! He needed water, and food. No doubt, they supplied it! Even as God miraculously sent manna from heaven to feed His infant nation Israel, so it may be that Christ ate “angel’s food!” But during the trial, God the Father did not personally intervene. No angelic help was given until after Christ had won the victory. Christ had fasted and prayed for forty days and forty nights! His spiritual strength was equal to the tremendous task before Him. When the test came, He had to face it with the spiritual reserves He had acquired through fasting and prayer! On one occasion, when His disciples could not cast the demon out of a child who was thrown violently to the ground, they asked Him why, and He retorted, “This kind cometh not out but by fasting

and prayer.”

Perhaps it is time we saw Christ as more of a Hero, the Victor of great battles, the Overcomer of superhuman tests of strength, and not as a very nearly effeminate, soft, philosophical individual who seemingly walked through life with profound statements always on His lips, but who never got His hands dirty; never experienced the sweat, toil, exhaustion and near despair that is common to man. Many find it difficult to relate to the Christ Who is portrayed to them in the pictures commonly found in Bible book stores, or in the pages of illustrated Bibles. And no wonder—if they have not known of the real Jesus Christ, the One who is the Savior of all mankind.

It is easy to see how Sunday-school teachers can keep the attention of their little charges by graphic accounts of David versus Goliath, the stripling overcoming the giant with a slingshot; tales of Sampson’s prodigious strength; of Daniel, standing coolly courageous in the lion’s den; of Noah, building his ark, and collecting all the animals. But Jesus? Most little children are not particularly impressed by Jesus as He is typically portrayed. About the time they learn He tells them to “turn the other cheek,” and they think about the neighborhood bully, they begin to wonder about this “Jesus” of whom they are told.

But the real Jesus of Scripture was a Person of fabulous accomplishment; the bravest man who ever lived! This struggle against Satan was far tougher, of much greater duration, and carried consequences far beyond those of David’s battle with Goliath. Had Christ failed, He would have sinned, by giving in to Satan. He would have lost His spiritual destiny; to return to the right hand of God. He would have lost His crown as future King of the universe! We would have had no Savior! Victory for the allies in World War II meant the physical salvation for countless millions. It meant freedom for most of Europe, for Britain and the United States. Had we lost the war, we would have been enslaved. Millions died to save many millions more. The dropping of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was justified by Truman by determining that it shortened the war by several months, and, therefore, saved perhaps a million or more lives. But if Christ had failed His battle with Satan, it would have meant the loss of all mankind. Christ was struggling not only for reward; for the supremacy—He was fighting for survival!

Do we realize what terrible hunger can accomplish in we humans? Have you read about the Donner party? About the crew of the whaler, Essex, smashed and sunk

by the frenzied charge of a great blue whale several hundred miles off the coast of Chile? Have you read about what some frenzied inmates of concentration camps did to their own fellows in order to survive? There have been many horrendous, gruesome cases of people resorting to cannibalism down through history. Extreme hunger is not some easily conquered appetite. It can literally turn a cultured person into an animal.

A vivid account of a family's survival aboard a small boat in the South Pacific was written some years ago. The sailing vessel in which they were making a lengthy cruise caught fire, and they were forced to abandon ship. They drifted for weeks, living on what meager supplies they had quickly salvaged, and, finally, on a chance sea turtle or fish they caught now and then. They were nearing starvation. They related how they would spend hours discussing favorite restaurants; going into the most intricate details of food preparation, talking of the meals they would enjoy when they were finally rescued. They watched each other rapidly lose weight, become emaciated, nearing starvation. This particular story had a happy ending, for they were ultimately rescued after being adrift for several weeks, and so far as I know, the family did exactly as they had so longingly discussed—survived to enjoy those meals they had so yearned for. Have you ever been excruciatingly hungry? Ever fasted for three or four days at a time?

When Satan began describing bread to Christ, he no doubt gave glowing descriptions of food, not necessarily only a loaf of bread, but probably went into great detail, portraying in vivid, colorful words the tempting sight and smell of delicious foods of various kinds. Remember our discussion of appetites? Judging from the enormous number of us who are carrying entirely too much weight around for the good of our hearts, appetite can be quite a problem. The Bible says Christ was tempted in every point just like we are! Paul wrote, "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). The suggestion to merely command stones to become bread was a deliberate, clever and powerful one; Satan tried to attack Christ in His most vulnerable areas.

But Jesus Christ immediately thought of how the life we live is much more than "meat," more than continually imbibing the physical, chemical elements of matter in order to keep our bodies functioning. He knew the life of us all is centered in the spiritual portion of our human minds; that there is a spirit in man, and that the careful protection of that spiritual essence, nurturing it toward spiritual

perfection, guarding it against pollutants of any kind, is far more important than maintaining and prolonging this physical life. He instantly quoted Scripture to Satan, saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God!”

As bread—food—gives us our physical life, so God’s Holy Word gives us true life! Life everlasting; life for all eternity! Christ plainly said so, yet His disciples and His persecutors all were puzzled, and some of His disciples left Him because of the seeming impossibility of what He said.

Christ portrayed Himself as the Living Word which must be ingested, imbibed. He said, “I am that bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6:48-51).

This saying was so puzzling, so difficult for them to understand, that many of His own disciples forsook Him right then and there! It was not until the Last Supper, Christ’s final Passover, that they came to understand. Christ is the “Living Word,” meaning, metaphorically, that when we drink in of God’s living witness, the Bible, we are drinking in of the nature of Christ. Spiritual food sustains our spiritual growth, and is vastly more important than the temporary perpetuation of this physical life. Christ knew this, and it sustained Him. He was not susceptible to thoughts which would result in depravity, as some have been when resorting to ghastly acts in order to survive. Spiritual survival was more important to Christ!

Next time you pray, why not do so with an open Bible before you, referring to the words of the “Lord’s Prayer” as an outline for your prayer. As you progress through this rich outline; covering thoroughly each point, calling to mind what you have learned in preceding chapters, you will finally come to the concluding words. When you acknowledge, “For thine is the Kingdom...” think about what you are admitting! First; to Whom are you praying? Why, to God, the Father! Yet, it was Christ who conquered Satan; who qualified to receive the Kingdom of God on this earth, wasn’t it?

Notice the answer: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that

are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:22-26). Yes, Christ qualified to become the future World Ruler. He disqualified Satan. But Christ is not yet on this earth, and Satan is not yet removed. Christ conquered through the power of God's Spirit; He did so in fullest partnership with His Father; He did so to deliver the Kingdom to His Father in heaven. He wants us to acknowledge that the Kingdom of God is securely in the hands of the Father in heaven.

As a powerful article of faith, we acknowledge that God has the strength, the ability, the authority, to answer our prayers! We are saying, in effect, "Father, I know you are going to hear and answer this prayer, for you are the One in complete control; you are in charge; you are the Great Ruler; you sit on your throne over all governments, powers, authorities—the Kingdom is YOURS!

Suppose you had a loved one who had been wrongfully thrown into jail. Suppose you finally, after months of trying; writing to congressmen, senators, contacting attorneys, talking to the news media, writing letters to the warden, and writing to the White House, received a telephone call from the President of the United States. Suppose he said, "I have reviewed the entire situation, and I have called the governor of your state, who will call the warden. Your loved one will be released immediately!" Would you have faith it would be done? Yes, we can have faith in human powers and authorities. If you receive a government check if you have overpaid your income tax, do you doubt for one instant it will be good when you deposit it in your checking account?"

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. What is a government check? It is merely a piece of paper. It is a written promise. It has no intrinsic value. It is not silver, or gold, or even paper money. Yet, when you take it to the bank, you have perfect faith it is good; that it will be cashed, and you can purchase goods with the money. The Bible is like that. It is a written promissory note. You can depend on it! Paul wrote, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11: 1).

God answers our prayers when we pray in faith. But faith is nothing more than believing God is perfectly able to do what He promises, believing He is in charge!

He will answer your prayers because He is in charge; He has the authority to do so!

Harry Emerson Fosdick said, "It is cynicism and fear that freeze life; it is faith that thaws it out, releases it, sets it free." It is faith that releases your prayer, sets it free, sends it loud and clear to God. When you conclude your prayers with your acknowledgement that God is in control, then let go of your prayer. Don't pick it apart, rethink it, or keep tagging on unessentials. Let it go. Give your concern to God. Have faith and He will answer!

CHAPTER TWELVE

"...and the power..."

We are all familiar with many applications of the term, "power." Political power, military power; horsepower, electrical power, or the civil rights chant, "Power to the people!" Just as we acknowledge in our prayer that God is in complete control; that He rules in heaven above; that He is soon to rule this earth when we pray "For thine is the kingdom..." so we should realize the immensity of His limitless power.

As we shall see, knowing something about the power of God can be a vitally important item of faith. When you're sure someone is capable of performing some act, you have confidence it will be done. Faith is confidence, assurance your prayer will be answered because God has power to perform mighty deeds. But unless we know what is the power of God, the repetition of the familiar words, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," sound more like spiritual poetry; as if we are merely intoning the required words with a group of the devout in church, insuring the commas are all in place, the emphasis is just right, the words uttered in proper cadence.

Do you know of examples of God's power? When you say, "for thine is the power..." do specific concepts of God's great power come to mind? Mostly, our minds conceptualize the power of man. We are impressed by displays of power. The marching of armed men; columns of tanks, armored vehicles, missile carriers; these are the trappings of military parades intended to impress and intimidate. No one understood the trappings of implied power better than Adolf Hitler. When we see the news photographs of the mighty 16-inch guns of a battleship firing; a

flight of F-16 aircraft unleashing rocket attacks; or the launch of a Titan missile, we are suitably impressed. We know we are seeing frightening engines of destructive power.

I have been as impressed as anyone with military power. As a young sailor aboard an aircraft carrier during the Korean war, I shall never forget the moment I heard the captain announce over the ship's loudspeakers that we had joined elements of the 7th fleet off Wonsan; how he advised all those not on duty to come topside when they could, to see the magnificent sight of all those American ships.

Thankfully, I was in the gunnery department; my duty station was only one deck below the flight deck, and my battle station was that of captain's talker for the gunnery officer. I scrambled up just one ladder, out the hatch onto the starboard side of the flight deck, and took a look about me. There, only a few hundred yards away, were two other Essex class aircraft carriers just like the USS Antietam. The battleship Iowa was there, as were some heavy cruisers, several light cruisers, and a large number of destroyers. Ships were everywhere, extending over the horizon. I knew there were others, too distant to be seen. It was a mighty armada. Standing there with the wind in my face, seeing these mighty ships ploughing along through the steep gray swells of the South China Sea, I was exhilarated with a sense of pride, of belonging to a great nation, of being there, offshore Korea, for a noble cause.

The implied power in all those guns, in those dozens of aircraft with their bombs and rockets and machine guns, in the sleek gray shapes of those destroyers plunging along like so many watchdogs over their larger charges—it was heady wine.

Many times during my two years aboard ship, I stood just above the twin 5 inch/38 anti-aircraft guns while they were firing. Just above them and immediately below my station was a 40mm quad mount. The deafening blasts from those guns, the acrid smell of burnt cordite, the bits of charred cork that smudged my face as the winds blew their clouds of smoke toward me is still a poignant memory. That's power, up close.

How well I remember my very first trip aboard a jet airliner in the winter of 1959. I was aboard the first nighttime flight from Los Angeles to New York by American Airlines after they had just taken delivery of their very first Boeing 707. Though I

was a seasoned traveler by then—having flown all over the country, throughout Europe, Central and South America aboard everything from old DC3's to DC7's and Super Constellations—I was not prepared for the thrill of my first jet ride.

This was different! When we took off, I was not anticipating the incredibly steep deck angle, nor the surprising acceleration on the takeoff roll when the engines were brought to full power. I seemed to be pushed back into my seat by some invisible force; the aircraft lifted off and began to climb at what I thought was an impossible angle.

But this was nothing to compare with the many times I observed launches from Cape Kennedy. I covered the entire series of Gemini-Thor-Agena launches, and was on hand for the manned Apollo flights. The first time I was in the forward press stand for the launch of a huge Saturn 5 rocket, I could scarcely believe my eyes. Not so far distant from us was a huge rocket the size of a thirty-six story office building! Brilliant lights illuminating it in the predawn darkness revealed tendrils of vapor slowly rising from the rocket, hinting at the liquid fuels inside. I was to do a television program during the launch commencing with the final seconds of countdown, and continuing live, on camera, throughout the launch and the hoped-for successful aftermath.

As the countdown reached 0, and the instantaneous blast of bright flame and white smoke burst from beneath the rocket, we saw the huge missile begin to slowly rise. I had been giving the dimensions of the rocket, the names of the crew aboard, their mission. I had described to my viewers the incredible power of that gigantic missile—seven million pounds of thrust were to be generated from those Saturn 5 engines! Then, the blast of sound reached us. The ground shook under my feet. My ears were filled with a thunderous roar; it was the loudest sound I had ever experienced. We were buffeted by shock waves from the nearly instantaneous explosion of thousands of gallons of fuel. The change in my pocket jingled, and it felt as if two mighty hands were beating against my chest. It was impossible to keep my voice from trembling as I described the launch; the incredible courage of our astronauts who could calmly sit there in that capsule atop a massive bullet, going through their prescribed routines as if what they were doing was somehow routine, normal. Talk about power! I was witnessing mankind departing from the earth! Those men over there were going to the moon!

As a pilot, I have flown eleven different types of jet aircraft, over sixty different

airplanes in all, including singles and twins, land and sea planes. I became familiar with the powerful thrust of their engines. Accumulating thousands of hours in the Dassault Falcon Jet, I crossed the Atlantic at the controls of the airplane nearly fifty times. The Falcon was a dream to fly, and I never tired of its safe, dependable, powerful performance. We would lift off at about 120 knots, get the landing gear and the flaps up, and accelerate to 200 knots (the fastest speed allowable in a control zone) in only a few moments. Our rate of climb fell off as we went higher into the thinner air, but we would generally climb at an initial rate of from four to six thousand feet each minute depending on our weight.

Once above 25,000 feet or so, it was a different story. The last 10 or 15 thousand feet of our climb had to be accomplished at a much reduced rate, so that our average climb to cruising altitude was about 1,000 feet per minute. We generally planned to get to our cruising altitude in about the same number of minutes as the altitude—37 minutes to 37,000 feet.

But when I flew the Grumman Gulfstream II, a larger, more powerful airplane, we could make it from a standing start at the end of the runway to 41,000 feet in just 14 minutes! The fuel aboard the GII weighed more than the combined weight of the Falcon, including 11 passengers with baggage.

But our modern jet fighters can lift off, pull straight up, and reach an altitude of over 50,000 feet in about three minutes! That's power!

We're all familiar with, and impressed by, the technology of man. The awesome power unleashed in the explosion of a hydrogen bomb looms ominously in the back of our minds. Who has not seen the photographs of that towering column of water, smoke, and debris from the explosion of the first hydrogen bomb at Bikini—the great ships of the U.S. Navy dwarfed by that gigantic, mushrooming cloud? That was the world's most powerful explosion, ever.

But what about God's power? Does God have power to compare with the thrust of a jet engine, the blast of a 360-foot long rocket, the explosion of a hydrogen bomb?

Have you ever heard evangelists talking about God's power? I once saw a large advertisement in the Los Angeles Times, announcing an evangelistic meeting under a huge tent. The ad said great manifestations of God's power were to be performed; that the sick were to be healed; the lame walk, the deaf hear, the

blind see. This particular night was billed as “double portion night,” implying that the evangelist had the power to somehow control the production of miracles so that on the preceding night, only a “single portion” of God’s power would be available, but on this special night, a “double portion” would be evident. Forgive me, but I was skeptical of such a claim.

Since I had begun to study the Bible by this point in my life (it was about 1955), I spoke to my wife about it, and we decided to go to the meeting along with another young couple attending the same college. I wrote of that experience in my book, *The Real Jesus*. It was the only time I ever attended such a meeting in my life. It was quite an education. This is how I described it in my book:

“During one session of the meeting... the wildly-weaving, hoarse-voiced, colloquially-accented southern evangelist who claimed to be having almost daily communication with ‘The Lord,’ was calling upon personal testimonies from the audience. From time to time a person... would rise, wave both arms, and scream out some unintelligible utterance... it seemed to be both enjoyable and intelligible to many others in the crowd because it would usually bring forth shrieks and moans of ecstatic agreement.

“There was a group of teenagers sitting directly in front of us, and they seemed to be under the tutelage of an... older teenaged girl who was urging her younger brother, ‘Go ahead, you can do it, there’s nothing to it!’ and gave him an outpouring of... urgent instructions.

“On a moment’s sudden inspiration... adding to our growing and acute discomfort, because suddenly all eyes were turned in our direction, the girl jiggled herself into position, and, springing onto the seat of her chair with all the grace of a rhinoceros, began to wave her arms ecstatically in the air and shrieked a series of piercing testimonies, interrupted by breathless screams of ‘Bless You Jesus! Bless You, Jesus!’... then she said the name... over and over again...

“Even though those of us sitting immediately behind her knew that all this was a carefully contrived demonstration in which she hoped to encourage her younger brother to throw off whatever remaining constraints of propriety and etiquette he may have had... the wildly gesticulating figure came to the immediate attention of the... evangelist on the platform who then confidently affirmed... over his microphone that what was happening in our vicinity of the tent was in fact a

‘direct message from God!’

“...Soon, it came time for the taking up of an offering. This was my first and only experience with what I heard described as a ‘silent offering.’ The evangelist said he only wanted to hear the ‘whisper of bills.’ No vulgar, noisy, obscene jingling of change! He then gave a quick financial report which was delivered with the same fervor and intensity as portions of his sermon... it seemed that ‘the Lord’ had managed to send him head over heels in debt, and the evangelist then proceeded to enlighten us [as to] what the tent cost... what it cost for payments on his buses, trucks and other vehicles in the traveling caravan, and many other costs which soared up into the thousands of dollars.

“Then followed the promise of yet stranger miracles. But these miracles were the other edge of the sword. Many of the devout were warned with absolute assurance that if they held back their money, it was quite likely they would arrive home and find it in flames! They were threatened with head-on collisions at intersections, heart attacks, a telegram saying their mother had died, and everything from liver attacks to instant senility.

“It must have frightened the daylights out of enough of them that they parted with a surprising amount of their money, but even this was insufficient, because after what was apparently one of the quickest tabulations in all history of accounting procedures, the evangelist and his staff took up yet another collection... stating they were some \$700 short, which meant the evangelist had to convince only seven people in this vast crowd of thousands that God had especially called and appointed them for the purpose of providing [this] required deliverance.

“I was beginning to get a clue as to what was meant by ‘Special Blessing Night,’ or ‘Double Portion Night’ or that we would ‘See Miracles.’ The evangelist was receiving very special blessings, double and triple portions, and it surely was a miracle the way those people parted with their money.”

I have never forgotten that experience. Of course, the traveling evangelistic campaigns of that particular man are over now, for he died many years ago, reportedly of acute alcoholism. I saw nothing I could remotely equate with God’s power. On one occasion, the evangelist seemed to become engaged in a fight with the devil and communists all at once. He shouted out his height and weight,

whipped off his jacket, clenched his fists and professed willingness to do battle right there and then. The audience cheered. Most people in that tent seemed to really enjoy the show.

Were we witnessing the “Power of God” as billed? I do not doubt many of the faithful in that tent were positively thrilled with the meeting; that many experienced moving, emotional heights. Surely, the frequent applause; the tears of joy, the ecstatic moans of agreement were real enough. But somehow, our little group of four was not able to enter wholeheartedly into the proceedings. Maybe it was that the evangelist failed to recognize the wholly contrived demonstration of the young girl in front of us. Maybe it was because I could not equate the power of God with the volume of a loudspeaker, or truly believe the wetness on the evangelist’s hands was “holy oil” as he claimed.

Have you ever seen a demonstration of the “Power of God?” Surely the power of Almighty God is more than the power of loudspeakers and amplifiers. Surely, it is more than the sound of an evangelist’s voice? Where is the power of God when we hurt; when we’re involved in terrible tragedy?

God’s Word says a great deal about God’s power. The very first verse in the Bible says, “In the beginning God created...” What is “creation?” Remember the first proof there is a God? It is that creation demands a Creator. Creation means the universe and the solar system; every portion of matter, and the laws that act upon it. What does it take to create? To bring something into existence from nothing? God says He is the Creator of all things; that He created matter.

All matter is made up of atoms. Yet, man has never seen an atom. It is only within the last few decades that scientists have been able to demonstrate the existence of the atom, have been able to identify its various parts, and have been able to unleash energy from the very “building block” of the universe, the hydrogen atom.

You are composed of atoms. The air you are breathing, this book you are holding, the clothing you are wearing, is composed of atoms. Each atom contains a nucleus and many other components, such as neutrons, protons, and electrons. Electrons are negatively-charged particles which circle about the nucleus at a distance of about 10,000 times the diameter of the nucleus. There are many other atomic subparticles, some of which have a life span of only a couple of billionths of a

second.

Each atom is like an infinitesimally minute solar system. It is as if the nucleus were the sun, and atomic particles were the planets with their moons, circling about the nucleus. It requires several atoms in composition to form molecules. A molecule is the smallest particle of matter containing chemical elements. Water as we know, is composed of H₂O, or, two hydrogen atoms combined with one atom of oxygen.

In a sense, all matter is merely stored energy. Atoms are like tiny dynamos; electrical energy in rapid motion. Yet, when they are grouped together in certain ways, they appear as “matter.”

Though it may sound strange, energy is matter, and matter is energy. Each atom is a tiny energy source. The closer we look into matter, the more difficult it is to see. A molecule of some substance or other would be visible only under powerful microscopes. But the atom is so tiny it remains completely invisible, even to the most powerful electron microscopes. Yet we know it is there! We know, through experiments in nuclear physics, of what it is composed, how it acts. But it is invisible!

No wonder God says “...that which may be known of God is evident to them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him are clearly understood by looking at what He has created; even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:19-20, paraphrased). If we see some huge structure, we marvel at the hands that made it. A trip to New York by someone who has lived all his life on a farm, or in a small village, brings exclamations of awe at the huge buildings—the Empire State, the World Trade Center. Millions stand at the foot of Mount Rushmore and marvel at the skill, artwork, and dangerous struggle it required to carve the faces of presidents out of solid stone. Men discover ancient monoliths in Tibet, or China, or in Iraq and Egypt, and marvel at the massive work it must have required. The great pyramids have astonished and impressed mankind for thousands of years.

Man’s great works impress us. But Who made the stone from which these marvelous structures were fashioned? Who created gravity, inertia, the laws of physics and chemistry that are immutable, powerful, eternal?

From ancient times, men have recognized the power of the sun. They have known

it required the sun for their crops to grow; to provide daylight, warmth, the seasons. Instead of wondering about the Maker of the sun, they have worshiped the sun, itself. As God says, “Who changed [exchanged] the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature [that which is created] more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Romans 1:25).

Perhaps it is no wonder the ancients, with no knowledge of physics, chemistry or astronomy worshiped the sun. All energy with which we are familiar comes ultimately from the sun. The sun is our solar system’s “furnace”; its power source. Talk about power! Think about our sun for a few moments:

The sun averages about 92 million miles away from earth, holding our entire solar system in its powerful gravitational field. Only about one hundred billionth of the sun’s expended energy reaches earth—all the rest is lost in space. Yet, with this minute portion of our sun’s energy, all man’s energy derives. All our fossil fuels; coal, oil, are stored energy—ancient life forms which received their sustenance from the sun.

How does the sun generate its energy? Our sun is like a gigantic nuclear furnace, with hydrogen fusion occurring in its core, sending violent gamma rays rushing toward the surface about 300,000 miles away. The sun is about 864,000 miles in diameter. Experiments with nuclear fission (the atom bomb) and nuclear fusion (the hydrogen bomb) have demonstrated to scientists that the process by which our earth receives its energy is exactly like that of the explosion of a hydrogen bomb. Hydrogen is fused into helium at a temperature of some 25 million degrees. A vast mantle, whose size is unknown, absorbs the powerful bombardment from deadly gamma rays, changing them into slower-moving forms like ultraviolet waves and x-rays. The next layer of the sun is called the “photosphere,” which is thought to be a turbulent region perhaps 80,000 miles thick. The chromosphere, the outer layer of the sun, is the portion we see. It is perhaps 10,000 miles in depth, and consists largely of hydrogen gas.

The outer atmosphere of the sun is called the “corona,” and is only visible near the surface of the sun, yet extends invisibly all the way to Mercury, about 36 million miles away.

The sun has been photographed many times by using powerful telescopes which obscure all but the outer layer of the chromosphere and the corona, or by

photographing hydrogen's red wave length. These photographs reveal the sun is exploding in continuous eruptions called "spicules." These gaseous explosions are like volcanic eruptions; they extend out into space for several thousand miles, and last only a very few minutes. There are about 20,000 such "spicules" visible at any one time.

Huge eruptive loops, prominences, and arches have also been photographed. One of the largest ever recorded occurred in June, 1946, lasted about two hours, and extended nearly a million miles into space before it disappeared. Sometimes, these loops and arches appear to ignite in space, soaring back down to the sun's surface. The average temperature of these surface storms appears to be 10,000 degrees F. Most are associated with interference of radio communication on earth, and are connected with "sun spots," although not consistently.

The power of the sun staggers the imagination. Yet, the sun is but an "orange dwarf" star in comparison with many other stars in our galaxy. For example, if our sun were moved to the position of any of the stars in the "Big Dipper," it would be invisible to the naked eye, for it is 14,000 times less luminous than any of those stars. If Betelgeuse, the super-giant in the belt of Orion, were moved into the position of our sun, its huge mass would absorb most of our entire solar system, with Earth, Venus, Mars, and Mercury orbiting within the chromosphere of that super-giant. Our sun is more than 100 times the diameter of the earth, but Betelgeuse is more than one million times larger than the sun.

Most of us live in blissful unawareness of our universe, of our solar system, and our position in it. We say the sun "rises" or "sets," remaining largely unconscious of our daily journey. Few of us awaken in the morning aware that we have just completed about an 8,000 mile trip, that our relative position to the sun has changed by the rotation of our good, green spaceship. Our minds simply boggle at the distances, sizes, shapes, and measurements of the solar system, our galaxy, and the universe. Our planet is like but one speck of sand in all the seashores of the world in comparison to its place among the stars. The distances between stars is as if one were to change one cubic inch of water into steam, and then disperse it through 30 trillion cubic miles of space, each invisible droplet of steam representing a huge star.

One thing we can know. We can know the sun is a continuous, daily display of awesome, stupendous, mind-boggling power! Our Father in heaven and the

member of the divine family known as Jesus Christ created all that! God says, "To whom then will ye liken me? or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou,... 'my way is hid from the Eternal, and my judgment is passed over from my God?' [In other words, "O God, where are You when I need you?"] Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Eternal, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding" (Isaiah 40:25-28).

When God wanted Job to repent of his self-righteousness, He turned to creation. He said, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

"Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, or who laid the cornerstone thereof? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb?

"When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness as a swaddlingband for it. And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed'? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it?... hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee, or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

"Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, that thou shouldst take it to the bound thereof [can we see to the "end" of the blackness of the universe?] ... knowest thou it, because thou wast then born, or because the number of thy days is great?" (Job 38:1-21).

After God showed Job the greatness of His power; after Job came to see himself in true perspective for the first time in his life, Job said, "I have heard of thee by the

hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

How many of us are like Job? We have “heard” about this “God” of whom evangelists speak. We have a certain “belief” about God, a personal philosophy. We have certain vague, nebulous concepts about who, or what, God is. But have we ever really set our minds to study the work of God’s hands? Have we ever absorbed as much knowledge about our earth, all life upon it, our solar system, our galaxy, and our universe—and wondered in ever-increasing awe at the mighty hand that produced it all?

Newton didn’t invent gravity; he merely defined it. But what is gravity. Do you know? Why do stars like our sun hold planets securely in their “gravitational field”? What is magnetism? What is nuclear energy?

Whether we look out to the macrocosm (out into the blackness of space), or into the microcosm (inside an atom, which is mostly space), we see the same great pattern of creation. God is the great Creator of all things. He has all power!

When Christ commissioned His disciples to tell of His resurrection, He said “ALL POWER is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: 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 [Greek: aion]. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus Christ healed dozens of people instantly! Peter was inspired to say to a crippled man, “Rise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” and the man stood for the first time in his life. Christ raised Lazarus from the dead; Peter raised Dorcus from the dead. Startled, shocked onlookers saw deformed limbs suddenly made whole; the sickening sight of lepers, with their whitish, decaying skin instantly become as pink and fresh as a newborn baby’s skin. The disciples saw one stupendous-miracle after another. They were witnesses to Christ’s resurrection; they saw Him on many occasions in Jerusalem, in Galilee—and they believed. The apostles were told, “But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me... unto the uttermost parts of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Startled thousands saw flickering crowns of real flame seem to settle on the

apostles' heads; glittering, fiery crowns, distributed equally among them, as each began to speak, one at a time, telling of the miraculous things they had seen. The miracle of understanding foreign languages was given to thousands; the apostles spoke miraculously, the people heard miraculously, and three thousand people were converted and baptized in only one day (Acts 2:41).

The apostles were believed because they believed! They knew what they had seen, heard, and experienced. They were eyewitnesses to the brutal murder of their Lord, and witnesses to His resurrection! Their faith was boundless—because they knew. You can come to know the power of God by learning about the things His hands have made, by drinking in of His written Word, by hearing His servants preach the truth from that Word, by fervent, private, prevailing prayer. You can tap the mighty power of God in your personal life!

Are there conditions to prayer? Certainly. But they are good, healthy, wholesome conditions. God says, “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment” (1 John 3:22-23).

When the apostles prayed in the name of Jesus Christ, they knew that powerful name could unlock absolutely limitless power! Peter was not in doubt when he lifted the crippled man to his feet. He had not the slightest iota of fear or doubt. His mind was not on himself, thinking, “What if this doesn't work? I'll look like a fool.” He was filled with compassion for the crippled man. He was in instant communication with Christ. It was as if his mind's eye could see Christ sitting on the right hand of God in heaven. He knew he was tapping the very power of the universe. The crippled man supposed Peter was about to give him some money, instead, Peter said, “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth RISE up AND WALK!” And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:5-9).

Notice that the crippled man “expected to receive something” of them. He hadn't the slightest inkling of what was to happen. When Peter stopped to look at him, he supposed Peter would give him money. This was a clear example of an apostle exercising the gift of healing; of the faith of Peter, irrespective of the faith or

belief of the crippled man.

Does God heal today? I know He does. I have seen miracles with my own eyes. I would not be here, except God had miraculously healed my mother many years ago. When my wife was eight months along toward the birth of our second child, we were in Europe with my parents and my brother. One day, she felt severe pain, low, on her right side. She looked, frightened, and called me in to see. She had ruptured! There was a large purple and blue spot, with a portion of the intestine obviously protruding through the lower abdominal wall. I saw it and touched it. We asked my father to join me in prayer. James says, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James 5:14).

We knelt by her bedside, and my father used a little bottle of oil like the one we both carried, placing a drop or two of olive oil on her head. We both laid our hands on her, and prayed earnestly for God to heal her. I thought how God is our Designer and Creator; how it was He who designed the female body to give birth to children; that it was ridiculous for the stress of carrying a child to cause a rupture; that God had the power to heal this wound, and close it up. We claimed God's promises, saying we knew God would hear, and heal, because He could not deny His own promises; could not deny the sacrifice of His own Son.

A day or so later, we were in Switzerland. My wife excitedly called to me from the bedroom, and I rushed in. She said, "Honey, look! It's gone!" Her abdomen was as smooth as before! It was as if the rupture, with the large, blue-black area of bruise, torn flesh and swelling had never occurred! We were moved to tears; we were ecstatic with joy, and rushed to tell my parents and my brother.

This was an absolute miracle. No one can ever tell me God does not exist, or that God cannot perform a miracle. There is no medical textbook ever written which can explain away what I saw with my own eyes, what I felt with my own hands. We knew she had ruptured. We knew God had miraculously healed her!

I have known of dozens and dozens of miraculous healings in my more than thirty-one years in Christ's ministry. I have heard personal testimonials, read letters by the score of those who have experienced dramatic healings; those who have been

blessed with new jobs, increased income, or been delivered out of terrible trials. I know all things are possible with God.

Are you personally familiar with the great power of God? You can read an article in an encyclopedia about the atom, about the sun, about nuclear energy; you can study the miraculous process of reproduction and human birth; you can study gravity, inertia, the cleavage properties of minerals, the formation of crystals; biology, chemistry. The more you know about matter, about our material universe, the more you know about God's limitless power.

Christ said we should acknowledge, at the conclusion of our prayers, that God has the power to perform what He promises! We say to Him, "I know you can do this, Father, for you have all power; there is nothing you cannot do!" Christ's outline for prayer, commonly called "The Lord's Prayer," urges us to think deeply about God's great power; then to pray in faith, without the faintest shadow of a doubt, that God will answer our prayers!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"...and the glory, forever,"

The term "glory" is commonplace. We speak of a "glorious" sunset, a "glorious" morning. How many synonyms can you think of for "glory"? You might think of magnificent, beautiful, awesome, fine, sumptuous; of great praise and honor; of renown; a source of pride and joy; radiant beauty, brightness, splendor, brilliant, lovely, superb, excellent, great, super, terrific, bright, or perfect. Holy, righteous, hallowed, to be praised—how many expressions are there?

Shakespeare spoke of the "glorious planet sol," referring to the sun. Something having glory is that which deserves fame, something of such magnificence that it virtually defies description.

Christ wants us to understand and appreciate the splendid magnificence of His heavenly Father; to understand that nothing on this earth—be it gold, silver or precious metals, the finest and rarest of diamonds, rubies and emeralds, the finest works of art, the most glorious sunsets or breathtaking scenery in nature—can compare with the awesome, stunning glory of God. Have you ever heard of religious people who speak of "glory"? Often, charismatics equate glory with "exultation," or "joy." During a particularly enjoyable charismatic meeting, one

may be heard repeating, "Glory, glory, glory, glory..." until the sound loses all meaning to both the speaker and the listener. As a commonly-used religious expression, the term has become synonymous with "good," or "praise." One might say, "Well, glory be!" as a happy exclamation. Of course, we're familiar with morning glories—the flowers—and who hasn't known at least one girl named "Gloria?" But none of these meanings were intended by Christ in the outline for prayer, as we shall see.

I well remember an occurrence which illustrates a common misapplication of the term. Two friends of mine were conducting a tour, visiting and baptizing those who had written to the church requesting water baptism. Baptism was by immersion, just as practiced by Baptists, and many others. During one outdoor baptismal ceremony, the two men were standing hip deep in a small farm pond with a beaming, happy, black farmer's wife who had just been baptized. As they turned to wade back to shore, a pickup truck slid to a stop in a cloud of dust, a man jumped out with a shotgun, and shouted to his wife in alarm. Obviously, she hadn't told him of the event, thinking he would be away. He thought, for his part, that someone was trying to drown his wife. All he saw was two white strangers standing in the middle of his pond, dripping wet, with his wife between them. Seeing his anxiety, frightened over possible consequences, she happily shouted, waving both hands exultantly in the air, "It's all right, honey! These men is from the church, and I is in my glory!"

It's a common expression. "She is in her glory," someone might say, referring to a debutante at a ball, or a bride at a wedding. I have related the true story about the farmer's wife many times, and it never fails to bring a chuckle from the audience.

From time immemorial, men have attempted to depict the glories of God. The ceiling of the Cistine Chapel in the Vatican is a well-known example, with the magnificent painting by Michelangelo of the fantasized scene of The Creation. How many thousands of fine Belgian tapestries, beautiful paintings, frescoes, friezes, icons and sculptures are there which attempt to inspire concepts of the creation, or great religious events; of angels, Mary, Christ and God?

We all know western art traces its origins to religious works; attempts to convey to the mind of man the splendor of God; of creation, of the birth of Christ; His passion; His resurrection; imaginary concepts of heaven.

All of us enjoy gazing upon things which are inspiring, pleasing to the eye. Who cannot be moved by the spectacular scene of breakers crashing upon the rocks of a rugged seashore, the spray flung high into the air? Who is not inspired by fabulous landscapes; scenes of our National Parks like Yellowstone and Old Faithful; Yosemite; Mount Rushmore?

For millennia the pastime, and sometimes the business, of the very rich has been to collect breathtaking works of art; porcelain, glass; sculptures of marble and bronze; tapestries, works of gold and silver; jewelry, inlaid, skillfully-made furniture, intricate, hand-made instruments such as an Amati or a Stradivarius violin. There is something deeply satisfying, rewarding, inspiring, about being surrounded by things of fabulous quality; of breathtaking beauty.

The finest material things are made by the skilled hands of master craftsmen. We gasp in amazement at the intricately-carved ivory and jade of Chinese artists; at the minute stitchings of the finest Belgian lace; at a landscape by Bierstadt, or the stained glass windows of Notre Dame. I well remember a Louis XIV harpsichord owned by a multi-millionaire in Pasadena, California. The inside of the lid featured a magnificent hand painted scene of stylishly-dressed men and ladies of the King's court; the case of the instrument was of the finest rare woods, bordered in gold. Such treasures are beyond price. Have you ever looked in awe at the British Crown Jewels in the Tower of London? Is anything more beautiful than the huge goose-egg sized diamonds in the crown, and the scepter?

Yet, for all the loveliness of man-made or man-shaped things, what can surpass the things we behold in nature itself? What can compare with the sight of a tiny ruby-throated hummingbird, hovering effortlessly over a bright red hibiscus, sipping of the nectar? I remember the story about a multi-millionaire owner of some of the big casino hotels in Las Vegas and South Lake Tahoe who, his fortune made, purchased a remote lodge in the most inaccessible part of the western mountains. He had to be flown in to the ranch in a small airplane, equipped with "STOL" (Short Take-off and Landing) equipment. There, he basked in the beauty of nature; fished for trout, observed the deer and elk which grazed in nearby meadows. There, he found peace—surrounded, not by the tapestries, objects of art, paintings and expensive furniture of his grand hotels or many mansions—but by God's creation.

I have seen some of the most beautiful man-made buildings, works of art, jewelry:

I have visited Versailles; The Vatican, with its famous museum and the huge, awe-inspiring basilica of St. Peters. Il Duomo in Milano is very impressive, as are the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace in London; the Louvre, El Escorial, and the Taj Mahal. I have been inside Notre Dame, in Paris, a number of times. I have seen the palaces of kings; been inside many beautiful mansions, chateaus, country homes of the super-rich. As a guest of Princess Lillian of Belgium, the second wife of King Leopold, I stayed in their lovely chateau at Hinteriss, in the Austrian Alps just over the Bavarian border from Bad Tolz. The structure was an exact replica of centuries-old Tyrolian mountain homes; constructed without the use of a single nail. It was situated alongside a rushing river, surrounded by soaring peaks. The royal family of Belgium enjoyed their many visits there, in a family-owned game preserve about the size of Yosemite National Park. It was, in every sense of the word as we commonly use it, glorious.

And yet, what can compare with the glories of the sun; of the solar system; of the universe? Remember the description of the sun's awesome power in the preceding chapter? Such splendor pales into insignificance the little things created by the hand of man. Just as we acknowledge that God has all power; that He is able to intervene in our lives, when we become obedient to Him, when we go to Him as His own little children with our requests; so Christ wants us to acknowledge His great glory.

The apostle Paul wrote of the glories of the universe; of earthly and celestial bodies. He said, "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body ... As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, [die] but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised

incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:40-52).

What a striking passage! Can we begin to comprehend it? Can we take it all in? God tells us we can actually become changed from human to divine, from flesh to spirit, from mortal to immortal, from earthly to heavenly. From a physical, mundane, temporal, fleshly body with our worries and concerns; our aches and pains, our physical debilities and limitations, we can become glorious, godly, spirit beings—inducted into the divine family of God—born into His glorious Kingdom!

It is always nice when a friend says, “My, you’re looking well!” Or, when someone comments on our physical appearance—complimenting us by saying we look younger than our years, or saying our skin seems to have such a healthy glow. All of us want to look well; to exude vitality, energy, well-being, health; to appear robust. But what a contrast between our frail human bodies and the glorious picture Paul gives of the resurrection! What if our bodies suddenly took on the shine of a billion diamonds, of burnished gold, of translucent pearls and onyx, of the dazzling brightness of the sun? That is what Paul said the resurrection is like!

As Isaiah wrote, “He giveth power to the faint: and to them that have no might He increaseth strength ... they that wait upon the Eternal shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint. “ And to the dead God will say, “Arise! Shine! for thy Light is come, and the glory of the Eternal is risen upon thee!” (Isaiah 40:29-31; 60:1).

The Bible tells us men have been perennially curious about the glory of God. They have wanted to see His splendor. However, Christ said, “Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His shape” (John 5:37). He also said, “And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven” (John 3:13).

When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, Moses was overcome by curiosity. After many encounters with this Divine Being, Moses could no longer contain himself. In a touching account, we read of how God understood, and partly relented, to satisfy a little of Moses’ acute longing.

“And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord [Yahveh] talked

with Moses.

“And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshiped, every man at his tent door.

“And the Eternal spake unto Moses face to face [in a cloud—not literally; Moses could not see His face, as is proved in the context] as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp; but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

“And Moses said unto the Eternal, ‘See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.

“ ‘Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way that I might know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.’

“And He said, ‘My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.’ And he said unto Him, ‘If thy presence go not with me, carry us up not hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are on the face of the earth.’

“And the Eternal said unto Moses, ‘I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name.’ And he said, ‘I beseech thee, shew me thy glory!’

“And He said, ‘I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Eternal before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.’

“And He said, ‘Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.’

“And the Eternal said, ‘Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen’” (Exodus 33:9-23).

What an inspiring account! Can you imagine it? Moses actually beheld the back of God Almighty! God would not allow Moses to see His face; but He understood, and tried to satisfy insofar as He could, Moses' burning curiosity. It is a touching story, this interrelationship between God and His prophet Moses, a man unique among all other human beings, a man to whom God spoke "face to face," out of a cloud, as if "to a friend."

When Christ was about to be crucified, He prayed the real "Lord's Prayer." This is not an outline for prayer, as is the case with the words we have been studying, but the prayer Jesus prayed just before He was led away to be killed. Toward its conclusion, Jesus prayed, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

"And the glory which thou gavest me have I given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am: that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:20-24).

Have you ever wanted to share some accomplishment, some ability, some performance, with a dear friend? Does an artist paint rare masterpieces only to be stored in the closet? Does a superb athlete perform only for the physical exercise? Does an operatic quality singer perform only in the shower?

How well I remember learning to swim, as a boy. My parents had been away, and I was spending the summer at my grandmother's farm. When they left me there, I was unable to swim. When they came to pick me up, I was swimming, diving, enjoying outings in the Molalla River, in Oregon. I well remember my frustration when, piping shrilly to my parents to watch my new accomplishment, they seemed preoccupied. I called, "Look Mom! Look Dad! I can swim!" whereupon I dove through a big truck inner-tube, to come to the surface only to find my parents were engrossed in conversation with my uncle and grandmother on the shore. How badly I wanted to show off my newfound ability. It's a common human

desire. I find it very touching that Jesus Christ prayed to His Father that He could ultimately show His disciples His great glory He had shared with the Father from eternity; that He wanted them to really see Him, as He really is, in all the splendor of His Kingly office!

The Bible pictures Christ in His glorified state in metaphorical language. In the first chapter of Revelation, John describes how he was given a vivid vision of events to occur during the famous “Day of the Lord” of prophecy. He wrote, “I was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, ‘I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book,’ ...And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

“His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters.

“And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

“And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His hand upon me, saying unto me, ‘Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [Greek: hades, meaning “the grave”] and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter’ ”(Revelation 1: 10-19).

Can our minds picture such a radiant vision of glory and splendor? Christ appeared as if His face shone with the full strength of the sun; His eyes like leaping flames of fire; His head as white as snow; His feet as burnished brass. When He spoke, John thought His voice was as powerful as the roar at the foot of Niagra Falls. No wonder the vision was so overpowering, so awesome and magnificent that John fell down in a faint!

There is no more detailed picture in all the Bible of God’s throne than that of Revelation the 4th chapter. Let’s notice what it tells us. “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it

were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, 'Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.'

"And immediately I was in the spirit; and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

"And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine [sardonyx] stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

"And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts [Greek: "living creatures"] full of eyes before and behind.

"And the first living creature was like a lion, and the second living creature was like a calf [an ox], and the third living creature had the face of a man, and the fourth living creature was like an eagle.

"And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him: and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.'

"And when those living creatures give praise and honor and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'For thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure [will] they are and were created' (Revelation 4th chapter).

The Bible reveals that cherubs, far from appearing as naked babies with bows and arrows, appear as a lion, an ox, an eagle, or a man. Study the apparition of God's throne which appeared to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1 and 10), how each creature had the four faces of a man, a lion, an eagle, or an ox. God placed two cherubim to guard

the way to the tree of life after the expulsion of Adam. Remember, Adam lived almost one-sixth of earth's recorded history until now. The garden was no doubt there until destroyed by the flood of Noah's time, about ten centuries later.

Cherubim are pictured in the ancient monuments. In the British Museum and the Louvre are casts of the huge creatures carved from solid stone guarding the palaces of ancient Babylonian and Assyrian kings such as Sargon and Asherbannipal. Each features the huge bodies of lions or oxen, with the heads of men, wings of an eagle, and hooves of an ox or claws of an eagle. Various representations of these four creatures are found throughout the ancient Middle East. The Sphinx is a case in point, as are many other representatives of "the host of heaven" in ancient art and monuments.

From whence came the fabulous myths of the dragon (or the giant, or the beast) who guards castles filled with treasures—the fable of St. George and the Dragon, for example—but from the oft-told stories handed down through the generations of those intrepid adventurers hundreds of years after Adam's expulsion who ventured too close to the entry of Eden, and were repulsed?

The Mexican aboriginals, the Aztecs and other races, worshiped a "winged flying serpent" they called Quetzalcoatl. Quetzal means flying creature, or bird; coatl means serpent. The Hebrew word for "serpent" in the account of the Garden of Eden is nachash which means, not so much a snake, as an upright, serpentine-like creature with wings, like an artists conception of a dragon. Satan is called a "dragon" in Revelation 12:9. He was called "the cherub that covereth" (Ezekiel 28:14) when in his pre-Satanic state, as "Lucifer," or "Light Bringer." As such, he was in close relationship with God's throne. Cherubim appear to have four wings (as in Ezekiel 1), while seraphim (Isaiah 6) have six. Why the living creatures surrounding God's throne in Revelation 4 have six wings, yet seem to evince the characteristics of cherubim, which usually have four, is puzzling. Perhaps they are cherubim of a different order which are not otherwise mentioned in the Bible. In any event, they are huge, powerful, spiritual creatures, after which families of fleshly creatures are patterned.

The cherubim surrounding God's throne evince the characteristics of the four creatures supreme in their own domain: the eagle, as king of all flying creatures; the ox, as largest, most versatile and useful of all domestic animals; the lion, as king of beasts, and emblem of many nations; and man, under whose hands God

has placed all other creatures.

Can our minds imagine it? We see the brilliance of a rainbow shining with bright, emerald-like hues, behind which are rolling clouds, lightning and thunder flashing and roaring. A dazzling throne with the brightness of several suns radiates from beneath the rainbow, upon which God is seated. A translucent, sparkling, clear, quartz-like “sea of glass” or large floor stretches toward the throne. Seated on each side are twelve (twenty-four in all) white-haired sages, or elders, wearing dazzling garments white as snow, their heads adorned with sparkling golden crowns. Guarding the throne are four huge cherubim, each with four different faces (hence, many “eyes”). Billions of angels are there; heavenly choruses singing, the elders fall to their faces, casting their crowns at the feet of Him that sits on the throne, and sing honor and praise and glory to Him. Such a breathtaking spectacle is simply too magnificent, too bright, too beautiful and overwhelming to imagine! Such is the GLORY of Almighty God!

To most of us, God is somehow remote, distant, unseen. Only by drinking in of these glorious scenes, thinking deeply about them, meditating profoundly over what we have read, can we begin to envision the magnificent glory and power of God. What a difference it makes when we talk to God in a personal sense directing our prayers to Him seated on His glorious throne, and not just some figment of our own imagination.

Jesus Christ prayed fervently that His disciples and “those that should believe on Him through their word, “ which includes us, you and me, could some day see His glory! For now, we must be content to envision it as the Bible portrays it. Yet, the time is coming, God says, when “We shall be like Him, for we shall SEE HIM AS HE IS !” (1 John 3:2). Paul said so! When we are resurrected, or physically changed, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” we shall inherit God’s own glory! Then, our visage will no longer be mottled flesh. No more aches and pains. No more tears. No more physical limitations, sickness, debility. Then, boundless energy! Endless youth! Limitless vitality! Eternal life! And glory, beyond our ability to imagine! Yes, we must acknowledge God’s great glory when we address Him in our prayers. God loves our praise—He returns our love, many times over. So pray to Him, as Christ outlined we should. Pray in faith, believing!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“...Amen!”

We're all familiar with the practice of saying “amen” at the end of a prayer. The word Jesus used is the Greek version of the Hebrew word, amen, which comes from a root word, aman, meaning “to build up or support: to foster, as a parent or a nurse: to render, be firm or faithful, to trust or believe, to be permanent or quiet; to be true or certain.” It connotes steadfastness, surety, verity, trust.

The word means “so be it,” or “so let it be done.” The first place the word is used in the Bible is Numbers 5:22, in connection with an oath administered by a priest to determine infidelity in marriage.

In Deuteronomy 27, the word is found 13 times in connection with a series of curses, or condemnations, recited by the Levites. An example: “And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice, ‘Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Eternal, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen!’” (Deuteronomy 27:14-15).

This was solemn public acknowledgment and agreement. They were answering, “We agree, so let it be done—let it be accomplished exactly as stated.”

David wrote, “Blessed be the Eternal God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen, and Amen” (Psalm 41:13).

There are three uses of the word: (1) Initial amen, referring to the words of another speaker. See 1 Kings 1:36, where Benaiah said, “Amen: the Eternal God of my lord the king say so too.” (2) Secondary or detached Amen, the complimentary sentence being suppressed, as in Nehemiah 5:13: “Also I shook my lap, and said, ‘So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied.’ And all the congregation said, ‘Amen’ and praised the Eternal. And the people did according to this promise.” (3) Final amen, the most common usage, as in the “Lord’s Prayer,” illustrated by the Apostle Paul when he wrote “...I will pray with the understanding... else... how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say ‘Amen’ at thy giving of thanks...” (1 Corinthians 14:15- 16).

There is a further, deeper meaning. “Amen” is used as a name, or a description of Christ, and God. “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness; the Beginning [Beginner] of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14). Since God has self-inherent eternal life the Perpetual, Eternal, Ever-living God—and since “amen” means “So be it,” and God introduced Himself to Moses as “I AM,” meaning the One Who was, and is, and is to come, it is natural that the Hebrew expression which connotes steadfastness, truth, positiveness, endurance, absoluteness, finality, surety, should be applied to the divine family.

Men have incorporated the names of God into their own names from time immemorial. My own middle name is a shortened form, or “nick name” for “Theodore” (although “Ted” is my legal name), which means “Gift of God.” A translator’s error in Genesis obscures the true meaning of the verse, which should read, “...then began men to call themselves by the name of the Eternal” (Genesis 4:26). This is said at the birth and naming of Enos, the first letter connoting El, or God. From that time forward, hundreds were named after the divine names and titles. “Elijah” means, “El,” He is “Jah,” or, “God, He is God.” Names like Elishaba, Elisha, Joel (Jah- El), Enoch, Jared, Joshua, and so many others include one of the names of God.

The concept of an “omen,” meaning a supernatural indication of some sort, whether evil or good, stems from ancient usages of the Hebrew word aman, from which “amen” derives. Ancient Pharaohs included this name in their titles. “Amenhotep” is one example.

Paul uses the word in expressing the truthfulness, verity, surety of the gospel and of Christ’s teachings. He wrote, “But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay [or, vacillating, hesitant, ambiguous, unsure]. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus [notice the Greek name for God, Theus, in the name], was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:18-20).

What should go through your mind when you conclude a prayer with the expression, “Amen”?

Let me draw upon an analogy. The difference between many amateur golfers and professionals is that the professionals have a “grooved swing.” Through constant

practice, careful attention to the fundamentals like grip, stance, takeaway, movement of their hips and legs in coordination with the upper body, keeping the head still, they learned long ago to make their swing constant, almost automatic. The amateur golfer, on the other hand, is continually “picking his swing apart.” He may stand over the ball, saying to himself “Keep your head down; check your grip, look at your stance, take away by, ‘curling under’ with the three fingers of the left hand, move the right elbow closer to the body,” and a host of other things. The result is a timid, erratic, sometimes wildly off center shot. Millions of amateur golfers are continually looking for the “secret” to a better golf game.

This continual search for perfection is why golf clubs and clothing and all associated paraphernalia are a multi-billion dollar business. It is why so many read the many golfing magazines, or purchase video tapes and recordings, and buy books and manuals hoping to improve their swing.

What they are doing is picking their swing apart. They stand over the ball, thinking anxiously of the things they should have long since committed to memory; long since made apart of them, until it became habit, automatic!

The professional doesn’t “pick his swing apart” any more. It’s a “natural” swing, because he has grooved it into his mind indelibly, with a tremendous amount of practice, not to say natural ability and athletic coordination.

What should occur to your mind when you conclude your prayer with “Amen” is that it is finished. It is accomplished. God has heard. It will be done. He has promised. It is conclusive, final. Once you have spent twenty or thirty minutes or even an hour on your knees with your heavenly Father, it finally comes time to give the prayer to God; to leave the results with Him. That’s when it’s time to say, “Amen,” which means, “So let it be done.” It means, “It is finished.” And it means something else! It should mean to you—In faith—that you are saying to God, “Father I know you have heard and I know you will answer.”

When you say “amen” you let go of your prayer. You don’t continue to “pick it apart,” worry over it, repeat it over and over again. Now, it’s time to leave the result with God.

Study the context in which Jesus gave the sample outline for prayer. You will be shocked! Do you know Jesus was condemning the practice of monotonous repetition? Do you know He was condemning the Pharisees for their “oft-

speaking” and their repetitious prayers in public places, saying they “think they shall be heard through their much speaking”? Actually, the famous “Lord’s Prayer” is not a prayer at all, but an outline for meaningful prayer. Christ specifically forbade monotonous repetition! But what have many sincere but misinformed religious people done? They have memorized the outline and endlessly repeated it in public places; reciting it as if a talisman, believing this is somehow pleasing to God. Not so. Christ specifically condemned the practice of repeated, public prayers.

So now you know. Now, you know how to pray. Now, you know the conditions to answered prayer, as we saw them in Acts 2:38. It is my own fervent prayer that the writing of this book has proved to be inspiring, informative, encouraging, deeply rewarding to those who read it. I dare to hope, and make it my prayer to God in concluding these words, that this small book may change human lives for the better. If such occurs in only one instance, it will have been well worth the effort. For of what value, after all, is only one human being, inducted into the very family of God—glorified with Christ in His Kingdom? I would encourage you to read this book more than once, to look up, and read for yourself each scriptural reference. Most of all, I would encourage you to pray. As you have seen, we could spend an hour or more praying about each word or phrase of the so-called “Lord’s Prayer,” and even then, we would have just begun. As I related at the beginning, I know God answers prayers. I have seen miraculous answers within only moments; I have seen answers delayed for years; I have come to understand that sometimes the answer is either “no,” or, “not yet.” Paul besought God thrice, and knew the answer had been delivered—but the answer was “no.” No one has some magical formula which makes the Great, Awesome Creator of the whole universe jump to our whims, or hasten to satisfy every need. Certainly, I do not. I have known of those who have prayed for years for specific requests which have been denied them. Why? Is the answer somewhere hidden within the beautiful thing God is shaping of each of our lives? Does it have to do with faith, and with character?

On the other hand, I have known of those who have cried out to God in time of need, and have received dramatic, almost instantaneous answers. As a witness to miracles, I can say with Job, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25).

Amen.

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