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WHEN GOD TAPS YOUR SHOULDER

By Fletcher Clarke Spruce

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DEDICATION

To Sallye and Ray Whose lives were blended together in a common response to God's tap
on their shoulders about the time this project was suggested by the Book Committee

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FOREWORD

Michelangelo was once shown a picture which had been painted by the artist's fingers. His
only comment was, "The foolish man had been better to have used his brushes."

Today, much literature, like modern art, is indistinct, a conglomeration of various
suggestions with no clearly defined emphasis.

This book, *When God Taps Your Shoulder*, is different. Fletcher Spruce, the author, is well equipped with literary brushes to paint clear and intriguing word pictures.

God has signally blessed him with the gifts of a keen mind, vivid imagination, and ready pen. He deftly uses these gifts to sketch in an appropriate background but always bringing into clear and distinct focus the central truth he seeks to illustrate.

In this volume he encompasses much of the landscape of human interest. Here is comfort for the aged, guidance for the parent, counsel for the youth, and answers for the student. Herein may be found content for the sermon, instruction for the Christian, practical advice for the sinner, and steps to holiness for the believer.

I sincerely recommend this book to all lovers of truth, confident that no reader will turn from any of these brief sketches saying, "I wonder what he was trying to portray."

E. S. Phillips
Chairman, Book Committee

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01 -- THE HAND THAT REACHES DOWN

Christ . . . came . . . to save sinners. I Tim. 1:15

* * *

"In the Beginning God"

I have seen people make severe shipwreck because they began elsewhere. A teen-ager began with fun instead of with God, and there was ruin right away. A student began with learning instead of with God, and there were doubts -- with no faith to furnish an answer. A young couple began with self instead of with God, and soon stark tragedy stalked that home to divide it in heartbreak.

But all of us have seen thousands who have begun with God and have walked with Him along the bright path "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." God is the best place to begin in study, in play, in pleasure, in business, in home, in work, in plans, in problems, in doubts, in fears -- in everything!

But, you say, there are difficulties. To say that God is the Creator, the First Cause, presents problems. If God created everything, who created God?

But, I answer, there are more problems if you do not start with God. If God did not create the universe, who did? And from what? To say that everything "just happened" or "evolved" presents even greater problems. Who evolved it? From what? Did the clock like regularities of all the universe and all nature "just happen"? Was there no creative God to order and shape things?

We are not afraid of the true scientist, for he has no quarrel with God's Word. Rather we respect science for her wisdom, for God has made science possible. But let no speculative atheist

steal away the very foundation of our faith. He has doubts about the beginnings, but we do not have these doubts. We have faith that God is a higher Authority than the skeptic who admits he does not know. So we go from the Creator to the Christ and embrace Him as Savior and Lord! And we thrill that we are a new creation in Christ Jesus!

* * *

The Most Expensive Thing in the World

Sin is the most expensive thing in the world. It cost God His only begotten Son. It cost heaven a third of her angels and her treasured Jewel. It cost Jesus His heavenly glory and His earthly life. It cost the earth its lovely Eden, corrupting it into a wilderness of thorns, briars, and weeds -- eroding it with floods, parching it with droughts, tearing it with tornadoes, volcanoes, earthquakes. It cost mankind his state of original holiness and divine fellowship, plunging him into guilt, greed, hate, frustration, pain, death.

Sin is to blame for every red-stained battlefield, every ugly scar of the soil called a grave, every hospital, every prison, every asylum, every broken home, every broken heart. Sin is to blame for every salty tear that falls, every bitter failure, every dark trial, every cry in the night, every crushing sorrow, every blighted hope, every nagging memory. Sin created hell. Sin is the most expensive thing in the world!

But sin is not the most powerful thing in the world! Sin did not bankrupt Divinity. God was not caught off guard. He foresaw the end from the beginning and provided redemption before sin appeared. On the Cross, Christ unhinged the gates of death and hell, thus enabling lost souls, through Him, to be saved!

While sin is the most expensive thing -- the blood of Jesus Christ is the most powerful thing in the world. Let Christ deliver you now!

* * *

God Took the Initiative

Someday someone will likely build a church with a tall spire, and on that spire, instead of a cross, a hand reaching down from heaven. It would symbolize the hand of God reaching down to lift man out of the pit. It would remind us that God first loved us before we loved Him -- that He took the initiative in our redemption -- that the sacrifice for our sins was planned even before we sinned, even before the worlds appeared.

Redemption was not man's idea at all. It was God's. Man's mind has never projected such a proposition. It is a divine revelation unique to Christianity. No other religion in all the world has ever come up with a hand that reaches down from heaven. Those without Christ seek salvation by feeding their babes to the crocodiles, by rolling in filthy streets, by praying often in the direction of holy cities, by climbing mountains to worship at shrines, by decrying pleasures and punishing their

bodies. But they have been unable to lift themselves by the bootstraps of their own religious devices. They stumble on in darkness, despair, utter confusion; always victims and never victors.

Rejoice and be glad for the hand that reaches down! The hand of God! A close look at that hand will reveal the flesh torn by a spike. It was the price He paid to reach down to lift me! Oh, what love! Thank God for the middle cross, the empty tomb, the Upper Room! All that we have which is good is a product or a byproduct of the hand that reaches down. All that we have which is not good will someday be banished forever by the hand that reaches down!

* * *

Man is a Sinner

Man is a sinner by nature. He was not created sinful; he was created holy, sinless, perfect. But the first pair sinned by choice, thus plunging the race into sin. Every man comes into the world with sin in his heart. The child does not have to learn how to rebel, harbor resentments, be proud, deceive. He does these things naturally because his nature is sinful.

Man is a sinner by practice. That is, sin is an act as well as a condition. This shows us the twofold nature of sin. Man commits sin because he is sinful. The lies, curses, lustful thoughts, rebellion, resentment, pride, and greed only reveal what man is really like inside. It is a case of a bitter fountain producing a bitter stream.

Man is a sinner by choice. To be sure, his power of choice was warped by the Fall -- but the choice is still his, and he sins deliberately. Certain moderns would have us believe that man sins because he must and not because he chooses. They would insist that everyone must sin in word, thought, and deed -- constantly. But is this necessary? Must we sin? If sin is a willful transgression of a known law of God, then man does sin by choice: willful choice!

Some people choose not to sin. Others choose to constantly and unashamedly sin. Since man's nature is sinful without the cleansing grace of God, he needs to exercise special personal willpower if he is to refuse to indulge in the acts of sin. How very refreshing it is to see people who choose to turn their backs on sin -- and accept Jesus Christ as Savior from sin! Which is your choice?

* * *

The Five Demands of Restitution

What is restitution? It is restoring that which you took that does not belong to you. It is paying back money you have stolen. It is returning that pair of pliers which you hid and brought home in your lunch box. It is asking forgiveness of someone about whom you have lied -- or spoken about sharply. It is telling the teacher that you want forgiveness for cheating in school. God has five ways of demanding restitution.

1. Society demands it. When a man steals something, the courts make him pay back. If he takes the life of another, he may have to pay with his own life. Other wrongs demand lesser penalties. When he has paid his debt to society he is allowed his freedom again. But society demands restitution.

2. The church demands restitution too-not by written laws, but by the unwritten code of Christian conduct and conscience. When fellowship is broken, Christians have a right to expect the situation to be remedied. Jesus speaks of leaving the gift at the altar until such a breach is repaired (Matt. 5:23-24). There can be nothing quite so tragic as holiness people who do not get along. Other holiness people have a right to demand restitution in the Church.

3. The conscience demands restitution. This is why people finally confess to crimes after years of running from the law. This is why people cannot sleep at night when they remember their wrongs which must be made right. They are weary of the nagging voice which haunts them by day and by night -- demanding restitution. They surrender to the police -- they send money to those whom they have robbed -- they ask for forgiveness for wrongs done. Conscience demands restitution.

4. The blessings of God demand restitution. There can be no genuine revival without restitution. John the Baptist demanded "fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). Zacchaeus paid restitution four times over (Luke 19:8-9). He knew that stolen money and Jesus Christ could not both abide in the same house -- and he wanted Jesus Christ.

5. Heaven demands restitution. There can be no sin in heaven. If there is sin in your life, you are not on your way to heaven. Confess it out, pay back what you owe, make wrongs right, and God will save you. Then you can sing with the poet:

Nothing between my soul and the Savior!

* * *

When the Soul is Hungry

Man's capacity for badness is infinite. No beast beneath him could sink into such depths of moral depravity as sinful man sinks. No creature in all of God's creation can become so debauched, so degraded, so defiled as willful, sinful, selfish man. Read Rom. 3:10-18 for a fresh, up-to-the-minute look at modern man . . . at his worst. He is ever devising new ways to indulge himself in the sordid, the unclean, the impure, the indecent, the unholy. And he mocks God as he does it. Every man who comes into the world comes with the beastly nature of original sin in his soul.

But man's capacity for goodness is infinite also. As surely as the beast is there, so is the angel. Both depravity and divinity have strangely stamped him. Though he sins, he aspires. While man may sink beneath the animal in his sinning, he may also rise above the angel in his holiness, purity, love -- for angelic holiness is bestowed, not having, passed through the fires of temptation. No other creation of the Almighty may climb to such lofty levels of spiritual redemption,

transformation, purity, and grace. Even the angels have not known the free choice of victory over sin through atoning grace as man has known it.

The hinge of man's destiny (downward or upward) is found in his response to the fourth beatitude: "hunger and thirst after righteousness." Hungry for holiness! Thirsty for Christ, who is our Righteousness! Cultivate that soul-craving, that spirit-yearning, that heart-eagerness to have the favor of God -- to be right and righteous and pure and holy from His viewpoint -- to see His approving smile. Be filled with all His fullness. He is that Living Bread which came down from heaven. He is that Fountain of Living Water springing up into everlasting life!

I am drinking at the fountain where I ever would abide;
I have tasted life's pure river and my soul is satisfied.

* * *

Stamped with the Image of the King

In many ways man is much like other animals. He has a respiratory system like a baboon, a circulatory system like a cow, a digestive system like a horse, and a nervous system like a cat.

But man has something which the lower animals do not have: a personality, a spiritual nature, a soul. He is capable of moral defilement and moral achievement. He has a code of ethics which has hounded him through the ages. He has inner aspirations which forbid him to be content with a full stomach under a shady tree. He has imagination which enables him to see above and beyond. He is capable of projecting himself into the needs of others. Lower animals do not have these qualities.

No other creature can stoop so low in debauchery and degradation and defilement as a human being who indulges himself. Examine the pages of this morning's newspaper and you will be convinced. On the contrary, no other creature can rise to such sublime heights of purity and spiritual beauty and holiness as a human being who yields himself fully to the whole will of his Maker. Scan the pages of church history and you will rejoice that it is so.

Created in the image of God, man was given the power to choose, to select his own destiny. God implanted this part of himself in each of us. The soul which I am -- which you are -- is a very precious thing. It is eternal. This body will waste away, but the real you will live forever because you are made in the likeness of God. Are you measuring up to the divine potential within you?

Why not surrender yourself to Christ just now, and ask Him to come into your life and wash away all guilt complexes, all frustrations, fears, anxieties -- all sins! He will make life new for you, and you will begin living as He intended for you to live -- in His image.

* * *

Living in the Spirit

Samuel L. Brengle graduated with honors from De Pauw University, but soon gave up his ambition for politics to enroll as a ministerial student in Boston Theological Seminary. Determined to become a great preacher, he sought the baptism with the Holy Spirit because, he reasoned, Moody ascribed his power to this experience. For weeks he searched the Scriptures and his own heart. And what he saw in himself sickened him: Christ's humility and his own pride; Christ's meekness and his own temper; Christ's lowliness and his own ambition; Christ's holiness and his own unholiness. He saw the "I" standing in the way as he agonized, utterly broken. Then came the dawn of January 9, 1885, which he described in his student pastorate the next Sunday when he preached on Heb. 6:1:

I awoke hungering and thirsting to live this life, never again to sin against Him in word, thought or deed. While reading some of the words of Jesus He gave me such a blessing as I never dreamed a man could have this side of heaven. My soul melted like wax before a fire. I loathed myself that I had ever sinned against Him or doubted Him. Every ambition of self was now gone. I walked over Boston Common before breakfast, weeping for joy and praising God. I loved Jesus till it seemed my heart would break with love. I loved the little urchins on the street, the strangers who hurried past me, the heathen. I loved the whole world!

His first ambition was to become a U.S. senator. His second ambition was to become a bishop. But after being filled with the Holy Spirit he was led of God to preach holiness in the Salvation Army -- which he did for more than forty years with God's abundant anointing.

Living in the Spirit is God's will for every Christian. . . for you!

* * *

Seven Steps to Salvation

1. Come to grips with the fact that you are a sinner. Learn from God's Word that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). See that you are dying, right now, without God. Discover your lostness.

2. Allow the Spirit of God to show you your need. Admit that you cannot save yourself. Let God make you sick of sin. See sin as it really is -- see yourself as you really are. See God as He is. See what He expects you to do -- with His help.

3. Reverse directions. You are going the wrong way. Continue no longer in sin. Repent! Get out of your swine pen of sin as the prodigal got out of his -- and come back to God. Repentance will not save you -- but you cannot be saved without it.

4. Plead guilty before God! Confess your sins to Him. One of the best ways to do this is to walk down the church aisle and kneel at the altar as a public testimony that you are sincere about living for God. Secret saints are hardly saints at all. Do not be ashamed of Christ.

5. Quit the sin business. Throw away those cigarettes. Pour those alcoholic beverages down the drain. Break off those unworthy friendships. Clean up your conversation. Quit those filthy movies and that trashy literature. Make a clean break. There is no such thing as a sinning saint. So quit your sinning.

6. Make restitution. Return those tools which you stole from the shop. Pay back that old debt you have tried to forget. Apologize to the person whom you have talked about unkindly. There can be no covered sin in your life if you are to live for God.

7. Put your faith in God. You cannot save yourself. Salvation comes by faith, not by feeling. You have met the conditions -- now trust Him for forgiveness. Stand on His Word. Accept his gift of salvation, by faith!

* * *

Seven Steps to Sanctification

1. Be sure you are thoroughly saved. Know your sins are all forgiven.

2. Admit there is still an enemy within -- even though you are saved -- which battles against holy living. Is it pride? Envy? Jealousy? Resentment? Willfulness? Some other monster you cannot dethrone?

3. Face the fact that you need something more. Study God's Word. Fall on your face and tell Him that you are tired of this up-and-down effort to be victorious within. Ask Him if there isn't something more.

4. Determine to get all God has for you. Settle it in your heart that you must and will, by God's grace, be delivered from this sinward tendency inside which steals away your peace of soul. Become an active seeker for heart holiness right now.

5. Meet the conditions of full surrender -- of unreserved yielding. Give all to God. Hold nothing back, however appealing to the flesh. Keep no key to the secret closet of your soul. Offer your self as a willing sacrifice, slain, consumed on the altars of obedience and consecration. Let God have the total you. Let Him purge, burn, crucify, destroy all the dross, all the anti holiness called carnality. Let Him cleanse the entire temple of your inner being, and make you fit for His abiding.

6. Invite Him to come in -- by trusting faith -- and inhabit your human temple. Believe that He desires to dwell in you -- that He will.

7. Claim the blessing. Having met your human conditions, believe Him to be faithful to meet His divine conditions -- and thus to sanctify you wholly! Praise God that the work is done!

* * * * *

02 -- IN QUEST OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Be no more children . . . but . . . grow up. Eph. 4:14-15

* * *

The Grasshopper Complex

God promised Israel that Canaan would be theirs, yet a whole generation perished without entering. Why?

1. They kept threatening to go back to Egypt. They did not have the faith to face up to God's challenging promises. There was a certain security in slavery that they did not have now as free men. And there was a challenge in being free which they hesitated to face. They should have burned every bridge to make retreat impossible.

2. They should have quit complaining when they left Egypt, but they didn't. They complained for fear of death at the Red Sea crossing; they complained because they had no water, because the water was bitter, because they had no bread, because they had no meat, because Moses prayed too long on the mountain, etc. Complaining people are not good candidates for the Promised Land.

3. They had a grasshopper complex. The giants of Canaan were so large that the Israelites considered themselves to be grasshoppers by comparison. Though they were no longer slaves, yet something of the slave complex stuck in their hearts. Theirs was not a false humility -- it was a carnal cowardice. No man should brag of his own might, but every man can feel a security when he has God at his side.

4. Their plans were not large enough to include God. They set down some cold figures -- without any warm faith -- and concluded: "It can't be done." So they voted to stay where they were -- God's promises notwithstanding -- and lost a whole generation. A little faith in a big God would have opened up Canaan for them. It will do the same for you today!

* * *

The Shrine of the Second Trip

One of the dangers which holiness people face is the danger of making two trips to the altar. But, you ask, should there be three? Or only one? And I reply: Two! We believe in two works of grace: regeneration and sanctification. We have Bible foundation for our position. We have multiplied thousands on earth and in glory to witness to us that God's way is to be saved and sanctified. Two works of grace is God's way.

But at this point of our strength we also find a point of danger: that of making a mecca of these two trips to the altar, and bowing down to them and worshipping them as past experiences, forgetting all the while that beyond Jordan is much land to be possessed. The Book of the Acts of

the Apostles gives several instances of Holy Ghost infillings beyond Pentecost. This is not to devalue what happened in the Upper Room; it fortifies it and keeps it current.

I am not making a plea for holiness people to head for the altar every revival. Nor would I insist that they stay. But I do plead that we keep our hearts constantly filled with the Holy Spirit, beyond the second trip. The cleansing is permanent in sanctification and need not be repeated in the course of the healthy Christian life. But the constant refreshing and mulling and overflowing of the Holy Spirit is imperative.

The cleansing is lasting -- the filling is fleeting! How long since your cup was filled to the overflowing? Are you worshipping at the shrine of the second trip? Our strength is not found in building monuments to past blessings, but rather in making spirituality an up-to-date reality!

* * *

Goals for Spiritual Growth

I heard of a young couple whose child would not eat properly. The child was punished for this and his nerves were set on edge. Mealtime was dreadful. At last a doctor was consulted. After many tests and much questionings the doctor discovered the unhappy experiences at the dining table -- discovered that the parents had been trying to force the child to grow by forcing him to eat. It simply did not work.

Growth cannot be forced. Growth is a natural development under proper conditions. This is true spiritually as well as physically. If growth has been arrested before maturity is attained, something is wrong and that wrong should be corrected.

Perhaps the biggest job parents have is to provide the proper atmosphere for well-rounded growth of their children: physical, moral, social, mental, emotional, cultural, and certainly spiritual.

Perhaps the biggest job a church has is to provide the proper atmosphere for the rebirth and growth of its constituents, spiritually. May I offer some suggestions here?

1. Create an atmosphere conducive to symmetrical growth in such areas as witnessing, fellowship, leadership, training, teaching, and soul winning.

2. Do not expect maturity of children or teen-agers. Saved children are still children. Saved teen-agers are still teen-agers.

3. Do not expect maturity of adults who are recently saved and sanctified. They are still "babes in Christ." Growth takes time.

4. Be patient. Growth is gradual. Appreciate small improvements.

5. Provide special nourishment for the spiritually weak, even as you would nourish a plant or an animal needing special attention.

6. Combat the negative appeal of the world with a positive appeal of spiritual activity.

7. Set goals for your own spiritual growth. As you attain these goals, reach out to greater achievements.

* * *

A Strong Man's Weak Points

Samson, man of unusual power from God, lost his strength and was at last bound, blinded, and put to work like a horse. He forgot his weaknesses, and at last his weaknesses got him. Here is where he failed:

1. He paid much attention to his physical strength but little to his spiritual strength. Our emphasis on physical fitness and mental training is well-placed, but above all we need to be Samsons inside -- giants in the inner spiritual life.

2. He kept company with the wrong crowd. He found his friends among God's enemies. Strong as he was, Samson could not lift them to his own level. Rather he degraded himself to their level.

3. He neglected the discipline of his sex life. He toyed with the affections of the opposite sex. He played with fire and got burned. As a result his lover betrayed him, handing him over to be bound, blinded.

4. He talked too much. He revealed his spiritual secrets to his spiritual enemies -- mortal enemies. He spoke when he should have kept silent.

5. He took his religion for granted. He did not check up often enough to be sure. Too late he discovered that God was gone -- and he did not know it.

* * *

Holiness Makes for Symmetry

When I was a lad rounding up the cattle we had one landmark everyone knew: an old, crooked tree. We often used the bent and gnarled mesquite as a reference point. No one knew what caused the tree to twist. Was it trampled by a stampede when it was young? Was it blighted by a bug? Did lightning strike it? No one knew. We also had a crooked calf in the herd. Soon after his birth he got an infection which left him runted, twisted, droopy, an unsightly beast. So great were his sores that my brother called him Lazarus. Nature has its strange imperfections.

So does the human race. Almost any preacher could write volumes on "Some Twisted Souls I Have Known." They are sunning dejectedly along skid row. They are languishing in institutions. They come bumming to your back door. Other warped souls blend into the cultural pattern about them. Their lust for immorality, their jockeying for position, their passion for pleasure, their greed for greenbacks thrives in the swim of a corrupt society better than in the gutter. Indeed, let us admit that every man is born with the twist of sin in his soul.

And this is precisely where the message of heart holiness shines forth in sharpest perspective. The work of the Holy Spirit removes the "bent to sinning" in the human heart, and cleanses away all the corruption of the carnal nature. This deliverance is a must for every man if he is to enjoy symmetrical growth, if his soul is to have a beauty that shines through.

All about us are trophies of grace-lofty examples of once-twisted souls now made straight by the power of the Holy Ghost. Holiness makes for symmetry in the Christian way. "The crooked shall be made straight." Why not plunge into the cleansing fountain of full salvation and let God set you to singing with the poet?

Take away our bent to sinning;
Alpha and Omega be;
End of faith, as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.

* * *

From Dwarfism to Gianthood

Tom Thumb at the age of twenty-five was but thirty-one inches tall. Jeffery Hudson in the court of Charles I of England was only eighteen inches tall when he was thirty years old. There are entire dwarf races to be found among certain bushmen of Africa, even today.

What causes dwarfism? We are told that there are three major factors: (1) The cartilage fails to develop normally into bone; (2) A disorder of the thyroid gland causes a hormone deficiency; and (3) Failure of the pituitary gland to function properly.

Spiritual dwarfism offers its tragedies too. Here is one of the great blights and threats to the ongoing of vital Christianity. The rate of arrested development of the inner man is at an alarming, soaring figure. There is more religion and less salvation than we like to think. Many saints, so-called, never attend prayer meeting, never win a soul to Christ, never pay their tithes, never assume the responsibilities of service in the church. Dwarfs they are, though called to be giants of spiritual power and usefulness in the Kingdom!

What causes religious pygmies? Is it carnal contentment? Worldly preoccupation? Self-centeredness? Devotional malfunction? Insufficient spiritual exercises? Diet devoid of moral nourishment? Yes! These and other conditions are fatal to Christian nurture and growth.

But there is a cure! The cleansing and filling power of the Holy Spirit! Utter renunciation of the world with all its glitter and froth! The awful self-crucifixion -- crucifixion with Christ if you please! The delightful indulgence in prayer, private meditation, and Bible study! The spiritual fiber-building practice of witnessing for Christ and working to win souls!

Away with the pygmy practices which dwarf the soul! Onward to spiritual gianthood! Our capacity for inner enlargement is infinite. May the souls of the saints never cease to grow in Christlikeness!

* * *

Young People Can Be Pure

The path of purity has been obscured in recent years with an avalanche of filthy literature and moral garbage in the movie houses, and on television... Many have embraced it, been poisoned by it, and even made it available to teens and subteens in abundance. Some so-called ministers of the gospel have embraced the new morality (which is nothing but the old immorality); educators have relaxed the restricting rules; parents have allowed their children to indulge themselves in unrestrained sexual vices.

This shameful sex backdrop becomes all the more acute when young people get converted and try to leap over the wall of impurity into God's green pastures of chastity and self-discipline. Coming to the altar is the beginning. But it is also the beginning of severest temptations too. How can young people be assured of deliverance as they try to live pure lives? Here are some helps:

1. Switch crowds you run with. When you are with the old crowd that pulled you down, witness to them. Allow no compromise. Find new friends who are also trying to live pure, holy lives.

2. Guard your thoughts. Christ cautions us (Matt. 5:27-28), as does Paul (Phil. 4:8), to discipline our thoughts if we would keep clean. Pure people cannot harbor impure thoughts. Keep your mind on Christ.

3. Do not toy with temptation. Temptation will come -- but you can overcome. Shun the suggestions of Satan. Refuse the filthy novel, the movie house, the Hollywood-type program, the unclean talk, the suggestive picture, the questionable joke, and the friends who would pull you down. Absolutely refuse to compromise.

4. Get busy for God. Don'ts are not enough. Character is not made in a vacuum. Read your Bible. Develop the habit of secret prayer. Work for the church. Make absentee calls. Begin witnessing, winning souls. Let your pastor put you to work. Then God will richly reward you.

* * *

The Marks of Maturity

People are not mature because they are big or old. Nor are Christians mature because they are saved and Spirit-filled. While purity is instantaneous, maturity is gradual. It is the result of growth, study, self-discipline, proper diet, and achievement. In his letter to the Ephesians, chapter four, Paul gives us some obvious markings of Christian maturity:

1. Accepting instruction (v. 11). The immature "know it all," but the mature are teachable, humble, constantly learning, improving.

2. Usefulness in service (v. 12). I saw a colt running alongside his mother who was harnessed to the plow. But I knew that when the colt matured a bit he would be pressed into service too. Childhood is playtime. Youth is preparation time. Maturity is serving time. Let us not spend all our lives playing and preparing. There's work to be done -- by mature folk.

3. Stability of purpose (v. 14). Mature Christians are not tossed about by every breeze that blows. They are living in one direction. Attractive by-paths do not lure them. They work for the ultimate goal.

4. Ability to be governed by principle instead of by passion (v. 15). I saw two men get fighting mad because their cars collided. In the mature saint, feelings are Spirit-controlled.

5. Cooperative activity (v. 16). Children do not always cooperate. They sometimes sulk, pout, argue, cry, and even quit when they cannot have their own way. Such actions are occasionally seen among older people in the Church. These people have not matured, spiritually.

6. Settled in faith (v. 21). Mature saints have final ground in Christ. He is their ultimate Authority. For them there can be no question mark where God has put a period.

* * *

Disciples Are the Disciplined Ones

Occasionally someone wants to know why there are so many Nazarene negatives. Now and then we ought to ask ourselves why we are against such things as smoking, drinking, dancing, movies, slander, gambling, and suchlike. Is it only because our fathers put these in the Manual? Ethel Jacobson had an interesting poem in a church bulletin:

Mustn't run across the road;
Mustn't touch the candle;
Mustn't pull the pussycat
By her handy handle;
Mustn't write upon the wall;
Mustn't waste my crusts.
Mustn't, mustn't, mustn't, mustn't --
Aren't there any musts?

So someone asks: Why all these mustn'ts for Nazarenes? Can't we be a bit more broad-minded, a little more sophisticated in our modern, intellectual culture?

But God's answer is: Disciples are the disciplined ones. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. We are therefore obliged to keep God's dwelling place clean, pure, strong, fit for His habitation.

For instance, the person who smokes or drinks alcoholic beverages is damaging his body -- God's temple. He has no right to commit suicide on the installment plan any more than to do so quickly. The person who dances comes into physical contact with the opposite sex, and opens the door to temptation, with lust climaxing in immorality. This is wrong beyond debate. The movie houses are increasingly filled with lustful, suggestive, immoral, and criminal pictures which poison the mind and point patrons to perdition. Could a Christian attend? Right or wrong? Slander and gossip are the sins of the tongue, damaging and destroying and murdering the reputations of other people. Gambling is the get-something-for-nothing fever of the devil -- a form of robbery which cannot be justified.

Yes, some things must be given up if one is to walk with God. But it is worth it in the long run. And it is the long run we are on.

* * *

Growth Through Suffering

1. Suffering is universal. Salvation is not an insurance policy.
2. God permits it. He could have prevented it, but He did not.
3. Why do you suffer? Only God knows. Someday you will understand.
4. Do not blame God for your suffering. Blame sin! When the world is free from sin, it will be free from suffering.
5. Do not blame yourself as you suffer.
6. Do not indulge in self-pity.
7. Do not advertise your suffering. God knows and cares.
8. You may suffer innocently through no fault of your own. Do it for Jesus' sake, and He will be near to share your burden.
9. The scoundrel who deserves to suffer often goes scot-free. Do not let this fact shake your faith. You do not know all the facts -- nor all the future.

10. Have a forgiving spirit toward those who may have caused your undeserved suffering -- even if they do not deserve forgiveness.

11. Let God punish those who deserve to be punished. He is the Judge.

12. Avoid resentment in your suffering.

13. If you suffer innocently, let God vindicate you. He can, and will.

14. Let God talk to you through your suffering. It's time to listen.

15. Time is in your favor. Let time help heal your hurt.

16. Suffering is temporary. You are immortal. God is eternal.

17. There is growth in suffering that cannot be had any other way.

* * * * *

03 -- THE MAKINGS OF A MIGHTY CHURCH

I will build my church. Matt. 16:18

* * *

A Prayer for My Pastor

Dear God, bless my pastor today.

Make him too big to be little; too wise to be foolish; too holy to be selfish; too spiritual to be worldly; too tall to get a chip on his shoulder; too dedicated to swerve; too zealous to be idle; too cultured to be coarse; too happy to be morbid.

Save him from the love of big words, the fear of carnal people, the tedium of too many announcements.

Deliver him from the rut of running overtime, the pit of pointless preaching, the evil of emotionless messages.

Strengthen him when the tempter would lure him into sins shallow or deep; when the stand he must take will not be appreciated by the people who pay his salary; when he is the target of tongues whetted to a severe sharpness.

Empower him with the Spirit of Pentecost to make him strong in the pulpit; with the Spirit of Christ to make him calm under pressure; with the spirit of joy to make him steadfast even in weakness.

Keep him from toning down the spiritual message to please the worldly; from trimming down his sermons into sermonettes; from talking down to his congregation in a display of conceited sophistication.

Give him wisdom to wait when he does not know which way to turn; give him love when he must rebuke the wolf scattering the flock; give him grace when he must sit in silent suffering rather than rise to his own self-defense.

Fill him with unction every Sunday, enthusiasm every Monday, and with the Holy Ghost every day.

And help me not to discuss his faults with anyone but Thee, O Christ. Amen.

* * *

What to Do on Sundays

1. Don't sleep all day. To stay up all hours on Saturday night and sleep all day Sunday is pure self indulgence on God's time.

2. Don't work all day. You have worked all week. Your body will break down like any other machine that is overworked.

3. Don't picnic all day, nor run all over the country. Frequent twenty-four-hour-long holiday frolics and weekend trips to the beaches, the mountains, the lakes, to Grandma's will damn your soul -- and your family.

4. Don't putter all day. Take care of your car, your screens, your lawn, your gutters, your cellar, during the week -- but not on God's day.

5. Don't pray all day. Do your Bible reading and praying daily, so that these things do not pile up, and occupy a large part of your Sunday time.

6. Attend the four services at your church: Sunday school, morning worship, youth-study hour, and the evening evangelistic service.

7. Relax with a good book, getting in some meditation that will fill your soul and mind with fresh challenge, outreach, improvement, purpose.

8. Arrange for the family to be together: a family walk in the park together, a family hymn -- sing around the piano together, a family forum in which each participates in the discussion of personal problems.

9. Lend a helping hand as Jesus did, doing someone a good turn on each Sunday afternoon. Visit a few people who need spiritual encouragement.

10. Organize some wholesome activities for your teen-agers. Let each Sunday draw the individual, the family closer together -- and to God.

* * *

Good Manners in God's House

1. Come early. If you were invited to the White House to meet the President, you would not be late. At church you are coming to meet One who is greater than any earthly ruler. It's good to be ahead of time.

2. Be friendly. Not hilarious, for church is not a party. But it is not a morgue. Your friends are here. Greet them warmly, sincerely. Like you, they seek happiness. Give them a little. You'll get it back. It's good manners to be friendly to visitors too.

3. Pass up those back seats. They are not for you. They are for the late, the indifferent, the visitors, the ushers take care of those who come in late. You are You are not a spectator anyway.

4. Sit towards the center. Selfish people sit at the end of the pew and make everyone crawl over them, rather than move over. Don't force others to thus be embarrassed.

5. Look ahead instead of looking back. Let the ushers take care of those who come in late. You are not a news reporter anyway! If someone is looking for you, he will spot you and let you know.

6. Stay in that sect. Don't run for the drinking fountain or the rest rooms during the services. Don't jump up and run across the aisle (or the church) to pass the time of day with a friend.

7. Start a whispering campaign by whispering a prayer. If someone whispers to you, nod and keep silent. Avoid notes, gum, paper wads, carving knives, and airplanes.

8. Participate. Stand when others stand. Kneel when others kneel. Sing when others sing. Say an "Amen" now and then. Be a blessing. God's house calls for a special brand of good manners because it is God's house.

* * *

The Jethro Philosophy

1. When God's work slows down, it is time to ask some searching questions. In the eighteenth chapter of Exodus we have an interesting account of how Jethro saw a problem and began to probe (v. 14). It is utter folly to keep pretending at God's work without results. Find the cause and the cure.

2. Sometimes good people are so involved in the problem that they fail to see the obvious solution (v. 16). Moses was too busy fighting the problem to find the solution. To Jethro it was simple because he saw the full picture. When your program lags, back off for a fresh perspective. Or else get some Jethro to show you why, what, and how.

3. The first step in improving your effectiveness is to admit your present failures (v. 17). If "the thing that thou doest is not good," then face up to it immediately. Face facts squarely and constructively.

4. It is sheer folly for one man to try to do the work of ten men (v. 18), because (1) he is killing himself ten times faster than he ought; (2) he is sinning against the other nine by not putting them to work; (3) he is demonstrating his own failure to gain the cooperation and participation of the other nine; (4) he is sinning against the future of the church by leaving a vacuum (when he is gone) which everyone will abhor.

5. The way to get more work done is to put more people to work (v. 21). This is more than a mathematical fact, for you are enlisting concern and cooperation when you enlist people.

6. Consecrated laymen are willing to work if someone will train them and harness them to the task (v. 22). Why not take time today to deal with one of your most critical problems: lay employment in your church?

Take a look at the six areas of Jethro's philosophy and see if God has something to say about your sagging church attendance -- your half-mast financial response your unemployed saints. Let's go for God!

* * *

Overcome the Ho-hum in Worship

1. Let's have a little emotion in every service -- a little holy groaning and laughter, a few Amens along the way, maybe a tear now and then, or a spontaneous testimony that is not listed in the printed order of worship. Don't "put it on" as playacting. Keep ablaze and it will be genuine. Nothing is so dead as dead holiness, for it is not holiness at all. Doing things "decently and in order" does not imply a stiff, cold, formal, dry service. Let the preacher get blessed as he preaches under the anointing. Why hide it? Sparkle a bit and weep occasionally if it is genuine. Let there be some freedom and demonstration in the pew -- so long as it is "in the Spirit."

2. Let holiness preachers -- and laymen -- avoid the monotony of monotone preaching and testifying. This is no plea for racehorse preaching and wildfire testimonies. But it is a plea to overcome the ho-hum, the so-what way of saying something about the most important matter in the world. If the house were on fire, you would lift your voice. If you believe the world is on fire, put some fire into your sermons and testimonies. God deliver us from sermons and prayers that must be read, from memorized testimonies.

3. Beware of being sidetracked by special days. The calendar is full of them -- all good -- but they will completely dominate us if we allow them to. Let's not devote every sermon and every service to a "special."

Our holiness message and holiness witness must have the central place, always.

4. Have some specific goals for every service. Do you expect something to happen? What? To whom? With what results? What have you done to bring this expectation to reality? No preacher, no layman should ever come to a service without some specific goals for himself-and others. Pray for results. Plan for results. Work for results. Expect results. God wills it. Every service can be thrilling, rewarding. Let's make it so!

* * *

New Blood

I have before me the figures of three churches which have the same attendance today they had sixty years ago. The records of another church in another area show that it is the same size it was forty years ago. There are others the same size as they were twenty years ago-ten years ago. Hopefully (and admittedly) these are isolated cases, for it is easy to find churches that have kept growing, adding new blood each year.

Is your Sunday school attendance larger now than it was five years ago? How big will your church be by 1970 if it maintains its present growth-place? How large will it be by 1980? Why do some churches keep growing year after year?

1. They plan to grow. They build more Sunday school rooms and organize more classes and put more people to work. I have never seen a church fail to grow when it did these three things.

2. Lay participation. If the church is to grow, someone must do the work. No pastor can, single-handed, do all that needs to be done. The way to get more work done is to put more people to work. Sanctified people will work if they are trained, harnessed, motivated. I met a layman last month who makes 3,000 calls each year, in addition to his regular job and his family responsibilities. Small wonder his church grows.

3. Enthusiasm -- on the part of both pastor and lay leaders. There is a holy optimism in the air. There is a contagious expectancy in every service. People are on tiptoe to see what is going to happen next. And something does happen -- like growth and Holy Ghost revivals.

4. New blood. New people get saved and sanctified and are placed in leadership responsibilities. Tired blood churches cannot grow. They shrivel and dwindle. New Christians have new faith, new fire, new methods, new enthusiasm, new vision. Is your church growing as it ought? Why? What do you plan to do about it? When? Holiness demands growth!

* * *

The Scatteration Theory of Growth

I saw thousands of bushels of wheat piled on the ground. The mound was left uncovered and the sun and rain beat down. But most of the seeds did not sprout. A few did -- around the edges. Some rotted instead of sprouted.

Across the road was another farmer who, instead of piling up his seed, scattered it out. He drilled it into the soil. His potential was no greater but he reduced the concentration and provided room for growth. The harvest was sixty fold.

I saw a Sunday school class enjoy its concentration of forty members and twenty in average attendance until someone divided the class into two classes with twenty members each and an average of ten. Now there were two teachers, and two classrooms to be filled, and a challenge to grow. Again the gain was sixty fold. It will reach a hundred fold.

A quarter of a century ago I saw a small church climb to the 300 mark in six years. Then it stopped growing. It is still that size. A fine concentration of saints to be sure -- but no growth. Spending money and building nice buildings to be sure -- but no growth.

During this same period of time I watched another church about this size sponsor a home mission project across the city. They gave up 5 families and fifty dollars per week and 50 from Sunday school. The new church today is larger than 300. The mother church bounced back to her 300 and did it again -- and again -- and again -- organizing several new ones and growing all the while, well beyond the 500 mark now. It is the scatteration theory of growth.

This is not a new theory. It started with the early persecutions (Acts 4:8), and still bears harvest today. The Early Church learned it the hard way. Maybe it was God's best way to get the Church to grow. Maybe it still is.

* * *

The Governor is Coming!

The governor is coming to our house! He will ask about our children and sit at our table. Irene will bring out the best silver and china and crystal while I help her with the dusting, sweeping, polishing. And what a spread we will attempt. And the steaks (no hamburgers, please)! We will get the thickest, juiciest, tenderest steaks money can buy. And forget the cost. The governor is coming!

Of course I am dreaming-even about the steaks. But Malachi dreamed too. He said: "The governor is coming! Butcher a beef. Not a stocky, sleek shorthorn. Butcher that sick, blind, swayback cow over there. That's good enough for the governor. As for bread, we will get some of that crusty, moldy stuff we feed the pigs." Read it in Mal. 1:8: "Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased?"

Of course Malachi was mocking. No one would treat a governor thus. People would give him their best. "Yet this is how you have been treating God," said Malachi. "You have offered Him sick, lame, blind sacrifices. You have put polluted bread on the Lord's table, and made it a contemptible thing. Your service is unworthy, evil. You have despised God and it shows through."

Shall we put our religion to the same test? Are we more faithful with our taxes than our tithes? Are the traffic laws easier to keep than the Manual rules? Are we more faithful to the labor union than to prayer meeting? Is it too rainy to go to church on Sunday but not too rainy to go to work on Monday? Are we more interested in the P.T.A. than the C.S.T.?

The test of true religion is that God and the Church and lost souls mean more to us than anything else in all the world.

* * *

Church Members Are Tempted Too

Here are some temptations to pride which church members must resist:

1. Doctrinal pride. We cherish our doctrine, for it is adequately founded on God's Word. Let's never change it! But let's not brag about our doctrine. It's God's holy Word -- not ours.

2. Ethical pride. Thank God for our standards! May we never compromise in the false hopes of winning more by believing less. But let's beware of being proud of our don'ts. We are not legalists.

3. Denominational pride. Thank God I am a Nazarene. This is my crowd. But there is no magic in our name. We may have to give a little at this point when the glad day of union with other holiness bodies comes. Our mission and our message are all-important -- not our label. Denominations do not save.

4. Promotional pride. Thank God for posters from headquarters and the district office! Let's build bigger bulletin boards. It's good to belong to a group that believes the gospel is worth promoting. But promotion is only a tool. Let's keep it so.

5. Per capita pride. Just because Nazarenes outgive all other denominations (larger than 100,000 membership) is no sign that we should be puffed up. Can we do less, considering what we preach and what we profess? Tithing is important. But so are some other things (Matt. 23:23).

6. Mourners' bench pride. I believe in the mourners' bench. God have mercy on the church that takes it out -- or ceases to use it -- for that church has ceased to be a holiness church! But many of our prospects have never seen the mourners' bench in action. Let us pray them through in their homes, at their work, wherever we find them -- including the mourners' bench, even between services.

* * *

Buttermilk

Dr. Roy L. Smith told the story of two ladies who disagreed in a neighborly discussion over the backyard fence. The argument became heated and each went home to tell her husband how wrong and unchristian the other was. The point of contention and disagreement was the price of a quart of buttermilk. One said it was ten cents. The other said eleven. So they fussed -- and pulled their husbands into the fuss.

The husbands were both members of the church board and took the discussion there for an opinion. The church board could not agree on the price of buttermilk, and the argument lasted some hours -- until they forgot the price and the buttermilk, and simply took sides. In a few days the whole church became involved one way or another. Feelings were hurt and friendships ruptured. Grudges appeared. Everyone was feuding. Dr. Smith said that the church was so completely split that for twenty years pastors came and left without seeing unity. Revival fires died while the devil danced. A great and lasting church fuss over a little thing: buttermilk!

It doesn't take much to start a fuss in the church or out of it: maybe a quart of buttermilk -- maybe a lover's quarrel -- maybe an upset in the annual election -- maybe the wrong person was asked to sing or play the organ or take the collection. Small fusses can snowball into awful avalanches and do infinite damage.

Good people disagree. Thoughtless people argue. Carnal people fuss. Little people fight. Small issues divide small people. Little people who are mature in years but not in grace or sense fight over nonessentials while the world goes to hell -- like the man who, while his house was burning, quit fighting the fire to kill a rat.

Big people -- holy people -- mature people refuse to be divided over little things. They put unity above personal likes and dislikes. God's people must have a will, a purpose to maintain the spirit of unity.

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04 -- TALL MEN FOR TROUBLED TIMES

I sought for a man among them. Ezek. 22:30

For Church Members --

* * *

"Give Me One Hundred Men"

E. M. Bounds pinpoints our need for tall men in troubled times when he writes: "The church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men. What the church needs today is

not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men -- men whom the Holy Ghost can use -- men mighty in prayer."

We need men in the pulpit . . .

1. Who will assume responsibility for an aggressive, spiritual leadership.
2. Who know where they are going and how to get there.
3. Who know the direction the people ought to go, and who know how to get the people going that way.
4. Who believe the gospel is worth promoting, and get busy at it.
5. Who believe that revivals can be had for a price, and get busy paying that price.

We need men in the pew . . .

1. Who will face up to life's priorities with a courage born from above.
2. Who will support an ordinary pastor with an extraordinary loyalty.
3. Who will gladly change their man -- made methods to get some God -- given results.
4. Who will produce a Pentecostal witness which will have its impact on the community.

John Wesley said: "Give me one hundred men who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth."

For Men Only --

* * *

Men Who Mean Business

Our greatest need is men -- not preachers, not statesmen, but men -- men who will hide themselves away in some wilderness of fasting, searching God's will, groaning on their faces for the fullness of the Spirit -- maybe days on end -- until their souls are flaming responses to God's global "Go."

Let these men have moss on their eyebrows and thunder in their voices and fire in their eyes and tears on their cheeks and love in their hearts. Let them be called fanatics, waving red warning lights because the bridge is out and people are plunging to death just ahead.

Let these men stand up and speak out for God. Let them charge us with our carnal complacency until we dread to see them coming. Let them pronounce God's judgments upon us for our selfishness until we know the fear of the Lord. Let them rebuke us for our hypocrisy until we hate them. Let them demand our repentance and restitution and confession until we look beyond them and see God and beg for mercy. Let them warn us of impending disaster until we turn our church lights on every night and fill our sanctuaries with the poor and the fashionable, praying, weeping, repenting together. Let them condemn us for our lying, our cheating, our stealing, our adultery, our drunkenness until we ask forgiveness of God and man. Let them lift high Jesus Christ until we fall at His feet.

Who are these terrible, holy people? Not preachers! Not missionaries! But men! Men who mean business for God! Men who stretch themselves out before Him and say: "Here am I; send me"! Will you begin such a band -- join such a band in your church -- now?

For Ladies Only --

* * *

The Consecrated Needle

She could not teach a class, sing in the choir, play the piano. She never got elected on the church board. To put it bluntly, she was a limited lady (she thought). There were so many things she could not do -- and she would have been the first to admit it.

Then one night as she sat by the fireplace, needle flashing dimly by candlelight, brooding a bit over her talent deficiency, God seemed to say: "Dorcas, give me that needle."

Dorcas replied, "Lord, what do You want with my needle?"

And God answered, "I want to give it back to you, consecrated, sanctified, for you to use as a pointed, sparkling witness for Me."

I think Dorcas slipped out of her chair down to the floor with a dull thud and began to weep out a very big consecration over a very small needle. She reminded the Lord that although she could not get elected, or even appointed, she would yield herself to the higher order of the consecrated needle -- if God could use an instrument so insignificant in His kingdom so vast.

The coat she completed that night was for herself but God reminded her of a little widow, just her size (and for whom she had been praying), who needed the garment more than she. Dorcas gave her testimony wrapped up in a coat of her own creation. And she did it again -- and again.

Small wonder that the devil wanted her dead before her time, so great was her spiritual impact. And small wonder that God, through Peter, brought her back from death awhile, to continue witnessing with her consecrated needle. Can any saint do less?

For Teen-agers --

* * *

Dare to Be Different

In these times when nearly everyone is a conformist, a copyist, victimized by the herd instinct, it is refreshing to see Christians who are different -- radiantly, wonderfully different . . .

1. In appearance. There is a modesty which marks God's people. They do not frantically rush the latest fads, whims. Theirs is a wholesome, winsome simplicity.

2. In speech. They shun the shady story, the unchaste conversation, the gossipy group, the cheap, chaffy chitchat.

3. On dates. Young people of character would rather make a scene -- even walk home -- than to yield their bodies to sin. They know that toying with temptation heaps up trouble for all their terrifying tomorrows.

4. At work. Twice-born men will give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. They steal neither time, money, nor tools.

5. At school. Students will discipline themselves in a consecrated learning-never cheating -- always diligent

6. In society. Saints do not seclude themselves. They will save men as salt saves meat -- by contact. Their power penetrates, sweetens, saves.

7. In secret. Their hidden hours are not hypocritical. Their conduct in the strange city is no less saintly than in home church. Even when they walk alone, they walk alone with God.

8. By witnessing. Saints cannot keep salvation a secret. Nor can they be indifferent while those about them are slipping into hell! They gladly tell the good news: they eagerly throw out the lifeline to the sinking seaman before it is too late.

Will you dare to be different?

For Those Who Missed It --

* * *

God's Second Best

God has a plan for every life. Some are called to be preachers, some to be missionaries, some teachers, etc. Others are in God's will as doctors, lawyers, scientists, mechanics, housewives, or clerks. There is a divine pattern for every life. How important to find it for your life!

However, some have missed God's plan for their lives. I know a middle-aged businessman who was called to preach in his youth but refused the call. He has made sorrowful shipwreck down through the years: much-married, changing jobs, ruining his health, running from God. I pastored a fine young woman whom God called to be a missionary, but she married a man who did not share that call -- and she missed God's will for her life. I went to school with a splendid youth who was called to preach the gospel in Africa, but he dodged that call. Perhaps he has enjoyed a degree of success but he has not enjoyed running from God.

Is there no hope, no happiness, no usefulness for the person who made a wrong choice in his youth?

There is hope! Do not always punish yourself and doom yourself to a life of utter despair and remorse! You need not throw away the rest of your life and live for the devil forever -- just because you rejected God's chosen plan for you while you were young! Nor does God want you to do this!

God is the God of the second chance. He has a second-best plan and place for you if you rejected and missed His first-best plan for your life. I know a man who in his youth refused God's call to preach. Later, when it was too late for him to enter the ministry, he gave himself in zeal and loving service to God and the church -- and became one of the finest laymen I have ever known.

If you missed God's best back there, take God's second best -- right now! Surrender to Him and live for Him. He has a place of glad and rewarding service for you where you are -- today! And you will find that even God's second best is so far ahead of the devil's best that there is no comparison!

For the Man in the Pew --

* * *

Lines for Laymen

First Timothy, chapter three, has some fine lines for laymen:

1. Bite your tongue (v. 8). Some people talk so much that they appear to be double-tongued.
2. Watch that overtime (v. 8). Are you working on Sundays, earning double time, when you could be in church? Don't be kicked to death by the golden calf.
3. Get a radiant religion (v. 9). Not the kind that leaves you cold, with a cloudy conscience and an anemic faith. God can wash away those guilt complexes, frustrations, twisting tensions and bring you the "beauty of holiness." Keep the awe, the wonder, the breathless adoration within you.

4. Shoulder your family responsibilities (v. 12). Good religion works at home. Let Dad and the children help with the housework. If that four-year-old is not taught to respect authority, he will be a candidate for the criminal court by the time he is a teen-ager.

5. Be predictable (v. 11). Be so dependable that folks will expect you at church -- on time -- regardless of the weather; that your tithe will be in the plate before you leave on your vacation; that you will make those calls for class if you are not in the hospital.

For Young People --

* * *

Don't Bypass God's Call

Why does God call people into special, full-time Christian service? Because He needs our help. Because He cannot do it alone. Because reapers are needed. Because the harvest is white.

How does God call? Maybe with a dramatic flash from heaven as with the Apostle Paul. Maybe with a voice in the night such as the child Samuel heard. Perhaps, as in Isaiah's experience, when the sanctuary is filled with heaven. It could come in the splendor of a glorious sunrise such as dawned on Andrew. Or it may be a confrontation with Christ such as Simon Peter had when he heard Him say: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." With others it is a mighty must which the prophet felt like fire burning on his bones.

Whom does God call? There is no telling. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence" (I Cor. 1:26-29). Other things being equal, God could use a Spirit-filled Ph.D. more effectively than a Spirit-filled backwoodsman. But other things are seldom equal. And if they were, God could get more glory from the latter than the former. With a worm God can thrash a mountain. Of course He could do it better with a bulldozer (we think). But who gets the glory? If the worm does it, God gets the glory. If the bulldozer does it, man gets the glory. Jesus called His twelve from all ranks. He uses all who will respond and bypasses all who will not. Obedience and simplicity are the keys. He will use you if you will let Him -- if you are humble enough, Spirit-filled.

If God calls, it will be heaven's highest compliment. Do not ignore the King's invitation to be a member of His staff. He sees something in you -- or has something to put in you, as He did in the rough, impulsive, unlearned fisherman, Peter. He has passed over others who are more able in order to select you. Don't ask why. It's not your business. Just say YES! Say it immediately when He calls you.

God has been tapping you on the shoulder, hasn't He? Then get busy!

For Fringe Saints --

* * *

Get Your Hands Dirty

Pick up that greasy wrench and go to work on that motor and stick with it till it hums like a sewing machine. Grab that hoe and chop down those weeds and carve yourself a garden out of that wilderness. Take that broom and sweep the garage and put everything in its place, including the dirt. Paint the front steps, patch the sidewalk by mixing your own cement. Build a combination birdbath and birdhouse. Clean out the gutters. Repair that broken clothesline...

Get your hands dirty for the church, too! There are floors to be waxed, walls to be painted, tables to be repaired, shelves to be built, partitions to be erected, wall switches to be installed. And there is witnessing to be done. There are absentees to be contacted this week . . . today! There are pieces of literature to be distributed. There is revival visitation to be done with prayer and fasting. There are neighbors to be picked up in consecrated cars.

Can saints dally and doze and stuff and stretch and yawn and dream while the Communists work around the clock to enslave us? While sinners devise new ways to sink deeper into sin? While dying millions about us stumble downward in the darkness? Can we sit in our rocking chairs of complacency while the tides of certain and fearful destruction rise higher and nearer? With our Christ we will accept heaven's challenge: "I must work -- the night cometh!" And be assured the harvest will be glorious.

For Saints in Reverse --

* * *

Jonah's Seven Fallacies

1. God can get along just fine without me. Wrong! God needed Jonah. He needs you too. In fact, God is limited without you.

2. Someone else will do my work if I don't. Wrong again! God has a work for you to do. If you fail God, God's work fails.

3. It is possible to escape God. Is it? The Psalmist said no (Ps. 139:7-8). Jonah ran from God because he thought he could. But he couldn't. Can you?

4. Running from God's call silences God's call. Delusion. You can no more escape God's call than you can escape God.

5. God should not be merciful to repenting souls. Erroneous! God was merciful to Jonah, wasn't He? Some folk insist God ought to be more severe with sinners. Some would call down fire on all whom they dislike. I am glad God is the Judge

6. Gourds are better than souls. Are they, Jonah? You were glad for the gourd -- but did you rejoice for the Nineveh revival? That which makes a man happy reveals his spiritual condition.

7. God's work can be done without love. Never! Jonah failed (though God sent revival) because Jonah was low on love. Force, fear, duty drove him. Not love. Love is God's way. Love is God's people's way, too.

* * * * *

05 -- FORMULA FOR FRUIT BEARING

Bear much fruit . . . be my disciples. John 15:8

* * *

Saints on the Witness Stand

There can be no such thing as a silent witness. Of course one may silently let his light shine. But this is not witnessing. It is putting your good works and good lives on display. This is imperative but insufficient in the Christian economy. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so (Ps. 107:2). Witnessing must be done with the mouth. On the witness stand, the saint . . .

1. Cannot remain silent.
2. Is not the judge who pronounces the sentence.
3. Is not the lawyer who pleads the case.
4. Is not the jury which renders the verdict.
5. Does not give his opinions and whims about the matter.
6. Does not repeat the rumors he has heard.
7. Does not hesitate to tell the whole truth.
8. Does not fear the outcome of his testimony.
9. Testifies to what he has personally experienced, seen, heard, felt.
10. Leaves the result of his testimony with higher authorities.

Here is a lad with a bone splinter in his arm. He goes to a specialist who operates, and relieves the months of intense suffering. The lad says: "Doctor, I am telling my friends about you." That is witnessing -- not judging, not arguing, not pleading, not repeating rumors, not giving personal notions, not merely displaying (in silence) a healed arm, but witnessing! He has had a striking a personal experience and he cannot remain silent.

Have we had a vital personal experience with Christ? Can we remain silent about it?
Witnessing is bearing fruit for Christ.

* * *

Persistence Pays Off

The national Retail Dry Goods Association made a survey of the calls their salesmen make in selling their wares. Here is what they found:

48 percent of the salesmen make one call and quit.

25 percent of the salesmen make two calls and quit.

15 percent of the salesmen make three calls and quit.

This means that 88 percent of the salesmen quit by the time they make that third call. It also says that only 12 percent make more than three calls on any one prospect. Furthermore we are told that the 88 percent of the salesmen who were three-call-quitters did only 20 percent of the business. Or, put it another way, 12 percent of the salesmen who kept on calling did 80 percent of the business. The survey discovered no high-octane success formula. Just "Keep calling."

Has the Church found the same formula? There are times when we look wistfully at the Sunday school register, frown at the mediocre annual gains (or shameful losses), and shake our heads in discouragement at barren altars. Are we like the three-call-quitters in God's holy harvest?

Is your church training people how to visit? Jesus did (Luke 10). Are we showing saints how to harness the fire of sanctification to the plow of hard work?

A little lady in our church invited a young couple every week for seven years before they came. But they came at last, prayed through, and he is now an outstanding minister in our church. Persistence is the payoff.

* * *

The Shame of Secret Discipleship

In an early pastorate in a southern city one of the fine members of my congregation came to report that he had found another Nazarene where he worked. He informed me that his new friend was a member of our First Church of that city, and that he had come to work on the same job with him some three weeks earlier. After working side by side with this new man eight hours a day, five days a week for three weeks, my friend discovered that his new partner in the shop was a born-again Christian and a Nazarene.

At this point I inquired: "You mean you worked at the same bench, rubbing elbows with this man all day long, for three weeks before you discovered that he was a Christian?"

He replied in the affirmative.

Again I wanted to know: "Did you find out what street he lived on? Was he married? Did he have any children? Was he a Democrat?"

My church-member friend knew the answer to all these questions, but he did not know about the man's spiritual condition.

In desperation I asked: "If you two saved-and-sanctified Nazarenes could work together for three weeks without either finding out that the other knew God, or belonged to the church, how did the secret ever come to light at all?"

"It was by sheer accident," said my church member. "He started humming a tune which we sing at our church. I asked him where he got that tune, and he replied that they sing it at his church. When I asked him which church, and he said "First Nazarene," then I told him I was a Nazarene, too, down on the other side of town, in Bresee Church."

Oh, the shame of secret discipleship! Do the people where you work, or live, or attend school know that you are living for Christ? Who told them? When?

* * *

Ordinary Man -- Extraordinary Passion

If Andrew ever preached a sermon, it was not good enough to get into the Bible. If he ever wrote an Epistle or a Gospel, we do not know it. If he ever performed a miracle with God's help, no one reported it. Was Andrew a failure for God?

Hardly! While Andrew preached no sermon worthy of scriptural publication, yet one of his converts (Simon Peter) preached a sermon at Pentecost which resulted in 3,000 converts. So Andrew had a share in these souls. While Andrew wrote no books of the Bible, yet one of his converts (Simon Peter) was the author of two Epistles in the New Testament. So Andrew will enjoy some of this harvest with Peter. And while Andrew performed no miracle, yet he introduced a lad to Jesus, and Jesus, blessing the lad's lunch, was able to feed 5,000. Andrew shares in this miracle's blessing!

So Andrew did not fail! It would be more accurate to say that God's work would have failed -- to a certain degree -- without Andrew, and man of Andrew's type.

Himself the first choice of Christ's twelve, Andrew was not an ecclesiastical glamour boy -- not even a fast talking promoter. He was an ordinary man with an extraordinary passion to introduce men to Jesus. And he started at home, with his own brother. We need more Andrews with a passion to present men to Christ!

* * *

More Calls to Mission Fields

Some years ago our missionary leaders had a waiting list of some three hundred applicants who wanted to become missionaries. But today we have no such backlog. We are hard pressed to find enough who qualify. If the present trend were to continue, we would soon have a missionary shortage. What can we do to capture the hearts of our consecrated young people with the romance of the missionary enterprise? The problem has its focal point at our family altars and in our local churches. What can we do to get more to heed the call to mission fields?

1. Keep your own heart and your own children so consecrated to God that you would be pleased, rather than pained, if God should call one of them to be a missionary.

2. Keep the challenge of this divine calling before your children. Let them know that somewhere God has a place for them to serve. Do not call them on your own. Create a climate where they can hear His call.

3. Keep your own family altar aglow with missionary interest, piety, reverence. Let the children participate in the family altar.

4. Keep a romance in your missionary attitude, thinking, and conversation. Instead of magnifying the low salary, the hardships, the loneliness, and the ugly darkness of heathenism, magnify the divine challenge, the glorious calling, the rewarding harvest, the joy of serving Christ where souls are in such darkness, yet are so hungry.

5. Keep your church ablaze with the "must" of missions. Read all the missionary books, attend all the missionary meetings, give a second (or third) tithe to missions. Testify with a missionary zeal. Inspire your pastor to preach with a missionary burden. And expect God to call your youth to missionary service. He will!

* * *

Factors in Fruit Bearing

1. Bearing fruit is the normal process in all of life. If life is healthy, fruit may be expected. The farmer depends on it when he plants the seed. God depends on this factor of fruit bearing in His disciples. Healthy saints bear fruit. It is the normal process for healthy Christians to produce Christians. If this is not being done, there is an unhealthy condition prevailing in the soul of the saint.

2. To bear fruit is to reproduce in kind. The farmer knows that good seed produces good fruit and inferior seed produces inferior fruit. It is true in the Church also. Vital, victorious Christians reproduce in kind. And careless, prayerless, joyless "saints" reproduce in kind.

3. To bear fruit is to multiply in number. The farmer plants 5 bushels of seed to the acre, but he expects 50 -- or 500 -- in return. He depends on the increase to stay in business. Fifty years

ago seventeen men dedicated themselves to the principles of Communism. Today one-half the world is dominated by this atheistic system. How much has your church grown in the past five years? Twenty years? Fifty years?

4. Fruit bearing is imperative to survival. Suppose just one generation of cattle should fail to reproduce; the species would become extinct. Think what that would do to our supply of meat, milk, butter, cheese, leather. Worse still, if Christians should stop bearing fruit for one short generation, Christianity would become extinct! Are you bearing fruit? How much?

* * *

Your Unknown Partner

It was Christmas time, 1934. My roommate, George Gardner, and I were hitchhiking from college to conduct a revival for my brother who was pastor at Temple, Texas. Somehow we separated and George caught a ride to Dallas and I got one to Fort Worth and on to Waco. At midnight a limousine stopped for me. On the seat were cigarettes, a half-empty flask of liquor, and a revolver. We had not gone far before the driver pulled up for more drinks, then started speeding crazily and singing loudly.

It seemed appropriate that I try to improve the situation, so I offered to drive -- but my offer was graciously declined. Partly through necessity I found myself testifying to the drunken stranger at the wheel, asking such elementary questions as: "Are you a Christian?"

To my delight he slowed to a crawl, pulled off the pavement, and turned the key. It was one of those quiet, crisp nights with full moon streaming down -- a good night to pray. And pray I did, for that was all I knew to do.

"Have you ever been saved?" I asked.

"I promised my wife before I left Fort Worth that I would not touch a drop tonight, and she is on her knees praying for me right now." His voice broke and he bowed over the steering wheel.

"Maybe we could pray too," I continued. "God can answer your wife's prayer and deliver you from this awful sin." Soon he was weeping loudly -- then shouting! He threw the flask and the cigarettes out the window and testified to God's grace, sober as could be.

I did not lead him to Christ alone. Neither did his wife. It took the both of us working together in an unseen and unknown partnership. Likely few of us ever see people saved without the help of another. We are laborers together -- with Him!

* * *

Hog-Killing Time

Hog-killing time always filled our childish hearts with the excitement of the unusual, the unexpected. Routine ranch chores were shunted aside. New adventures beckoned. Experts at butchering were always advertising their abilities, and novices were always offering sage advice. But work spoiled it all! One of the distasteful tasks usually assigned to me was that of rubbing sugar-cured salt into the freshly trimmed hams. Hours on end I would press the brown grains by the handfuls into the bulky chunks. My frequent pauses were prodded with such advice as: "The salt in the bag will never help the ham in the smokehouse. . . . Rub the salt into the meat or the ham will spoil and the salt will lose its saltiness."

And we proved it months later when each breakfast plate was loaded with bright red slabs of tasty ham, circled by halos of red ham gravy, flanked by hot, brown-backed biscuits and ribbon cane syrup.

I recall that advice anew today: "The salt in the bag will never help the ham in the smokehouse."

And Christians whom Jesus called salt will never save the world by staying shut away from the world. God did not design that the Church should remain behind closed doors, as was the case before Pentecost, but that the Church should penetrate the world and save it, as was the case at Pentecost and beyond. This will be our finest hour if we will penetrate, as did Paul, Luther, Wesley. With salty saints it is penetrate or perish.

* * *

Bottled Up or Poured Out?

Let's suppose that when the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost the 120 stayed a while longer in the Upper Room. Matthew led them in a popcorn testimony meeting. John led them in singing a few snappy choruses. James made some announcements. Andrew sang a solo. Thomas took the collection -- maybe two of them. Peter preached that masterful message recorded in Acts 2. Then Philip dismissed them, saying, "Everyone come back next Sunday and we will do this all over again." Then they all went home, worked a week and were back next Sunday.

What would have happened? The Church of Jesus Christ would have been stillborn. Pentecost would have been a pitiful failure.

Actually what did happen was that they took their service to the people. Somewhere about the middle of Acts 2:4, the 120 got out of that Upper Room and went down into the streets of Jerusalem to continue their singing, testifying, preaching, rejoicing. Three thousand were saved! How could 3,000 have been saved if they had stayed in the Upper Room? The next time the secretary reported another 5,000 had been converted. Then the Church began to grow! The revival spread like a prairie fire in a high wind.

Whenever the Church has observed this pattern, she has made progress. Wherever she has changed it, she has failed. If the people are not coming to where the church services are -- then let's take the church services to where the people are.

The gospel must be poured out all week rather than bottled up on Sundays. Our neighbors are lost! Let's take the good news to them -- man-to-man and house-to-house. If we do, we will win them. If we do not, we will lose ourselves.

* * * * *

06 -- WHEN A NATION KNEELS

I . . . will heal their land. II Chron. 7:14

* * *

A Prayer for Our National Leaders

God, bless the leader of our nation today.

Bless him with courage to face his adversaries. May he not cross swords over petty differences while gigantic issues are thus avoided. May he have rock ribbed convictions of integrity, honesty, responsibility. Give him an inner tallness that will not stoop to the low level of little men with shriveled souls. Teach him when to say yes and no. Help him not to be swayed by expediency. Deliver him from his friends with whom he must oft disagree to keep in step with Thy will. And when his choicest advisers fail, may he find in Thee an unfailing Guide.

Bless him daily with fresh wisdom from Thine altars. May he see the utter folly of leaning on his own wisdom and understanding. Wilt Thou reveal to him Thy will in matters great and trivial. Grant him the good sense to ask for Thy help. Be pleased to give him a ready insight into the problems stacked before him. Give him a clear view of duty -- and a delight in performing it.

Bless him with renewed strength for recurring responsibilities. When myriad tasks clamor for his attention, may his shoulders be strong to bear the burdens of his high office. May his hand on the pilot wheel be steady as he guides our ship of state through heavy seas of political upheaval, the threatening storm of atomic annihilation, the hidden rocks of economic ruin.

Bless him with a calm sense of personal forgiveness and the fullness of Thy Holy Spirit. Make him at once a servant of God and of the people. Make him a channel of Thy blessings to all nations.

In the worthy name of Christ we pray. Amen.

* * *

The Intoxicated Cat

Jack Barron tells the story of a man who played a trick on his cat by mixing whiskey with the milk in the saucer. The cat began to dance around like mad, stagger in circles, and finally fell in

a heap in the corner and went to sleep. Soon the cat began to lose his hair. He acted weirdly and looked a fright. Someone wrote the newspaper a letter about the affair and the letter was published. Soon letters from everywhere began pouring in, condemning the man for his inhuman treatment of dumb animals. Readers denounced the owner of the intoxicated cat with suggestions of cruel punishment for a cruel man who fed liquor to his cat. Give an animal liquor and you are considered cruel. But give a man liquor and you are considered sophisticated. Let an animal stagger, reel, act foolish, fall in a drunken stupor and immediately aroused readers from coast to coast howl in protest. But let a man stagger, reel, act foolish, fall in a drunken stupor, and we simply ignore it. We condemn the man who gives liquor to his cat, but we vote for the man who legalizes the sale of liquor to your son and daughter. We write letters to complain about someone offering liquor to an animal, but we offer it to our children through the magazines, on the billboards, in the newspapers, and in mile-long letters in the sky. It is not fit for your cat but it is just the thing for your son and daughter!

How crazy can we get? When will the good people, the sane people, the ordinary people untie their tongues about this senseless corruption of our fine youth? When will you begin your personal crusade to vote out the wets and close up the stills and sober up the world before it is too late? I have already begun! Will you join me?

* * *

The Cycles of Civilization

The highways of human history are cluttered with the wreckage of civilizations. They have flourished, decayed, died, and their empty carcasses -- punctuating the past -- are ominous warnings to the present. It has been suggested that civilizations rise and fall in a set cycle of eight steps:

1. From bondage to spiritual faith
2. From spiritual faith to courage
3. From courage to liberty
4. From liberty to abundance
5. From abundance to selfishness
6. From selfishness to apathy
7. From apathy to dependency
8. From dependency to bondage again

In the case of American civilization it was the first step which caused her forefathers in Europe to look from their fetters to America with spiritual faith. In step two we see their courage

to build a strong society in the eighteenth century. Step three pictures the liberty this courage produced. Step four depicts a hundred years of abundance. Step five portrays the self-centeredness after World War I. Step six points out the apathy which set in on the heels of World War II, ushering the American people now into step seven: an increasing dependence upon a growing, centralized welfare government which this apathy has allowed. According to history, when this seventh step has run its brief course, America will gradually -- then suddenly -- plunge into the fatal eighth step: bondage. This is already apparent in the curbing of certain basic freedoms which will ultimately lead into subjection and slavery.

Reformation is imperative -- but impossible unless based on transformation. When a nation is sick because of sin in the heart, it must be healed by spiritual revival in the heart. Only genuine repentance can save America -- or any other nation on earth. Our hope is in God!

* * *

National Repentance

This slogan appeared on an outdoor bulletin board on a church lawn some time ago:

"In case of atomic war this church will be open for prayer. However, it will be too late then, so why not come next Sunday?"

What would you do if you heard on your radio that your city was the target for an atom bomb already launched halfway around the world which would blast you to eternity in ten minutes? Three places would immediately be jammed with people: (1) the highways choked with cars trying to get away; (2) the cellars crammed with people seeking shelter from the blast; and (3) the churches packed with people trying to pray.

Let us sincerely hope that this never happens! Indeed, it will not happen if our nation and our world will kneel before God now and repent, and beg His forgiveness -- much as we would do if we knew we had ten minutes to live.

What a wonderful spectacle it would be to see our nation on its knees out of pure love for God and His work! What a joy it would be to hear our national leader call us to prayer daily, and set the example before us! To know that our legislators have an old-fashioned prayer meeting before work each morning! To discover that each local official kneels for prayer each day! To find that each school, club, labor union, and business establishment prays at the beginning of the day! Is anything more important than national repentance today?

* * *

The Price Tags of Peace

Wars are more expensive these days. Someone has suggested that in Caesar's day it cost about 75c to kill a man in war. Spears were not expensive. By Napoleon's time the price had gone up to about \$3,000 per corpse on the battlefield. In the Civil War the cost climbed to \$5,000. In

World War I the body-count cost soared to \$21,000, and in World War II the figure stood at \$50,000 per man killed in battle. How much will it cost to kill a man in the third world war? Some estimates are a million dollars; some two million. Maybe it will be a little cheaper on a wholesale basis. Cities come "cheaper by the dozen." And while we are figuring the cost of killing, remember that money is not the only costly thing about fighting. War is expensive.

Peace, however, is more expensive -- in a subtle sort of way. The price tags of peace must include:

1. A grass-roots revival of prayer, Bible reading, Sabbath observance, church loyalty, honesty, and all other spiritual values. Peace begins in our own hearts.

2. A renewal of the family altar, the family circle, the family life. Parental authority under God must climb back into the saddle. The Christian home must replace the pagan home. Peace begins in our own homes.

3. A local church vitality which will make religion vibrant, church loyalty spontaneous, personal evangelism customary. Peace begins in our own local churches.

4. A preaching which annoys complacency, disturbs sinners, arouses a community conscience, and challenges all to the holy way. Peace begins in our pulpits.

5. A surging, awakening spirit among the masses which demands justice, makes lawmakers tremble, urges action on the part of officials, cleans away social evils, and spreads the message of full salvation to the uttermost parts of the globe. Peace must clean up the home base first.

Of course peace is more expensive than war, because its price tags cannot be paid with money. Money cannot buy some things: like peace.

* * *

Barleycorn's Bill of Rights

Is it right to shoot a mad dog because he gives his disease to one person, yet to license "respectable" saloonkeepers to sell the "disease" of alcoholism to millions?

Is it right for the state to license a liquor store, and then put the man in jail for drinking legal liquor?

Is it right to sell a man a legal drink which causes him to murder his brother, and then put him in the gas chamber for doing it?

Is it right to legalize the sale of intoxicants which make criminals and paupers, and then tax ourselves to take care of the wretched society which they produce?

Is it right to advertise and encourage drunkenness at a time when about one-half of the automobile accidents are alcohol-related?

Is it right to waste a billion pounds of grain to produce alcoholic beverages while a billion people in the world are hungry for that grain?

Is it right to beg the public for money to fight the diseases of cancer, heart trouble, and tuberculosis, and at the same time sell a more deadly "disease" of drunkenness in a falsely advertised package?

Is it right to ask God's protections on our homes and our family, and then vote Satan's curses of alcohol into our homes to wreck them?

* * *

A Killer is Loose in Our Town!

A killer is loose in our town! He walks the streets by day and by night. No policeman dares lock a hand cuff on him. No one has courage to swear out a warrant for his arrest.

This killer is a sly one. He does not wear a mask. He carries no gun or switchblade. Yet I read every week headline stories telling ghastly horrors of his fresh, bloody crimes.

Worse still, this killer is a respectable businessman in our community. He drives a long, expensive car and lives in a mansion and has a fat bank account. I pass his place of business every day -- several times some days -- and see him through the window. He is big and handsome and jolly. Lots of customers come to see him. They come often. Old women and young people trade there. Sharp dressers and bums buy his wares. I see teen-agers and even little children hanging around the entrance, laughing at his jokes.

This killer hides behind the law. His business is strictly legal. The voters protect him. The state legislature protects him. The Constitution of the nation protects him -- swaggering murderer that he is! But the Holy Bible has outlawed him, and God in heaven has already condemned him to a speedy and divine justice for his crimes -- even as history curses him without mercy.

This killer, you see, is the liquor dealer in our town, with his vast murder-machine killing people for money. His victims are dying and dead all about us. Some I have buried already. Others I shall bury tomorrow. Will he enter your home for his next victim? Or mine? I hope not, but he may. He will if he can. Shall we wait until then to start fighting back? Not I. I am in the fight right now! Will you join me? Now?

* * *

It's Not Too Late -- Yet

While Thomas Jefferson was writing the Declaration of Independence, Edward Gibbon was writing *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The nation that was being born was being warned, lest the Americans die as the Romans died. The historian's account of the nation that died fifteen hundred years ago reads like last night's newspaper. Here are his five reasons for the death of the Roman Empire:

1. Their rapid increase of divorce
2. Their constant increase of taxation
3. Their mad craze for pleasure
4. Their building of gigantic armaments
5. Their downgrading of vital religion

With a heritage that Rome never had, Americans are blindly taking the same tragic steps to the same ultimate oblivion. Liberalized divorce laws undercut the dignity and sanctity of the home, the basic unit of strength. Legalized adultery is still adultery though glamorized by Hollywood and the moral-trash stands.

Taxation without representation once made Americans fighting mad, but now people willingly work to the middle of May each year just to pay their taxes, before they start working for themselves. Were the Romans ever as pleasure -- bent as the Americans are? Indeed, the current craze of the free world is seen in its fascination of base perversions, bumper-to-bumper weekends, madness for the gridiron and the arena and the track and the diamond, the spree with the bottle and the dice and the dope and the film.

Do these things not even warn us? Alarm us? Are America and other freedom-loving nations immune?

May God give us wisdom to see that our fiercest enemy is the enemy within: sin. When nations down grade Jesus Christ and outlaw prayer and make fun of the Bible and replace vital religion with shallow sophistication, there is tragedy ahead. Let the American people -- and all the other peoples of all the other nations-repent and turn back to God. It is not too late -- yet!

* * *

Etching Our Epitaph

In his book *Civilization on Trial*, the historian Arnold Toynbee traces the rise and fall of twenty-one civilizations preceding ours, nineteen of which have destroyed themselves with atheism, materialism, socialism, and alcoholism. As civilization No. 22, we would do well to take a long look in our looking glass.

Atheism is the doctrine which already dominates about half of the people of the world under the Red flag. Many of the other half in free lands are practical atheists also.

Materialism is the natural child of atheism and the unnatural offspring of a decaying orthodoxy. When things are in the saddle, eternal verities are in the hangman's noose. Pleasure-intoxicated and dollar-happy, we have trampled truth as nineteen dead civilizations have done.

Socialism, the fine art of kidding ourselves into totalitarianism, has us by the throat -- the knife of irresponsible government ready for the kill.

Alcoholism, already our greatest social stench, is responsible for our brimstone sea of trouble, sorrow, waste, and death. Our only excuse for intoxicants is Profit with a capital P.

Let's stop etching our epitaph, and fall on our faces in repentance before God says: "It is enough."

* * * * *

THE END