

The Good News

OF THE WORLD TOMORROW

JUNE-JULY 1984



Make These Your
**GOLDEN
YEARS**

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Does Satan
Have
Your Consent?
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COVER: The eternal Creator God has a surprising perspective on old age and growing old. The special section beginning on page 2 shows how older Christians can fulfill their unique calling. Photo by Hal Finch.

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True Spirituality

What Is It—Do You Know?

By Herbert W. Armstrong

HOW OFTEN do we hear one say, "He is *so* SPIRITUAL"? Or, "Those people are not very spiritual"? What *is* true spirituality — do you know?

We need, just now, to be warned against being deceived into a false standard of spirituality. We need to examine the true scriptural standard.

Four things usually accepted as sure evidence

There are four things generally regarded as sure evidence of a spiritual mind:

- 1) Speech, noise, emotion, demonstration.
- 2) Knowledge of Scripture.
- 3) "Faith."
- 4) Rigid standard of righteousness.

It will prove interesting, and profitable, to take a brief look at each, and measure according to the scriptural standard.

1) The most commonly accepted evidence of spirituality is the way people talk or demonstrate.

Some people have deliberately cultivated spiritual-sounding language. Or, perhaps, they have unconsciously acquired the habit of using "spiritual" sounding expressions. People say, "My, isn't Brother so-and-so *spiritual*?"

Many think a church service does not amount to anything

unless there is more or less noise, mass enthusiasm and a great deal of emotion worked up and visibly expressed. They never enjoy a sermon, no matter how edifying, unless the preacher is full of certain emotional enthusiasm, fluent in the accepted spiritual phraseology and able to generate in his audience the usual emotional reactions and outbursts expected in this type of meeting. If such things are present, these folk enjoy themselves immensely, whether they learn anything really worthwhile or not.

This is not to discount or to criticize the natural emotional expression resulting spontaneously from a genuine spiritual experience, or the true spiritual language springing naturally from an honest heart. Far from it.

Some people are naturally emotional. Some are not. We shall see from the Scriptures that emotion and spiritual phrases of themselves are not the essence of spirituality. They may be the natural result, the honest and spontaneous expression of it; or, if deliberately generated and "worked up," put on for show and effect, they may be only its counterfeit. And the sad part is that those who deal in counterfeit always *insist* they have the genuine.

"By their *fruits*," Jesus said, we shall **KNOW** (Matthew 7:20).

It is important that we get a right balance.

2) The second class is well

indoctrinated. Usually these people do not believe in much, if any, noise or any spiritual manifestations. They have a great deal of head knowledge, but most of this class have a great deal of misunderstanding, and often they have queer personal theories resulting from misapplied, wrongly divided Scriptures.

They love to try to trap and corner others with the Scriptures, and especially do they delight in it if they are able to corner some minister. Arguing Scripture is their one great interest in life.

These misguided people believe their arguments, contentions and beliefs will win their eternal salvation, without real repentance, or living a surrendered, righteous life in Christ Jesus, showing the fruits of the Spirit in their lives.

3) And then there is the "faith" group. These say they are saved "by FAITH, and faith ALONE." They are not so much concerned about the Holy Spirit, and seldom mention such things as repentance, utter surrender or any need of submission and obedience to God's will and law.

Their religion never works any miracle-changes in their lives. Since "Jesus died for our sins," we do not have to obey. "Just BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is their sole condition to salvation. The invitation of the ministers of

(Continued on page 19)

Make These Your GOLDEN YEARS

*As an older Christian, you have a special calling.
Read here how to overcome the obstacles and fulfill it.*

By Norman L. Shoaf

“The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31).

So says the great God, the One who will live forever and the One who created the physical aging process in human beings.

God respects those who, further along in years, are striving to live His way in the face of the special challenges and trials with which they are confronted.

Yet how different God’s viewpoint is from that of the youth-oriented society in which we live!

Television, magazines, entertainment and advertisements tell us that young is *in* and old is *out*. Our modern idols are young, beautiful, lithe and rarely more than 30 — almost never more than 40 — years old. The generation gap widens. We are left with the impression that to grow old is to enter a wasteland of loneliness, ignorance and uselessness.

Becoming “old,” it would



seem, is to be avoided at all costs!

What a paradox! As the forces of science struggle to extend life, society in general strips from old age all the respect and honor once accorded those who had lived long lives and who had the experience, skills and wisdom to share for it.

Older people make up a significant part of the Body of God’s called and chosen people today. One in eight members of God’s Church is older than age 55. Perhaps you are one of them. If so,

read on. Your calling gives you a unique role in the Body of Christ.

And if you are not in this special group, read on anyway. You probably know several people who are, and you are responsible as a Christian for appreciating their feelings and needs and serving them.

A special group

If you are an older Christian, you are specially blessed! God says, “The splendor of old men [and women!] is their gray head” (Proverbs 20:29). You have a special place in God’s Church. These should be your golden years — the best years of your life.

However, the world we live in — Satan’s world — produces trials that are particularly hard on the elderly, especially in Western societies. Various worries and pressures beset older people, even in God’s Church, and can lead to discouragement.

Perhaps the present financial “squeeze” feels more like a stranglehold to you, living on a limited income and struggling to make ends meet each month. Perhaps

Photo by Hal Finch

you have no family nearby and no close friends, and fight desperate bouts with loneliness.

Maybe your health is not what it once was, and you are forced to face your mortality in pain or merely by not being able to do what you want. You may even have a gnawing feeling of uselessness — you just don't feel wanted and wonder sometimes what you are doing in the world.

How can you fight — and win — battles such as these?

What is your outlook?

A major key to overcoming in this Christian struggle is to develop the right outlook on life. That outlook must be tremendously, overwhelmingly positive!

The almighty God in heaven — your holy Father — is ageless! He is "the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity" (Isaiah 57:15), and His purpose is to share that eternity with you. He deeply wants you, more than your human mind can realize.

The mighty God is "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3). You can literally rely on Him for your every need. You can cast every care upon Him, for He cares about you (I Peter 5:7). He wants you to enjoy an abundant, happy life (John 10:10), and will provide such if you will only look to Him in faith.

God has given you this life as a training ground. He has given you time in which to develop His character and qualify for His coming Kingdom.

Notice how King David, as he grew older, relied on God: "Do not cast me off in the time of old age; do not forsake me when my strength fails" (Psalm 71:9), David cried out. "Now also when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come" (verse 18).

Abraham enjoyed a long, successful life because he relied on God: "Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things" (Genesis 24:1). Whatever

state or circumstance you are in, determine to live life to the fullest — positively!

Be positive

Do you have a habit of looking back on failures in your life, like one man I knew? After this man retired he was forever lamenting all the mistakes he had made in his life, and sorry he had not accomplished more.

The result? He wandered from room to room, looking out the windows and feeling sorry for himself, until the day he died. But his real failure was that he looked backward instead of forward. He thought his life had already ended when he reached a certain age. And after all, isn't that what society had told him?

Live in the present and look to the wonderful things you can do now and in the future if you will only apply yourself. You say you're too old to change? Change is the name of the game in the Christian life! Make this your motto: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). You're never too old to gain new knowledge and accomplish even more.

Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong, now in his 92nd year, is a tremendous case in point. He has often remarked on the happy, abundant life he enjoys. Why is he happy? Because he has applied himself, with God's help, and can look back on great achievements in his life, and is looking forward to doing even bigger and better things.

God's purpose for you is that you rule the universe with Him (Revelation 21:7). That means an eternity of extraordinary accomplishment. You need to keep that in mind and ingrain a positive attitude into your character now. There is no human alive who cannot improve and grow, especially with the direct, loving assistance of our powerful Father.

God will even renew your strength and give you new vigor for life: "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, nei-

"When you are older, you must look back on the things you have done, not the things you missed. In other words, take a positive approach to life. The future is positive — and that is something to bear in mind."

Alfred Mayhew, 88
Maidstone, England



"The most satisfying thing now is that the years have helped in having a better understanding of, sympathy with and ability to acquaint with others, whether of the same age group, younger people or children."

Roy North, 79
Calgary, Alberta

"It is essential that older people keep their minds active. I believe it is vital that you have a hobby. And there are always people around who need help, and active elderly citizens can get themselves involved."

Elizabeth Mayhew, 66
Maidstone, England



"One thing I wish younger people knew about older people and old age is that older people understand young people's problems. Older people remember that they were once young, too. And they would like for young people to come to them and talk about problems. From our experience we can help them. They shouldn't be afraid."

Ruth Barksdale, 70
Brooklyn, New York

"I would like for the young to know that we elderly love them very much and we desire to share in their happiness — that we appreciate gestures of love, even a smile or a hello."

Eglantine Trottier, 74
Point-aux-Trembles, Quebec



"I believe older people can avoid discouragement by encouraging others. Get involved, be friendly, give of oneself, be humble and in general have a Christian attitude. Attend Church activities and, above all, practice God's spiritual law, which is the law of love. The results will be joy, peace, happiness, fulfillment and encouragement."

Howard Stein, 69
Vista, California

"When young people look at older folks, they should take the time to realize that they, too, will one day be old and that they will, in the very near future, be replacing us as the older generation. Time goes so quickly. You are old before you know it. We were young once, too. And it was only yesterday."

Helene Viard, 84
St. Andre Les Vergers, France



"We have gone through years of experience. Our past trials have made us aware of our errors and misjudgments. As a result, our past adds to our present strength. We are using these experiences as learning processes to help younger people."

Lila Stein, 65
Vista, California

ther faints nor is weary. There is no searching of His understanding. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength.

"Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord [this means you!] shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:28-31).

Much of it is in the attitude you take toward life. God will provide your every need and help you overcome every obstacle (Matthew 6:25-33).

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Remember God's calling. He specially chose you to actively assist in the most important job in the final days of this age. And God doesn't make mistakes. He knew and knows exactly what He is doing. You can grow in grace and knowledge, develop talents, overcome, endure to the end and be born into God's Family at the return of Christ.

Get involved

What part are you to play in the Church and work of this end time? How can you become more involved?

Overall, concentrate on giving and not getting. Don't occupy your mind with your problems — your bills, your loneliness, your illness. Let God take care of those things — you concentrate on what you can do for others.

Share as much as possible. Perhaps you are not capable of rendering financial assistance. Maybe you can't volunteer for work projects. But you can maintain a cheerful attitude for the benefit of those around you.

"Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good

word makes it glad" (Proverbs 12:25). Remember the incredible future awaiting us in God's Kingdom, and keep on hand a large supply of those "good words" with which to encourage others. A kind word can work wonders for someone who is down.

If you are close to God through Bible study, prayer, meditation and, if your physical condition permits it, fasting, you will have real godly confidence, and this will radiate to others. You will remember that Jesus Christ overcame the world (John 16:33), and that you are on His side.

You will face your trials with courage, persistence and a stiff resolve to obey God in all things. And think of the fine example you will set for others.

Do you feel that you don't support God's work enough? You simply don't have the money to make the large offerings you wish you could, and you feel like you are not doing your part?

Well, never underestimate the power of prayer. You can do more with one deeply felt, believing prayer than a hundred others can do with a hundred half-hearted offerings. James said, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

The Bible is filled with records of what believing prayers accomplished for God's people. God hears such prayers and answers. Perhaps you even have more time to devote to prayer than those who must work or who have more family responsibilities to take care of.

Set a right example

Paul devoted a whole section of one of his epistles to you as an older person: "Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine: that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things — that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet,

chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed" (Titus 2:1-5).

This is no small responsibility!

You are to develop love, patience, temperance and the other fruits of God's Spirit. Your behavior is to literally be holy, as befits a saint. And you are to set a good example, to teach younger people the right way to live. Your age or situation in no way excludes you from an active part in the work of God's Church!

In short, it is your duty to let people around you know what it means to be truly Christian. The help you give your fellowmen, your encouraging example, your

cheerful words, your contagious smiles, your confident attitude, your prayers and your faith — all this is well within your means. You are never too old to sow these good seeds.

Notice this combination promise-command from God: "Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing [in God's Spirit, in Christian works]" (Psalms 92:13-14).

Strive to truly make these your golden years — the most productive, most useful, most interesting and happiest years of your life! □

God and the Hoary Head

God's approach to old age is surprising! Here's how older Christians can lead more productive and rewarding lives.

By Gary King

"Every day I pray that I will die!" The speaker was an elderly woman confined to a wheelchair. Life in an "old-folks' home" had become unbearable for her.

She was lonely, bored and in poor health. Her old friends were dying one by one. Her family didn't visit anymore. She had no reason to go on living.

Or did she?

Is it God's desire that older people waste away their final years of human life staring blankly at television screens? Are people of no value once they

reach 65 or 55 or 45, or whatever age society sets as the age after which people are considered to be washed up?

The answers, if more widely known, would bring comfort and hope to millions of senior citizens!

God's attitude

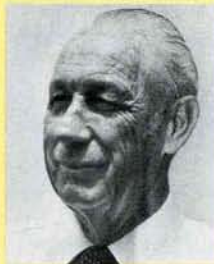
Age has never been a problem for God. After all, who is older than the Eternal, the "Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7:9)?

God's approach would surprise many in this youth-oriented society, where people with perfectly good skills and experience are often pushed into retirement.

Many of God's people through-

"It is extremely necessary to have a schedule and to think about what you will be doing with your time. Search out ways to help others and to make them happy. There is no better way to prove to yourself that you are still useful."

Andre Cuisiner,
77
Paris, France



"We don't feel old as young people think of old. Time seems to move so slowly when looking into the future and seems to have moved so quickly when looking at the past. Young people would do well to realize old age comes to all of us sooner than we expected."

Walter Schuricht,
69
Ojai, California

"Young people can be a great moral comfort, a true beam of sunshine, to those of us who are no longer young, by simply paying a bit of respect and attention to us."

Reine Cuisiner,
77
Paris, France



"For some, elderly people seem out of phase, behind the times. They should know that current accomplishments wouldn't have been possible except for the tenacity of the elderly who, in spite of the rudimentary means, have with stubbornness and wisdom accumulated the knowledge and sources of technological progress."

Louis Besnard,
74
Bebeil, Quebec

"It's hard to put a kid's head on a man's shoulders. But I wish they could realize what we've been through. We've been down the road, you know. And I would hope that our example would give them some idea of what it's like."

Carl Mollonex, 72, Highland, California



"I wish youngsters could understand that age allows for experience and that older people who try to guide them are doing so to help them avoid the problems and hurts that the older person knows lie along the way in life. Experience is the best teacher, but that experience does not have to be the youngster's own personal experience."

Thomas Faunce, 67, Santa Barbara, California

"An important point for older people to remember is that their lifetime has been given to them as a gift. Always going back to what has been can and does often lead to discouragement. They should focus on things ahead of us, especially as Christians, to learn more of God's ways."

Hans Mayer, 72, Queens, New York



"In my youth we were more family oriented, and our pleasures and recreation were home-centered. Mothers were at home when children were there. Fathers took their responsibility seriously. Material things were far less important."

Virginia Faunce, 66, Santa Barbara, California

out history were chosen for important tasks when they were of advanced age. For instance, Moses was 80 and Aaron was 83 when they were directed to lead Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 7:7). Abraham was 75 when God called him out of his country for a great purpose (Genesis 12:1-4). Noah certainly could claim senior citizenship — he was 600 years old when the Flood was upon the earth (Genesis 7:6).

God still calls older people to play a vital role in His work, and each individual is placed there for an important reason, regardless of age or handicaps (I Corinthians 12:18). God tells us, "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness" (Proverbs 16:31). Many dedicated Church members are in their 70s, 80s or 90s — a handful are more than 100 years of age.

Why would God call or work with someone up in years? Precisely because of the person's years, in part, and the wisdom and experience those years have produced.

As Titus 2:1-5 explains, older Christians have a tremendous capacity for teaching and setting right examples.

Younger people, when was the last time you tapped the reservoir of experience that belongs to older men and women? I still remember many of the stories told to me by my grandmother, a former schoolteacher. As a small boy, I loved to go for walks with my grandfather, holding his strong, calloused hand, while he shared with me his many experiences as a blacksmith.

God commands us to listen to the wisdom of our elders (Proverbs 23:22-23). Leviticus 19:32 commands, "You shall rise up before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord." When we visit the elderly, we should treat them with respect and profit from their wisdom. God will not tolerate dishonor (I Timothy 5:1).

Failure to follow these principles can result in dire conse-

quences. I Kings 12, for instance, tells the story of Solomon's son Rehoboam, who was faced with the difficult decision of whether to maintain the high taxes that had burdened the nation of Israel during his father's reign. At stake was the nation's loyalty (verses 3-4).

Wisdom rejected

After requesting three days to consider the matter, King Rehoboam first consulted with the old men who had served Solomon: "How do you advise me to answer these people?" And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever" (verses 5-7).

Rehoboam was not satisfied with the voice of experience, however. The advice of the young men, faulty though it was, was more to Rehoboam's liking: "Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, 'Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, "Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us" — thus you shall say to them: "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist! And now, whereas my father laid a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!"' So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king directed, saying, 'Come back to me the third day.' Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the counsel which the elders had given him" (verses 8-13).

The result was a civil war in which the nation of Israel split into two separate countries, with the larger being under the rule of Jeroboam (verses 19-20). It would have paid to heed the advice of the elderly.

A productive time of life

Is it God's will that we shut down once we reach a certain
(Continued on page 21)

If You Had a Boss Like Mine

One of our local supermarkets has installed computerized cash registers. The registers are supposed to operate at the speed of light if everything is working well.

One day recently it wasn't.



Something wasn't interfacing with something else, and the computers were making all kinds of mistakes. Consequently, the line of customers was getting longer and angrier, and the hapless cashiers were becoming more and more frustrated.

By the time the old gentleman in front of me reached the head of the line, he was beside himself with impatience. As the register buzzed, clicked and flashed in a futile attempt to make sense of its own signals, the old fellow had had enough.

"Last time I shop here!" he

growled at the beleaguered but innocent cashier.

"Good!" snapped the frustrated young woman.

The man slammed down his items and stormed out of the store.

"You shouldn't have said that," remarked the other cashier. "You know the management

as-little-as-possible approach seems to be most common today.

Perhaps you are like that.

"Yes," you'll say, "but if you had to work where I do — if you had a boss like mine —." Well, OK, there is that side to it. Indeed, many employment situations are hard to get excited about. Conditions are uncomfortable. Wages are low. The work is boring, and the management is selfish and unreasonable.

Obviously, nobody chooses to work in a situation like that. But we can't always choose. Sometimes an employee has little choice but to put up with the difficult conditions, because any job is better than none at all.

Maybe you are in that position. If so, what should your attitude be? Have you no choice but to join the ranks of grumbling, mumbling, turned-off, resentful people who hate every minute they spend at work and who look forward only to quitting time?

Does the Bible say anything about that? It ought to. Most of us who work spend between a quarter to a third of our waking hours at our place of employment. That is a large portion of our lives — lives that should be spent overcoming and building character.

The Bible and the worker

The Bible *does* have something to say about work — quite a lot, in fact.

We recognize that not all our readers are free to act. They live in countries where unemployment is rife, or maybe in the developing Third World coun-

doesn't allow us to be rude to the customers."

"Who cares what they think? This is my last day anyway. I'm starting a new job next week."

"Lucky you," said the other girl. "Wish I was."

A typical attitude

Unfortunately, these young women are typical of many workers. They are miserable at their jobs. Certainly, some companies are filled with happy employees eager to do a fair day's work, but such places seem to be the exception. Rather, the halfhearted, do-

tries where jobs — any jobs — are few and far between. Or perhaps because of age and lack of education, a change for the better is almost impossible.

So if you aren't happy at work, or if you are trapped in an employment situation that is far from ideal, this article is for you.

First, remember this: It is not a sin if, through no fault of your own, you cannot be what this world calls successful.

Some in New Testament times were called into God's Church while they were slaves, and slavery is surely the most undesirable of all employment situations. Paul's advice to these people was that they should gain their freedom if they could, but if not, they should not be concerned about it (I Corinthians 7:21).

The same can be said to you if you are in a bad employment situation. Get out of it — improve yourself — if you can. But if you can't, you need not feel that you are a failure. Valuable "growing time" need not be squandered in self-pity and frustration.

The Bible tells us, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Why? Because "there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going" (same verse).

Anything you are going to learn and anything you are going to do — or, what is more important, any character you are going to build — has to be done while you are alive. Therefore, the time you spend at work had better be used constructively. That doesn't only mean getting ahead and making money.

God wants you to inherit eternal life and a level of achievement and prosperity beyond the wildest dreams of even the most successful business tycoons.

But before He gives you that kind of life, He needs to know you will use it properly. There will be no room for dishonesty, laziness, selfishness and smoldering resentment in the Kingdom of God. These things must be over-

come, with God's help, now. The apostle Paul once wrote some advice to Titus, the minister in charge of the church on the island of Crete. The Cretans had a bad reputation for laziness and dishonesty (Titus 1:12). The members had to overcome this.

"Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters," wrote Paul, "to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things" (Titus 2:9-10).

Yes, but, some of the Cretans may have thought, the way my boss speaks to me, it's all I can do not to be rude in return. And why should I be honest when everybody else where I work steals all the time? And I get paid whether I work hard or do nothing, and everybody else does as little as possible.

But it isn't just a case of pleasing your boss. While it is good if those over you consider you to be a reliable employee, that should not be your main reason for being that way.

"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh," wrote Paul to the church at Colosse, "not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God" (Colossians 3:22).

You aren't just going to work to serve people who may not appreciate you. You should also have the attitude that you are working for God. He always appreciates honest, hard work, and He will reward it.

So Paul continues to the Colossians: "Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ" (verses 23-24).

Paul wrote something very similar to the people of the church at Ephesus: "Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers,

but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free" (Ephesians 6:5-8).

Who you really work for

It's clear, isn't it? An employment opportunity — any employment opportunity — provides a chance to show *God* what kind of worker you are.

Are you honest, or do you steal your employer's goods? What about his time? Are you late? Do you quit early? Do you try to give him value for your wages? Do you try to respect him, even if he is hard to get along with?

You should! "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh" (I Peter 2:18).

The Bible shows us we should see beyond the immediate problems. The character you are building will stand you in good stead in your future responsibilities in the Kingdom and government of God. If your work gives you many hours a week to build that character, thank God for it, and don't waste the time.

Work as if you are working for Jesus Christ Himself. You can be sure He is watching.

Don't succumb to the temptation of joining the millions of frustrated people who have to drag themselves to work each day. Watch your attitude — not the clock! A Christian whose sights are set on the Kingdom of God can make even the most tedious of jobs an opportunity to overcome laziness, selfishness, resentment and dishonesty.

Why waste a quarter to a third of your life?

Ask God to help you rise above the difficult circumstances.

Then one day you will hear your *real* boss — Jesus Christ — tell you the words you want to hear most: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). □



Every human being is just naturally interested in his — or her — own things.

He knows nothing else!

He is interested in his own pleasures. His own happiness. His own profit. His own importance. Charm. Effectiveness. Success. Friends who mean a lot to him.

Often, he is concerned for others only when he is reminded that he should be, and then it is because doing nice things makes him feel like a better person. A small sacrifice or a charitable act becomes a means of self-exaltation. To do something nice for others makes him feel good, and makes others admire him.

Yet, in his own mind he thinks he has "love." Truly, as God's Word tells us, man's heart is deceptive above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9).

A loveless generation

One of the saddest commentaries of our time is the lack of genuine love and concern for other members of the human race.

Almost everyone suffers from the loneliness of being shut out from the thoughts and actions of others.

Loneliness has come to be a major problem in our modern way of life. It has probably been the cause of more delinquency, destructive acts and desperate behavior than any other single factor.

As Norman Roston wrote in the article "The Ones Who Wait," published several years ago in *The Saturday Evening Post*: "You can see them [the unloved] in the city or town, men or women, the young and the old, gathering in the late afternoons or evenings, strolling in the streets, or wandering through stores or the parks, or sitting on park benches, or heading for bars. They are in search of others, the

Photos by Hal French

Are You Expressing TRUE LOVE?

Everyone thinks he knows what real outgoing love is — but few do. Even fewer realize the vital importance of expressing it.

By Jack R. Elliott



unnamed, the yet-to-be-found, the hour-long or night-long companions. And the numberless unseen who merely wait alone in separate rooms, in small, desperate rooms, their hope behind, accepting defeat. These are the ones who have somehow missed the miracle. Passed by while others were chosen.

"Perhaps the saddest of these are the aged and ill, betrayed by the world, forgotten by kin. The living turn cruelly and irrevocably away from the dying. And love, the root of life, withers.

"I don't know why they're keeping me alive," said the man in the sun-filled ward of the hospital, his hands flat upon the sheets, his head turned toward the window where the sun danced. "I'm not going anywhere if I get better. I've got a sister living in California, but she hasn't written for years, and I never hear from my daughters. No one visits me now except a nun sometimes, who is very nice, but I don't even know her name. *It doesn't mean anything.*"

"It is not merely a matter of age. The loveless exist wherever life may be. They are the obviously scarred or the seemingly well, the wounded with the scar hidden; they are married or single, in and out of careers, in and out of marital beds or motel adventures, all touched by that shadow of having been denied, forgotten, unbled."

This is a pitiful, sad commentary on real life! Perhaps you feel that you are being left out of the affection and concern of others.

But what are you doing for others? How about you? Do you have any loved ones going hungry for a word of encouragement, a note or visit that says you care about them?

Truly, outgoing love is in desperately short supply in this generation. If you and I are not careful, we will fall right into the trap that so many people without any knowledge of God's truth are in. But if we will begin to exercise outgoing concern ourselves, our own loneliness will evaporate.

Even though this godless gen-

eration makes goodwill difficult, it is still necessary for human happiness. Life without personal warmth and goodwill is not real living.

Love absolutely necessary

People need to see a smile and receive a cheery greeting that somehow conveys interest in their welfare, with a willingness to stop and help when necessary. Such love is a vital part of any happy society.

And it will be a prominent, personal, daily quality in God's Kingdom.

Those of us who are able to see



This godless age makes goodwill difficult, but it is still vital to happiness. Life without personal warmth is not real living.

that outgoing love is a part of God's way of life, and who have chosen to come out of this world and to learn and practice God's way, may not excuse ourselves from having and practicing outgoing love and concern for others. It is an absolute requirement for any who expect to enter His Kingdom.

Those who have not demonstrated genuine outgoing concern for others in their daily lives will not enter at all (Matthew 25:31-46)! To those who do not aid the stranger, the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick and the confined, Jesus Christ will say, "De-

part from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

True love is so important that Almighty God warns those without it that they are as worthless as "sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1).

A personality devoid of outgoing love is a sick personality! It is unpleasant, unwholesome and ineffective.

On the other hand, an outgoing personality adds immeasurably to health, happiness and prosperity. It is a delight to everyone, and it will certainly make the lives of those around much brighter and more worthwhile.

The apostle Paul wrote: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (I Corinthians 13:1-2).

This knowledge comes only from the Bible, and understanding comes from God's Holy Spirit, which no one possesses naturally.

Without God's Holy Spirit, the only genuine interest we have is self-interest. Unconverted people are interested in others only in relation to what others mean to them — what they get in return.

Since this world's advisers are without God's Spirit, their writings or examples unwittingly advocate "putting it on" in order to receive. But giving in order to receive is not goodwill. It is pursuing self-profit.

All of us have heard about love and goodwill from people who don't really understand it. We have seen others' examples of what it is supposed to be, but we have received wrong information. Right knowledge was simply not available because of a lack of spiritual understanding.

Some are asleep

Yet even some who have been

baptized, have God's Spirit, know God's plan and hope to enter God's Kingdom lack this outgoing love. They just don't think about others. Their fruitless lives make it obvious that they do not actively care for others.

They intend to do right. They often think to do good works, yet seldom get around to actually doing them. They try to be nice. They often say and do pleasant things. They try to be fair.

Yet, no one is benefited. No one's life is being changed. No one's hope is lifted up. No happiness is radiated to others. No joy is spread. Instead, they are forced to rationalize, defend themselves, argue or retreat. This kind of behavior falls far short of truly outgoing love.

In fact, it is not love at all!

It is merely living up to what we feel is required of us. It is a person's way of demanding credit for being nice. It is selfish.

Goodwill or true outgoing love must come from a Spirit-led heart. Even though the heart of man is not naturally inclined to love his fellows, through God's help we can change.

And there is a lot we must do ourselves!

What can we do?

The formula for receiving God's Holy Spirit is given by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:38.

Peter said to those pricked in the heart and wanting to do something about their condition: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Repentance means turning from your human way of self-centeredness and pursuing God's way. It means repenting of breaking God's law and setting your will to obey from here on.

God will then give you His Holy Spirit, a spirit of a sound mind — wisdom by which you can intelligently love and consider others. You cannot work up goodwill by yourself.

To act like you have it is to be false. Any act, no matter how

good, is eventually discovered to be just that — acting.

On the other hand, when we receive God's Holy Spirit we do not just automatically and mysteriously become perfect. We work toward perfection — with much effort on our part — using the Spirit God gives.

God's Spirit opens our minds to realize the importance of others in our lives and our importance in theirs. The goodwill we give and receive is a vital commodity. We come to realize that fellowship of kindred spirits is most beautiful. God's Spirit also gives us the assurance that this



God's love does not
give up. When
all else has failed,
true love — outgoing
concern — will still
be going strong.

harmonious love and goodwill is worth working for.

If you would like to know more about this vital key to true outgoing love, write for our free reprint article, "How You Can Be Imbued with the Power of God." See the inside front cover for our address nearest you.

Your part

Outgoing love requires work along with willpower and determination. It is an uphill pull because human nature is not naturally outgoing.

Human nature, as influenced by Satan the devil, the "prince of

the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2), is selfish. To be outgoing in love cuts against the grain of what we have been absorbing through Satan's influence all our lives.

Wisdom to try — wisdom to correctly guide your efforts, wisdom to keep trying in spite of all adversity, wisdom to discern God's will — is an absolute necessity in learning to exercise true love.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting" (James 1:5-6).

In faith, you must stand unwaveringly on your trust and conviction.

In hope, you guide your action expecting to receive the desire you have set your heart on. This hope adds the spiritual motivation to go forward.

In love, you must act with unselfishness, with initiative and genuine concern for everyone.

These three important ingredients are added to your gift of wisdom through effort on your part. They are all important, but the most important, and the one that takes most effort, is love (I Corinthians 13:13).

Love and godly character

This is what life is all about. This is how you have your part in your own salvation.

This process of creating godly character in us is God's plan of creating children. It is His doing, but we also have our part. Besides our willpower and determination, it takes our resourcefulness, perseverance and drive.

It requires breaking old habits — habits of thinking and acting selfishly. It then requires building new habits — habits of thinking and acting in outgoing love. The old habits are deeply ingrained, just as the new habits must become deeply ingrained if they are to become part of us.

To build a habit you must do a thing over and over until it becomes automatic behavior. It has been said that we are what we habitually are, and you become

godlike when you become habitually and consistently godlike.

God is love and He acts habitually and consistently in outgoing love. That is what we are learning to do through His Holy Spirit. The basic laws of God are given for the purpose of developing godly love and goodwill. They are laws of love (I John 4:8).

The meaning

I Corinthians 13 makes it clear what true love is. The word translated "charity" in the Authorized Version does not mean "giving to the poor." Verse 3 clearly demonstrates that — read it yourself.

The Greek word translated "charity" is *agape*, not *phileo*, which is more commonly used to denote emotional love. *Agape* and *phileo* have similar meanings, but *phileo* "comes chiefly from the heart," explains *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, while *agape* "comes from the head." It means to think and act toward others with genuine concern and tenderness. It means having goodwill — feeling it deeply but intelligently.

While either word can be translated "love," the Authorized Version translators used "charity" to distinguish this intelligent, heartfelt concern (outgoing love or goodwill) from the kind of emotion that the word *love* conveys to the average person.

What true love is like

Verse 4 shows that this *agape*, this intelligent outgoing love or goodwill, is always patient with others, suffering long with any grievance received from them.

It is kind — unfailingly kind — as you will see by comparing verse 4 with verse 8.

Love never compares itself with others (II Corinthians 10:12) so that it is never envious (jealous), never vaunts itself (boasts) to get self-acclaim.

It is never puffed up (arrogant, self-important). Such puffed-up ego only shows that you have compared yourself with others and found them beneath you.

Goodwill will never behave itself unseemly (unpleasantly,

unbecomingly). Philippians 4:8 also adds information on the pleasant things we should do instead: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things."

True love seeks not its own — is not self-centered, not carnal (I Corinthians 13:5).

It is not easily provoked (aroused to anger).

It thinks no evil — does not dwell on the ugly, wicked side of others' behavior, nor is resentful or bitter.

And it never rejoices in hearing or seeing iniquity. Instead, it rejoices in truth — in wholeness (verse 6).

If a person belittles or insults you, real love never causes you to rail back, but it bears all things (forbears in all provocations). It never inflicts harm for harm, evil for evil or insult for insult.

This *agape* believes the best in all matters. It does not show unpleasantness and ill will by doubting or causing dissent, but hopes for the best in all things — is not negative.

God's love endures all things. Trials, unpleasant episodes, differences of opinion, misunderstandings do not send it off in a corner to mope or to turn away in bitterness. It does not lose friends over them. It does not give up. It never fails! When everything else has failed, true love — genuine goodwill and outgoing concern for others — will still be going strong.

Jesus Christ's example while on the cross is the one we should strive to follow. He said of all His scowling, bloodthirsty, hate-filled tormentors, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Can you still be a friend to those who hate you? Can you still have goodwill toward them? Can you still be concerned for their welfare?

You must, you know! And, you

must come to have it habitually and consistently.

How to have true love

If you want to live and act in love and goodwill, go to the Author of all that is good. Ask Him prayerfully to give you this attitude and show you the way. Expect Him to answer and to keep on giving it to you as long as you are trying to give up your old self-centeredness and striving to live God's way.

Then follow God's biblical instructions on how to behave toward others in love and goodwill. Live by the laws of love.

Your selfish human nature has always had its way in the past and will continue to crop up, so you must continue to resist self-will while you step out on faith to do God's will — goodwill!

Like a baby's first steps, your first attempts may not be very skillful. You may stumble — you may even fall. But dust yourself off, ask forgiveness and try again and again, until you habitually come to have goodwill — God's will — toward all people.

Romans 13:8-9 says: "Owe no man anything, except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

It takes work to be outgoing. You won't even think to do it without effort, and it won't be successful even then if you don't stay close to God. This also takes effort of will and energy.

Yet, this love is absolutely required by God. It is a wonderful thing to have. No one will enter His Kingdom without it (Matthew 25:31-46).

Now is the time to marshal your energy to make certain you have God's great love. Develop it and radiate it all the rest of your life. The time is short. It is later than you think! □

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

We're often told that we should pray for our enemies, but how should we do that? Surely we shouldn't pray for bad trials to come on them, yet if they are not converted, it doesn't seem we should ask God to bless them, either (John 17:9).

In Matthew 5:44, Jesus tells us, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." This scripture shows that we should pray in love that God will bless our enemies.

Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong has often remarked that he prays for his enemies and that we should, also.

Does this mean that we should pray that God will shower them with abundant riches? Or should we pray that God will bring sore trials upon our enemies so that they might come to repentance?

Jesus does not specify what type of blessing we should pray for. Only God in His infinite knowledge and wisdom knows what type of blessing our enemies should receive based upon their actions and needs.

Of course, their greatest blessings would come if they would repent and seek God. But only God can grant repentance and only He knows how best to bring it about (Romans 2:4).

In John 17:9, Jesus set the example for us that we should not pray for this world's system. God is not going to save the system that humanity, under Satan's sway, has established in this world, and we should not pray for it. We should pray for God's Kingdom and for those who are now the embryo of that Kingdom. This scripture does not say, however, that it is wrong to pray for our enemies.

What does the prophecy of Matthew 24:19-20 mean?

Jesus said: "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those

with nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath."

These verses are part of a prophecy that was fulfilled in type in A.D. 70. The situation would be especially hard on those with small children and nursing babies. (Jesus Christ used the word *woe* in verse 19 compassionately, while in Matthew 23:13, He pronounced woe on the religious authorities as a thing deserved.)

Perhaps we can best understand why Jesus said to pray that their flight from Jerusalem be not in the winter or on the Sabbath (verse 20) by noting what occurred in A.D. 70.

According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Jerusalem was then divided into several warring factions. One faction wanted to surrender to the Romans and avoid destruction. Another faction was determined to fight the Romans no matter how hopeless the outcome seemed.

Those who were determined to fight would not allow the rest of the people to go out of the city to surrender to the Romans. The only way one could get out was to go out in the morning or afternoon with hoes or rakes, as if carrying on with the regular daily duties in the fields. One could not take extra clothing, belongings or small children without being noticed and captured.

On the Sabbaths or in the winter, people would not be going out of the city to work in the fields. If the time to flee came then, few if any could escape. Thus Christians were to pray that the time to flee would not fall in the winter or on the Sabbath.

The time is coming again when, during the Great Tribulation, Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies. Christians will again have to travel to a place where they will be supernaturally protected by God to avoid the ter-

rible bloodshed prophesied to occur. Notice Revelation 12:13-14.

What is the "land Sabbath" spoken of in the Bible?

God's instruction is, "Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow" (Exodus 23:10-11).

This instruction is not a ritualistic ceremony. It has a great deal to do with developing and maintaining productive soil that will produce nourishing food year after year. The almighty Creator God promises to bless those who wholeheartedly obey His laws (read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28).

The land Sabbath God gave to ancient Israel was an intimate part of the Jubilee cycle (a period of 50 years). Each seventh year was also a year of release from all debts that had not been paid within that period of seven years. After 49 years the ownership of land, if transferred, returned to the original family (Leviticus 25:10).

Today, however, man has established his own laws concerning property rights and debt collection.

Normally, an individual must continue paying on debts incurred to banks, mortgage companies and other financial institutions. A farmer may not be able to rest all his land at one time every seven years if he is depending upon certain cash crops every year to continue to pay on his mortgage.

Therefore, the Sabbath of the land must, in today's society, be viewed as an important ecological principle. God wants us to take care of the soil, and God's people should see to it that their land receives its rest. This resting of the land may occur all at one time during the seventh year, as was the custom in ancient Israel, or a part at a time over a period of seven years. □



YOUR SPIRITUAL OLYMPICS!

*God's Word shows us many spiritual lessons
we can learn from the Olympic Games.*

By Rex J. Morgan

Excitement is now rapidly mounting worldwide as hundreds of millions of people look forward to viewing, either in person or on television, one

of the world's greatest sporting events, the Summer Olympic Games. The Games this year will be in Los Angeles, Calif.

Did you know that ancient

Games in Greece, the forerunners of the modern Olympics, are mentioned in the Bible?


During the days of the early Church, the Olympic Games were an important and famous event every four years, just as they are today.

The apostle Paul used these Games, with which most everyone of his day was familiar, to help him explain vital spiritual principles. The same principles apply to God's people today!

Olympic origins

The first known Olympic contest took place as long ago as 776 B.C. Thereafter, the Games were scheduled at four-year intervals for almost 1,200 years, until A.D. 394, when they were abolished by Roman Emperor Theodosius I after Greece lost its independence.

For the first 13 olympiads, the only event was a footrace of about 200 yards (180 meters), and the Games only lasted one day. All the contestants were



male and all ran naked. Gradually, other events such as chariot races, boxing, wrestling, the discus and javelin were added, and the duration of the Games was extended.

The Games occupied such an important position in Greek life that time was measured by the four-year interval between them — an *olympiad*. For 1,200 years, time was counted in olympiads, before years and months began to be used.

The greatest honor any Greek could attain was winning the simple branch of wild olive given to a victor in the Games. Kings competed alongside commoners; even the Roman Emperor Nero sought Olympic honors.

In time, four similar national contests developed in various parts of Greece — the Olympic, Isthmian, Nemean and Pythian Games. The Isthmian Games took place every two years in Corinth, and would have been familiar to Church members living there in Paul's time. So Paul

pointed out some striking spiritual lessons to the Corinthians by referring to these Games.

When we understand this background to these passages, they take on added light and meaning.

Strive for the prize

Let's notice, for instance, I Corinthians 9:24-27. "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?" (verse 24). Only one person in each race at the Games received the victor's wreath or garland.

"Run in such a way that you may obtain it." Paul compares our Christian life to a race and urges us to run earnestly, with the comforting knowledge that although only one person in an Olympic race can win, everyone who runs well in the Christian race can win.

In verse 25, Paul shows that every successful athlete at the Games had to exercise rigorous self-discipline. So it is at the

modern Olympics, too. The athletes who will succeed at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics will be men and women who have sacrificed many of the pleasures other people enjoy to devote countless hours of exhausting struggle, sweat and toil in training for their events.

It is interesting that the Greek word translated "competes" in verse 25 is *agonizomenos*, which literally means "agonizes." Yet these athletes went through all this just to obtain a "perishable crown." The winner's crown at the Olympic Games was made up of olive leaves, which began to wither away as soon as they were plucked.

How much more, then, ought we as Christians to discipline ourselves spiritually and agonize for our prize, a "crown of righteousness" (II Timothy 4:8), a "crown of glory that does not fade away" (I Peter 5:4)!

The life of a true Christian isn't a simple matter of coasting or cruising along effortlessly,



The Christian Marathon

By Val J. Aspenns

Herbert W. Armstrong has often said that knowledge is of no real value unless it is put to use. This is especially true in respect to spiritual knowledge.

When God reveals His truth to us, we can come away with a greater sense of commitment, dedication and resolve toward God, the work His Church is doing and the Christian way of life in general.

Or we can allow our sense of purpose and enthusiasm to go the way of the proverbial New Year's resolution, which lasts about as long as the hangover.

It's quite clear that unless we use the knowledge God gives His people — unless we apply it to our life and circumstances — it will be lost, perhaps never to be regained. There is an old motto that says, "Use it or lose it." It's simple, yet so profound.

When viewed in this light, it seems that our options are somewhat limited. We all need to make the right choice and, with God's help, go on to greater spiritual growth, no matter what obstacles or trials this life may bring to us as individuals or as the entire Body of Jesus Christ.

Paul led the way

In another time, in another setting,

a man named Paul trod this same Christian road before us. He was not unfamiliar with the trials and tests of life. In fact, few can match his record (II Corinthians 11:25-27).

Paul's life is a glowing example of how to be a Christian no matter what the circumstances, be it in poverty or wealth, in sickness or in health. If the stress of life is seemingly too much, take heart — Paul has been there. He overcame and freely gives us the benefit of his experience.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, far predated the jogging and running fad. Yet, on a number of occasions, he used an interesting analogy by comparing our calling to a race and exhorting us to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1).

To participate in this race, you don't have to be a beautifully conditioned athlete. There is no specific age qualification, and the official judge of the race — God — doesn't discriminate against women or men. But you do have to be a Christian — willing to work hard and expend a lot of effort.

The race Paul alludes to is not a short 60- or 100-yard dash over a

merely "believing in Christ" and thinking we are already saved.

Rather, living God's way is a constant struggle. It's a continuing effort to keep sin out of our lives, to seek God and be close to Him in a materialistic world that hates His ways and hurtles along in the opposite direction. It's something we have to strive for with great zeal and energy, something to "contend earnestly for" (Jude 3).

We need to drive ourselves forward with every ounce of spiritual strength and determination we have, just as an Olympic-class athlete urges and pushes his body on to achievement.

In I Corinthians 9:26, Paul alludes to the boxing events at the Games, and says that he doesn't fight like a shadow boxer, beating the air without purpose. We know

perfectly level, artificial running turf encompassed by stands filled with admiring, cheering fans.

Rather, it is more like a long-distance cross-country run winding over unpaved dirt or gravel roads as well as hard concrete, with stretches of both level ground and hilly, gut-wrenching terrain.

A long-distance run

Because of the long distance, the field of runners spreads out quickly and at times you may feel you're running all alone in this race. At other times, you see runners pass you and you're tempted to drop out in discouragement. After all, who would know or care if you gave up?

And then there's the pain of blisters or just plain fatigue. What a relief it would be to quit! There's also the double threat of heat and humidity, which can sap your strength, but you go on. Finally, you will reach the long-awaited finish line.

Only one person can come in first in a race. Jesus Christ has already done that in this spiritual marathon (Hebrews 12:2). But when you've run hard and done your best, you, too, can know you've won the race. Those who have experienced this feeling in physical races know the joy of running.

At the end of his life, the apostle Paul expressed this joy, knowing he had run his spiritual marathon well

our purpose — we know our goal of entering God's Kingdom. We need to keep our eyes on that goal and never deviate from it.

The word translated "discipline" in verse 27 ("But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection") literally means "give a black eye to." Paul realized he needed to box and "pommel" (Revised Standard Version) his own body, with stringent self-discipline, in order to ensure he stayed on the right track in his personal spiritual life.

Once again we see that a care-free and complacent attitude will not gain us entry into God's Kingdom. God wants to see that we really mean business in following His way of life. He wants to see us straining and striving to really build tough, resilient spiritual character. Paul realized that

he had to discipline himself strictly in this way "lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27).

The word translated "have preached" refers to the office of the "herald" at the ancient Greek Games. The herald had the job of proclaiming the rules of the Games and calling the competitors together and exhorting them. The word translated "disqualified" refers to a person whom the judges would reject as not having deserved the prize. See also Galatians 2:2 and Philippians 2:16.

Similarly, every one of us is urgently warned, in the message to the Philadelphia church, not to run our race in vain and end up losing our crown (Revelation 3:11).

Consider past champions

Hebrews 12:1-2 portrays another aspect of the ancient Greek Games in order to bring us further vivid spiritual lessons.

Olympic athletes receive added motivation from the awareness that they are surrounded by stadiums full of spectators spurring them on to success.

Particularly in ancient times, when success at the Games was

even more highly prized than today, all the principal leaders of the nation, as well as past heroes and champions, would be at the arena, supporting the competitors. Those in the audience would seem like a vast cloud because of the athlete's blurred vision when running as fast as he could.

Paul comments that we also "are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1). In our Christian effort, we can look to the outstanding examples set by the men and women of faith, the heroes and champions who have preceded us, such as those cataloged in the previous chapter, Hebrews 11. Meditating on these examples, keeping them in our mind's eye as we run our race, should spur us on.

Cast off the weight of sins

An Olympic athlete can't afford to carry any unnecessary weight. Heavy clothing is a slowing, hindering burden. Runners in the original Games even went so far as running naked to avoid any unnecessary encumbrances.

Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us." Sin is

and won the crown of righteousness (II Timothy 4:8).

We must race

We as Christians have been called and chosen to participate in this race for eternal life. To reject this opportunity could mean our salvation. So run we must, day by day, week by week.

Along the route we might stumble at times or have to stop momentarily at an aid station for some thirst-quenching water, but remember that Paul, who was tried and tested in much the same manner, is cheering us on. "Run," he wrote, "in such a way that you may obtain [the prize]" (I Corinthians 9:24).

We are also encompassed by a great "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) — the people of God who have successfully run before us and who now, symbolically, are encouraging us to victory.

The apostle Paul met his challenges, accomplished his work and his race. He won his crown. We, too, have a crown prepared for us. Jesus Christ tells us: "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

As we all near the end of this Christian marathon — as the road of life gets tougher and tougher, remember Paul and keep on running! □



Photos: Lanson P. Hebans, Sygma



the heavy burden that holds us back and thwarts us from doing our best in our Christian endeavor. Proverbs 5:22 compares sins to strong cords binding us down. So sins of any sort must be discovered and cast off as we speed forward in our race for God's Kingdom.

Hebrews 12:2 shows the importance of having a goal to strive for in our life, just as Olympic competitors fix their eyes on the finishing tape or the goal they have to reach. We need to always look to Jesus as "the author and finisher of our faith." He was there at the start of our individual race, showing us the way to go, and He will be there at the finish, awarding the prizes to the conquerors.

Jesus Christ is the great champion who endured in His life on earth, striving against sin "for the joy that was set before Him." He kept His eyes on the great goal of reigning in glory with His Father. Considering the example of Jesus, who "resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin," helps us avoid growing weary and faint in the strenuous, grueling contest in which we're engaged (verses 3 and 4).

Paul gives another vivid de-

scription of the intense effort we need to employ as we drive ourselves toward the goal of God's Kingdom in Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

Instruction to Timothy

Paul makes frequent references to the Olympic Games in his epistles to Timothy.

In I Timothy 4:7 he tells Timothy to "exercise yourself rather to godliness." The Greek word rendered "exercise" here is *gumnaze*, referring to the gymnastic exercises used by the Greeks of Paul's time in preparation for the Games. Paul goes on to show in the next verse that physical exercises only profit the body for a little while, but the dedicated spiritual training we undertake — the exercising of our bodies and minds after godliness — living God's way of life — is "profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

In I Timothy 6:12, Paul refers

again to the boxing and wrestling contests at the Games, and to the crowd of witnesses in the onlooking audience: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

Yet another allusion to the Games is in II Timothy 2:5: "And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."

Athletes have to strive and work hard, to "endure hardship" (verse 3), for their success, and they have to abide by the rules of the contest.

In the same way, we as God's people must labor diligently to enter God's Kingdom, and we must be obedient to the laws of the greatest judge of all — God (Genesis 18:25).

Nearing the end of his life, Paul used an Olympic Games analogy to graphically sum up his life's endeavors: "I have fought the good fight [the Greek words refer to a wrestling bout], I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7).

Paul was able to look back with satisfaction that he had run the race right to the finish and had kept the rules. Are we able to look at our spiritual lives with that feeling? Are we putting out as much effort as we can in our bold bid for the glorious prize of God's Kingdom?

In verse 8, Paul concluded, "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness," not just a wreath of fading leaves or a gold medal subject to tarnishing (see Matthew 6:19-20), "which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

Will you be numbered among the group of conquering heroes who mount the dais along with the apostle Paul to receive the glorious reward of entrance into the universe-ruling Kingdom and Family of God?

Run to win in your personal spiritual "Olympic Games"! □

Spirituality

(Continued from page 1)

this group is, "Give the preacher your hand, and the Lord your heart."

And when, later, you ask such "converts" what they did — what really happened — when they "gave the Lord their heart," they usually just look blank. They do not know. It really did not MEAN anything. It was merely a FORM. The churches of this class should be called social clubs — they are not soul-saving institutions.

4) Finally, there are those whose spirituality consists of a rigid standard of righteousness. In fact, they usually are so strict about following God's commandments that they fall into the error of keeping the strict LETTER of the law in their own strength. They are scrupulously honest, severely punctual, critically exact.

But, as Paul said of the strictest sect of his day, they are "seeking to establish their OWN righteousness," and have not "submitted to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). And they are usually harsh, stern, critical, intolerant of those who do not live up to their particular ideas of righteousness.

The true scriptural standard

Now, let us turn to God's Word, and humbly seek GOD's standard of spirituality.

Of the true spiritual mind, God says to us, through Paul, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

But HOW can you have the mind that was in Christ Jesus in YOU? Jesus says: "Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock. If anyone hears My voice and OPENS the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

And Jesus meant exactly what He said! He will come in, through His Spirit, and literally LIVE His life of true righteousness in you, if only you will surrender all of SELF and let Him IN.

"But you are not in the flesh

but in the Spirit, IF indeed the Spirit of God *dwells* IN you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, HE is NOT HIS." Unless His Spirit abides within you, living His life of true righteousness in you, you are not a real Christian! "And if Christ is IN you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Romans 8:9-10).

When God first begets us as His children, He takes us who have been proud, worldly, sensual, disobedient. His aim is to make us like Himself. This transformation (not *reformation*) is a tremendous undertaking. It requires a miracle.

God stands pledged, upon real, thorough repentance and faith in Christ (Acts 2:38), to start the performance of this tremendous miracle by putting His Holy Spirit literally WITHIN you! But God will work the complete change in your life ONLY if you are willing to SUBMIT to the process!

The FIRST condition is real, deep, thorough repentance. You will have to be willing to accept correction and repeated chastisements at His loving hands, for "whom the Lord loves He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6).

The spiritual mind is the *surrendered, yielded* mind. It is the mind that has given up all wanting its own way. It is the mind that has been CONQUERED in its rebellion against God.

It is the mind that, henceforth, is *willing* to obey God no matter what the cost, and that continually studies God's Word, not to argue and strive and corner others, but to *learn* more of God's will, and to *walk* in it!

It is a mind FILLED to overflowing with real LOVE for God and all fellowmen — even one's enemies — and that has sympathy, patience and kindness for others in their ideas and beliefs, their faults and mistakes, that speaks softly, gently, kindly, that seeks only to help and to serve. It is the mind that has DIED TO SELF.

True spirituality

The real spiritual mind can say with the apostle Paul, "I have

been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but CHRIST LIVES IN ME" (Galatians 2:20). When you can say that, then you have the mind that was in Christ Jesus.

The real spiritual mind is a SOUND mind (II Timothy 1:7)!

To those being carried away with a false and pseudo spirituality, where real manifestations of the Spirit were being counterfeited by DEMONSTRATIONS of SELF in a fanatical emotionalism, Paul, correcting them, said, "Brethren, *do not be* CHILDREN in understanding" (I Corinthians 14:20).

True, Paul said to these same Corinthians, "I wish you all spoke with tongues, BUT," he added, "*even more* that you prophesied [preached]; for he who prophesies [preaches] is *greater* than he who speaks with tongues" (verse 5).

True, Paul said to those overly emotional Corinthians, "I speak with tongues more than you all; YET," he continued, "in the church I would rather speak five words *with my understanding*, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (verses 18-19).

And also he said, "God is not the author of confusion," and, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verses 33, 40).

Let us get a proper balance, in the position of their relative *scriptural* importance.

"By their FRUITS," not by their tongues, their language, their emotion, their ability to argue, their empty profession of faith, their self-righteousness, said Jesus, shall we KNOW their true spirituality.

And the true FRUIT of God's Spirit is "love" first of all, then "joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). *These things*, expressed in living character, determine true spirituality.

These things are the expression of "the LOVE of God," which has been "poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 5:5), and thus the Holy Spirit *in us* is simply GOD'S LAW *in action* in

LETTERS

Asking for a visit

I would like to comment on "GN Focus: What Happens If I Ask for a Visit?" [March].

So many questions that were brought up in the article were some of my very own questions and fears four years ago, but after one visit I knew that these had to be true, ordained ministers of God. Suddenly I was so at ease, and the questions began to come out so easily — and many of them, as I recall.

But as the article stated, there is no follow-up unless you request it, nor any pressure put on you.

I'm so happy I asked for a visit, despite the negative vibes I started out with. I know now that it was one of the wisest decisions I've had to make, and I realize that this wisdom came from God.

Frieda Hodge
Carpentersville, Ill.

Your thoughtful article stirred up memories for my wife and me of our first visit with one of God's ministers. We must have had dozens of questions, and the minister answered every one with genuine concern and patience, respecting our thoughts.

One thing that made these visits much more profitable was that we wrote our questions down. I'm sure those who do this will never have to say, "There was something else I wanted to ask, but I just can't seem to remember."

Mr. and Mrs. David Whitney
Goffstown, N.H.

"Are You Happy as a Christian?"

In this world of increasing troubles

and unhappiness, the article "Are You Happy as a Christian" [March] was certainly timely and refreshing. It's so easy to be caught up in the moods and feelings of the society in which we live, and as a result our thoughts are not always what they should be (Philippians 4:8).

May I direct a suggestion to my fellow readers? If you make the mistake of not taking the time to look up and read the scriptures referenced in articles such as these, you have really missed a lot.

Hank Berger
Diana, Tex.

"Jesus Died for You"

I would like to congratulate George M. Kackos for his article "Jesus Died for You — Can You Live for Him?" [February]. It is one of the best articles I have read in the past three years that I have been receiving *The Good News*.

The way that the events leading to the crucifixion and death of Christ were described made them so vividly real that I could almost see it happening in front of me.

No ordinary human could have endured such pain, humiliation and ridicule without hitting back in some way.

G. Gallo
Swindon, England

Thank you for the wonderful article "Christ Died for You — Can You Live for Him?" That is the most sobering article that I ever read in my life.

While reading the article tears came to my face until I had to stop and get a towel to dry my eyes. My weak and insignificant mind really is understanding and

being able to comprehend how our Savior suffered and died for all our sins.

Christene Jefferson
Cincinnati, Ohio

I write this letter to you after having been truly humbled to tears. I truly, for the first time, have seen the incredible love that Christ has for each of us.

The horrifying ordeal that Jesus went through for me makes me look at my trials in a different light. It is sadly true that we sometimes forget that important day as though it were something out of a history book instead of being on our minds throughout our daily lives.

My personal trials now do not look so terrible in the light of what Jesus went through, not because He deserved it, but because without it we would have no hope.

R. Gramza
Milwaukee, Wis.

Christmas keeping

In response to Willard McDonald's letter about keeping Christmas [February], let me say this: For many years, I, too, asked (and applied my own answers to) the same questions. I would not "deprive my children" of the pleasure. I struggled against God's will in my life. I finally realized and had to admit that I was terribly wrong. I was putting my children *before* God. This past year we did not celebrate Christmas and we did not miss it at all. Knowing that we were pleasing to God was a wonderful substitute for the Christmas spirit!

Mary Bottinelli
Slade, Ky.

our lives, for LOVE is the fulfilling of the law.

And that, and that alone, is true Christian spirituality.

The four substitutes

REAL spiritual-mindedness is the mind of LOVE, for God is LOVE.

So let us review our four SUBSTITUTES for spirituality in the light of God's Word:

1) "Though I *speak* with the tongues of men and of *angels*, and have not LOVE, I have become as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (I Corinthians 13:1). Did you ever hear one speak with the tongues of ANGELS? Spiritual

TALK, "tongues" or "manifestations" are only a lot of wind, or a noise like beating old tin pans, *if you have not LOVE*.

2) "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and . . . ALL KNOWLEDGE," and

3) "Though I have ALL FAITH, so that I could remove mountains, but have not LOVE, I *am NOTHING*" (verse 2).

4) "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not LOVE, *it profits me NOTHING*" (verse 3).

What is it to have LOVE? The next four verses of this chapter tell. Here is TRUE spiritual-

mindedness: "LOVE is very patient, very kind." Are YOU? "LOVE knows no jealousy; love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, never selfish, never irritated, never resentful; love is never glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness, always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, always hopeful, always patient" (verses 4-7, Moffatt).

Read those four verses again, substituting your own name wherever "LOVE" appears. Try it as a test on yourself. It will tell you how truly SPIRITUAL you are. Let us seek more real, genuine SPIRITUAL-MINDEDNESS! □

Hoary Head

(Continued from page 6)

age? Should we ever stop learning and serving?

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 indicates that we should continue to grow in knowledge and character. God was highly displeased when the person with, admittedly, only one talent did not develop his full potential (Matthew 25:24-30).

How can older people lead productive, rewarding and more secure lives? Here are four ways.

1) *Take care financially.* Proverbs 6:6-8 shows us the principle of saving, by the example of the ant that busily prepares for the winter months.

In these difficult times, older people often have financial worries. Even the various social programs governments offer do not solve every problem.

The U. S. Social Security fund, for example, seldom provides enough funds to cover all expenses. It was originally intended not to replace savings or family assistance, but as a supplement.

Many older people are able to increase their income by selling their own handicrafts or by working at part-time jobs.

When senior citizens are unable to provide for themselves, their families bear responsibility for caring for their needs: "But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God. . . . But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Timothy 5:4, 8).

If the family is not able to provide, then God has instructed that the needy should be helped by means of the financial system God has set up within His Church (Deuteronomy 15:7-8, 10-11, 14:28-29, 26:12-15).

2) *Guard your health.* "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health,

just as your soul prospers," wrote the apostle John (III John 2). Taking care of one's health, if practiced over the years, will pay big dividends in later life.

We should treat our bodies with care, because they are temples of God's Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Taking care of one's health includes proper nutrition and exercise; avoiding bad habits such as smoking, excessive drinking and drug abuse; coping with stress and maintaining a balanced, happy frame of mind.

Younger people should show special respect for those seniors who struggle with infirmities and pain. I remember one woman who, when offered assistance at a senior citizens' function, protested, "I am not a cripple!" She was handicapped, but wanted to retain as much self-respect and independence as possible. We should offer help in such cases, by all means, but not push it.

We should also be acutely aware of seniors' personal sensitivities and treat older people with respect, outgoing concern and compassion.

3) *Serve.* Timothy formed in the Church a service group totally composed of widows more than 60 years of age (I Timothy 5:9). The main requirement for being part of this group was that each widow "trusts in God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day" (verse 5). Today, too, there is a real need for those who have time to pour out their hearts to God in beseeching prayer for His work and His people.

If you are able to, why not send notes of encouragement to those who need a kind word, or invite to dinner a new family in the area? When was the last time you knitted a sweater for someone's baby or gave welcome pointers to a young fellow building his first home?

There are always opportunities to serve for those who have the desire. Ask God to, according to His will, use you as a servant (Philippians 2:13).

4) *Look to God.* No amount of

savings, good health or family assistance can replace God's help, which we all need to rely on foremost.

In times of weakness, loneliness, want or pain, we all have a High Priest who understands our needs (Hebrews 4:14-16). It is powerful faith in this Redeemer, Jesus Christ, that will ultimately see every one of us, young or old, through the storms of this life.

The aged in the Millennium

In the near future, when Jesus Christ returns to set up His Kingdom, the aged will have their proper place in society. Zechariah 8:4-5 paints a portrait of peace and happiness that will become reality during the Millennium:

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.'"

There will be no generation gap then, no thousands of elderly languishing away in rest homes, their lives filled with despair. Young and old will rejoice together at the blessings of God's rule (Jeremiah 31:12-13).

If you know older people, and you surely do, remember the definition of pure religion: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

Give the elderly your time, conversation, rides, letters and service — your godly love. If you do, the rewards will be great. □

Interviews were conducted and compiled by Philip Stevens, John Borax, Earl H. Williams, Donat Picard, Marilyn Kneller, Jerold W. Aust, Hal Finch, Graemme J. Marshall, Karen Fergen and Thomas R. Delamater. Photos: Philip Stevens, John Borax, Royland Taylor, Georges Pilon, François Potevin, Philip Aust, Hal Finch, Norman Champagne and Robert Neville.

Does Satan Have Your Consent?

Since the Garden of Eden, Satan has been subtly manipulating humanity — without our consent. But you can become aware of and check Satan's influence.

By Ellis La Ravia

The subject of Satan the devil has fascinated people throughout history.

Endless speculations, legends, comic illustrations and literary classics have portrayed this supremely evil being.

And all this attention has only served to deceive and further deceive humanity about who Satan is and what he does!

As true Christians realize, Satan has deceived the entire world — even about himself (Revelation 12:9)!

Almighty God does reveal, through His Word, the reality of Satan and his devastating impact and influence on man. God shows us a great spirit being who has misled humanity and constructed an evil civilization that is destined to come crashing down soon.

Let's look at the shocking facts!

Humanity deceived

God's people know that Satan deceived humanity from the beginning in the Garden of Eden.



The Bible records that Satan influenced Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The first humans thus cut themselves off from God and from access to God's Holy Spirit, symbolized by the tree of life (Genesis 3).

The Bible tells us that Satan actually took the form of a serpent and spoke to our first parents. He was extremely persuasive verbally.

But what was even more devastating was the devil's subtle,

unseen influence! Did you ever stop to think about it? Satan had an enormous impact on the minds of the first humans — an impact of which they were totally unaware. For, *without their consent*, Satan was placing a wrong attitude of desire and vanity in their minds. They didn't hear anything or see anything, but the strong desire was there, and they decided to partake of the only tree God had held back from them — the tree that produced death.

The rest of the story is history — literally. When Satan influenced Adam to sin, this began a civiliza-

tion oriented around vanity, jealousy, lust and greed. Satan is leading the world to destruction, without the world's consent and for the most part without any real knowledge or understanding on the part of people.

Christians are called out

This is the same world into which each of us were born. We all were silently swayed in the wrong direction from birth.

Satan has made himself the god of this present evil world (II

Photo by Cliff Smith, First Vision

Corinthians 4:4). He has blinded the minds of humans. Instead of bringing light (Satan's original name was *Lucifer*, which meant "Light Bringer"), Satan brought darkness. For more information, write for our free booklet *Did God Create a Devil?*

Only Jesus Christ has brought complete light or truth with respect to both God and Satan (verses 4-6). And God, through Jesus Christ, has called us out of this evil civilization.

We all walked in the past "according to the course of this world, according to [influenced by] the prince of the power of the air." This made us "sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). We were fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the mind. We were the "children of wrath," cut off from God's Holy Spirit but in tune with Satan. Without our consent, Satan continually was leading us into sin and death (verse 3).

Revealed — the purpose of life

Once God calls us, we realize that the whole purpose of this human life is to build godly character (John 15:16). Previous to our calling, whatever character we had built was our own self-righteousness and whatever evil we committed came from Satan.

Now how, once God has revealed the truth to us, do we build godly character?

When a man and woman come together in a sexual union, the sperm from the male can unite with the ovum in the female. From this union a new physical creation can be begotten and ultimately born, bearing the characteristics of both parents.

This same system applies spiritually in the building of godly character. God gives us His Holy Spirit — the very Spirit Adam and Eve rejected. Through that Spirit we are begotten as a new spiritual creation. God's Spirit unites with the human spirit in a spiritual union (Ephesians 1:13-14). God becomes our spiritual Father.

Then we must be led by God's

Spirit and mature as children of God (Romans 8:14). We build godly character using the very Spirit of God.

There are no alternatives to producing godly character. Either it is produced by God in us — manifested by Jesus Christ as we yield ourselves to the leading of the Spirit of God — or it cannot happen.

Regretfully, from a human viewpoint, even we who are called and converted are still tempted to return to Satan's world to partake of his spiritual influence. That influence is subtle, and we have been so comfortable in it all of our lives. It is easy to be corrupted once again and return to sin (II Corinthians 11:2-4).

But we are no longer spiritually ignorant. God tells us that anyone "who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning" (I John 3:8). Yes, Satan has been guilty of beguiling people with his unseen, unheard influence since the beginning of human history.

God gives His Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Of course, we must first repent of our sins (Acts 2:38). But God does not force His influence upon us, as does Satan.

We must, by choice, build godly character. We must, by knowledge and design, go contrary to Satan's influence. We must desire God's way with all our heart and seek Him.

God tells us, "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself" so that "that wicked one [Satan] toucheth him not" (I John 5:18, Authorized Version).

Through God's Spirit we can yield to Jesus Christ. Then Jesus Christ can live His life in us and manifest God's character. This is the only way it can occur. God will not do it without our consent. That wouldn't build godly character.

The nature of the struggle

The only person who never succumbed to Satan's influence was Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:15). Yet He was tempted by Satan in a titanic face-to-face struggle

(Matthew 4:1-11) and throughout His life. Jesus knew the nature of the struggle. He understood the mental and spiritual battle for control of His mind. Jesus Christ succeeded where Lucifer and Adam had previously failed.

The apostle Peter reminds us that Satan, our adversary, still goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8).

Satan realizes that Jesus, who overcame his temptations, qualified to rule over this earth. Now Jesus is helping others to overcome Satan and form the basis of a new world and a new government on this earth.

Once we receive the Spirit of God, we are able to resist Satan's influence and form the basis of the new civilization that will begin with God's Church.

Is it any wonder that Satan wants to destroy us? God's Church is the beginning of a new, godly civilization — the embryo of a whole new world — that will end the evil civilization Satan has spawned.

We can resist

The world isn't aware of Satan's influence. But Satan has made this world into the frightening physical manifestation of this attitude of vanity and selfishness — the attitude that led to his removal as a covering cherub from God's throne — the attitude that will ultimately cause him to lose his earthly throne.

Thankfully, God has revealed this spiritual knowledge to us. We know of Satan's influence without man's knowledge. We now have access to God's Holy Spirit because He has chosen us to be a part of His Church (John 6:44). Therefore, we can resist and overcome the influence of Satan and his world.

God gives us His Spirit to correctly discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). This is a capability we didn't have before God called us.

No longer are we held in bondage in Satan's world without our consent! □

Nahum vs. Nineveh

Fulfilled prophecy is a powerful proof of God! Read here how one little-known book of the Bible challenges the skeptics — and wins.

By K. Neil Earle

Could an obscure prophet from an insignificant vassal state achieve total accuracy in his pronouncements against the terrifying superpower of his day, the Assyrian Empire? What would be his chances?

None whatsoever, unless —! Unless that prophet were directly inspired by the Creator God Himself.

Nahum means “full of comfort or consolation.” The vivid message of this forceful and talented man of God was indeed good news for his people Judah in the late seventh century B.C., but it seemed like a long shot, to say the least. When God stamped

Nahum to boldly taunt Nineveh, colossal capital city of ancient Assyria, the odds seemed weighted in Nineveh’s favor:

“At the time of Nahum’s

prophecy, Nineveh was queen city of the earth, mighty and brutal beyond imagination, head of a warrior state built on the loot of nations. Limitless wealth from the ends of the earth poured into its coffers. Nahum likens it to a den of ravaging lions, feeding on the blood of nations” (Halley’s *Bible Handbook*, page 369).

When Nahum wrote, around the 620s B.C., Nineveh had already existed for 15 centuries. Nimrod established Nineveh soon after the Flood (Genesis 10:11) as the northern military arm of his gangster empire in Babylon. An independent Assyria flexed its muscles from time to time (Numbers 24:24, Judges 3:8).

But by the 700s B.C. a succession of strong rulers exploiting tactics of calculated terror made



Illustrations by Ken Tunell



the Mesopotamian city-state a military menace. The 10-tribed House of Israel succumbed to Assyria's sledgehammer in 721 B.C. (II Kings 17:6), and only God's direct intervention saved Jerusalem from Sennacherib's invasion soon after (Isaiah 37).

Isaiah vividly sketched the swift-moving blitzkrieg sweep of Assyria's disciplined legions:

"No one will be weary or stumble among them, no one will slumber or sleep; nor will the belt on their loins be loosed, nor the strap of their sandals be broken; whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hooves will seem like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind. Their roaring will be like a lion, they will roar like young lions; yes, they will roar and lay hold of the prey; they will carry it away safely, and no one will deliver" (Isaiah 5:27-29).

Thus the formidable Assyrian army. In the words of one commentator, this army was "part machine, part beast." The "cruel masters" of Assyria (Isaiah 19:4) utilized terrorism to induce foreign cities to surrender. Listen to Assurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) boasting, "The heads of their warriors I cut off, and I formed them into a pillar over against the city" (Finegan, *Light From The Ancient Past*, page 203).

The Assyrians' refined barbarism was a gruesome part of their military strategy. Seen in this light, it took a lot of courage for a Jewish prophet still living under the Assyrian shadow to pen this scorching rebuke: "I will dig your grave, for you are vile" (Nahum 1:14).

Courage indeed! For the penal-

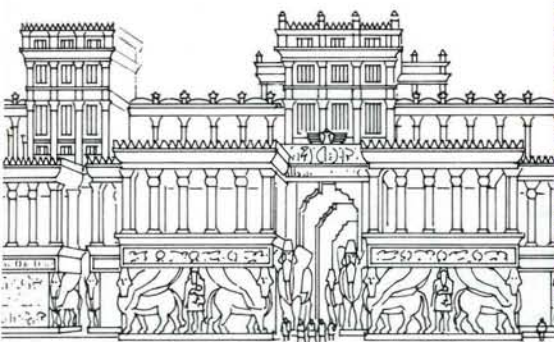
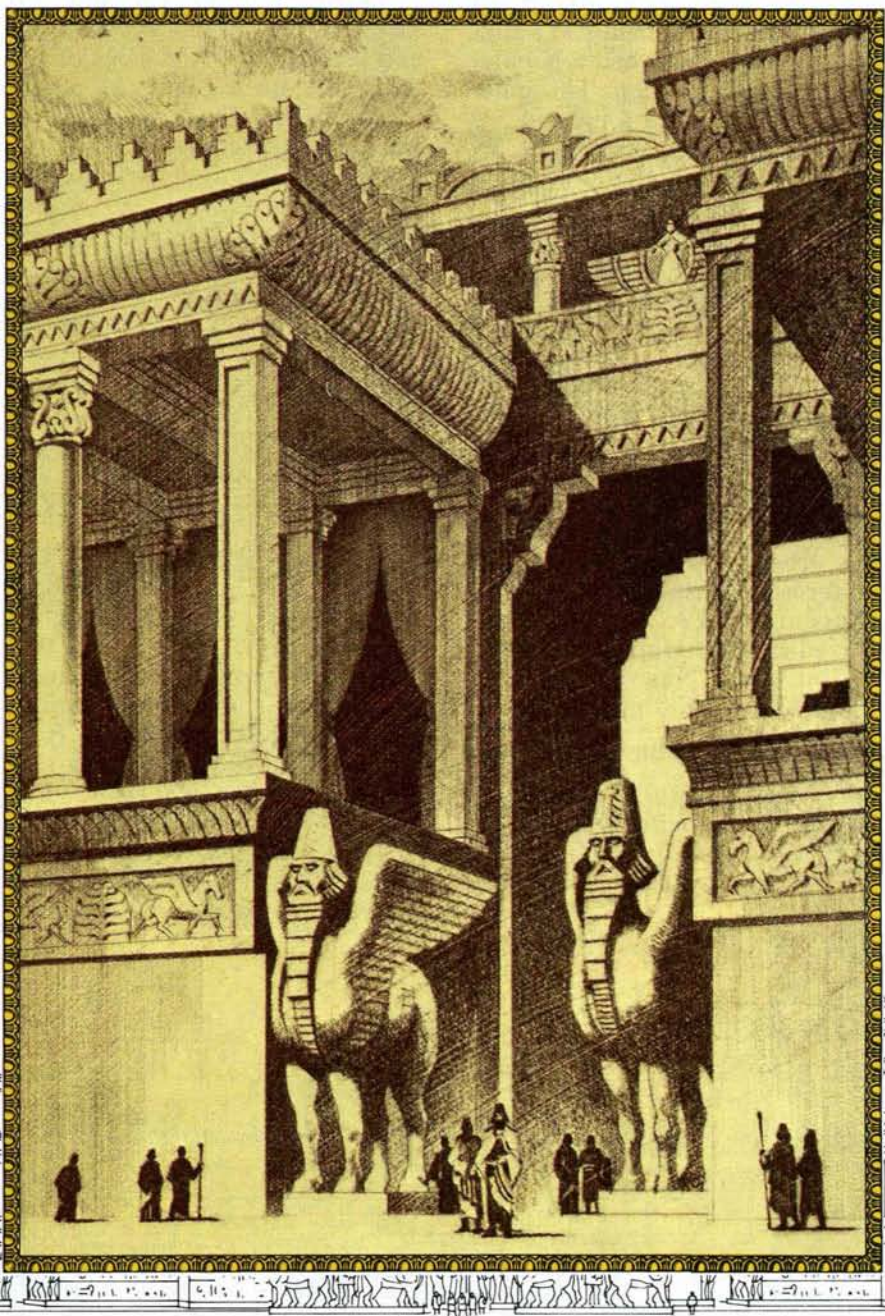
ty for false prophets in ancient Judah was a swift death by stoning (Deuteronomy 18:20).

The best of times, the worst of times

Nahum probably wrote sometime after the 12th year of Judah's righteous King Josiah (II Chronicles 34:1). His encouragement for the nation to continue its "appointed feasts" (Nahum 1:15) doesn't fit the reign of evil King Manasseh (696-641 B.C.). Furthermore, Nahum mentions the collapse of NoAmon in Egypt in 663 B.C. as a past event

(Nahum 3:8). Josiah's religious reforms in his 12th year (II Chronicles 34:3, 35:1) dates Nahum's prophecy to about the early 620s B.C. Even though rebellions against Assyria characterized his time — Babylon actually seceded in 626 B.C. — Nahum's confident, even insulting, predictions of the utter extinction of mighty Nineveh were bold beyond belief.

Why? Nahum was luridly specific: "It shall come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you, and say, 'Nineveh is laid waste! Who will bemoan



her?" (Nahum 3:7). "Surely, your people in your midst are women!" (verse 13).

Remember, even God three times called Nineveh a "great city" (Jonah 1:2, 3:2, 4:11). Excavations revealed a staggering picture:

"The term Nineveh refers to the whole complex of associated villages served by one great irrigation system, and protected by the one network of fortifications based on the river defenses. Nineveh... was about 30 miles long and about 10 miles wide... protected by five walls and five moats. Jonah's mention of 120,000 babes (Jonah 4:11) suggests it might have had a population of near a million. The inner city, about 3 miles long and 1½ miles wide, was protected by walls 100 feet high, 8 miles in circuit" (Halley, page 369).

Diodorus Siculus, writing in the first century B.C., recorded that three chariots could drive abreast the 50-foot-thick walls overlooking a 150-foot inner moat. Twenty-story watchtowers at regular intervals monitored the inner defenses of that titanic inner fortress.

Yet God's servant Nahum thundered against this impregnable urban colossus in fiery and picturesque verbal hammer blows (Jeremiah 23:29). Nahum, stirred by God Himself, was taking on proud Nineveh (II Peter 1:21). Who would prevail?

Six specific predictions

Nahum faithfully catalogued six specific, pointed predictions against the Assyrian capital.

First, he warned that Nineveh

would fall easily and quickly. This was astounding. Ancient bastions held out for years. Tyre mocked Alexander the Great three years, while Ashdod resisted the Egyptians 29 years. But Nahum was colorfully emphatic: "All your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs: If they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater" (Nahum 3:12).

Next, Nahum foretold that the city would fall in a state of drunkenness: "While drunken like drunkards, they shall be devoured... you also will be drunk" (Nahum 1:10, 3:11).

Third, Nahum 1:8 and 2:6 mention an "overflowing flood" and predict that "the gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved." The river was to feature in the city's collapse.

Fourth, Nahum prophesied that the proud capital would burn: "Fire shall devour the bars of your gates" (Nahum 3:13).

Next, Nahum pulled no punches, warning that Nineveh's destruction would be total. She would never rise again, unlike Memphis, Sidon, Babylon, Damascus, Jerusalem and other ancient cities: "Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe" (verse 19).

Last, a staggering prediction: Nahum twice predicted that the gargantuan metropolis that sprawled over 1,800 acres, that seemingly unconquerable citadel of Assyrian greatness, would totally disappear — vanish from human sight! Notice Nahum 1:14 and 3:11: "I will dig your grave... you will be hidden."

Thus Nahum's specific predictions. No vague generalities here — rather, specific challenges to

the skeptics who doubt God's Word! Was Nahum accurate? Did his prophecies come to pass? Could they have been cunningly doctored after the event to make Nahum seem inspired?

Who would win out? A supreme city-state of the ancient world, or the words of a faithful, fearless servant of the true God? Let's sift the facts of history and archaeology and find out.

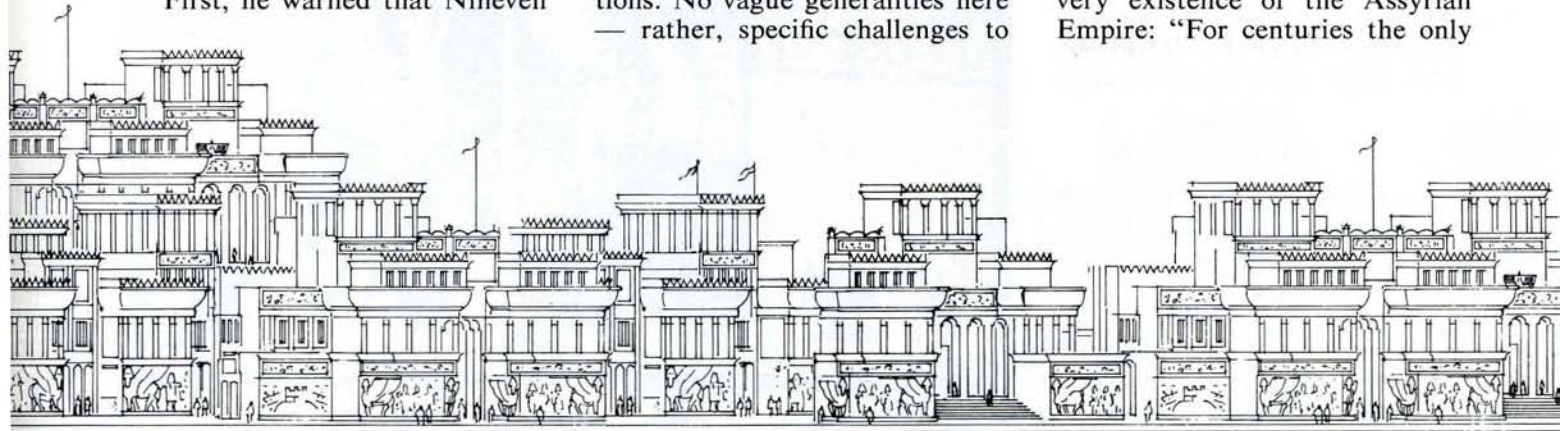
The stones speak

In 1840 the energetic French consular agent in northern Iraq, Paul-Emile Botta, financing a small excavation project to relieve his boredom, spent a fruitless season digging in earth mounds along the Tigris River.

Then, seven miles north in the town of Khorsabad, Arab farmers accidentally uncovered immense pillars in the sunbaked earth. By 1844 the tablets Botta salvaged from Khorsabad were the sensation of Paris. Botta's "find" was nothing less than the castle of Sargon II (721-705 B.C.), conqueror of Samaria.

In 1845 another dogged amateur, Englishman Henry Layard, worked the spot opposite Botta's original project on the Tigris. His find? The "Black Obelisk" of Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.), an Assyrian victory monument that mentioned, in enduring stone, such biblical figures as Hazael of Damascus and Jehu of Israel (II Kings 8, 9) doing obeisance to the Assyrian strongman.

All this was amazing, incredible, exciting beyond words to describe. "Enlightened" skeptics of the 1700s had scoffed at the very existence of the Assyrian Empire: "For centuries the only



knowledge that such an empire existed was to be found in the direct and indirect statement of Scripture. The historian puzzled; the skeptic jeered the scriptural accounts" (Meisinger, *The Fall of Nineveh*, pages 4-5).

In 1853 Howard Rassam unearthed the royal library of King Asshurbanipal, containing tens of thousands of volumes of ancient Babylonian and Assyrian literature.

It remained for the Mallowan expedition, sponsored by the British School of Archaeology from 1949 to 1950 in Iraq, to uncover astounding evidence for the veracity of God's faithful prophet, the fiery Nahum.

Point by point

In 612 B.C. avenging Scythians, Medes and Babylonians finally surrounded Nineveh. The city fell in three months. "The siege lasted from Sivaw to Abu, that is from May-June to July-August, but eventually Nineveh fell" (Finegan, page 219). Nahum's analogy of an overripe fig falling into open mouths was stunningly accurate (Nahum 3:12).

Why did Nineveh succumb so quickly?

"Camped outside the city walls, the king of Assyria... became lax in his vigilance and began to indulge with his soldiers in much drinking. With great success the enemy general routed the disorganized camp... battle decided entirely by the Assyrian drunkenness" (*Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, MacDowell, pages 310-311).

Nahum 1:10 was fulfilled. The Assyrians regrouped inside the

perimeter walls, still secure. But nature's God intervened: "After heavy rains the river broke down a distance of the city walls... the siegers, learning of the break in the wall, attacked," wrote Diodorus Siculus.

One archaeologist reported, "The fact of the flood accounts for a stratum of pebble and sand found a few feet below the surface of the river in the mounds of Nineveh."

How literally Nahum's prophecies were fulfilled: "With an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place" (Nahum 1:8).

What about Nahum's prediction that Nineveh would burn (Nahum 3:13)? M.E.L. Mallowan records: "The condition in which we found (the throne room) was a dramatic illustration of the final sack: The wall plaster had been packed hard and burnt yellow by the flames and then blackened with soot which had penetrated into the brickwork itself. The intense heat had caused the south wall to bend inward and the floor of the chamber itself was buried upon a great pile of burnt debris over a metre and a half in depth, filled with ash... never have I seen so perfect an example of a vengeful bonfire, the soot still permeating the air as we approached" (*Nimrud and Its Remains*, Vol. II, page 434).

Could anything be plainer?

Yet Nahum's fifth and sixth predictions were blockbusters, prophecies that could only be verified with the passage of thousands of years. Nahum predicted that Nineveh would never recover and, strangest of all, that the

Assyrian stronghold would disappear altogether. Check Nahum 1:14 and 3:11 once again.

Now look at the evidence:

"In 612 B.C. the ancient capital of the Assyrian Empire was so completely obliterated that it became like a myth until its discovery by Sir Austen Layard and others in the 19th century" (Unger's *Bible Dictionary*, page 795).

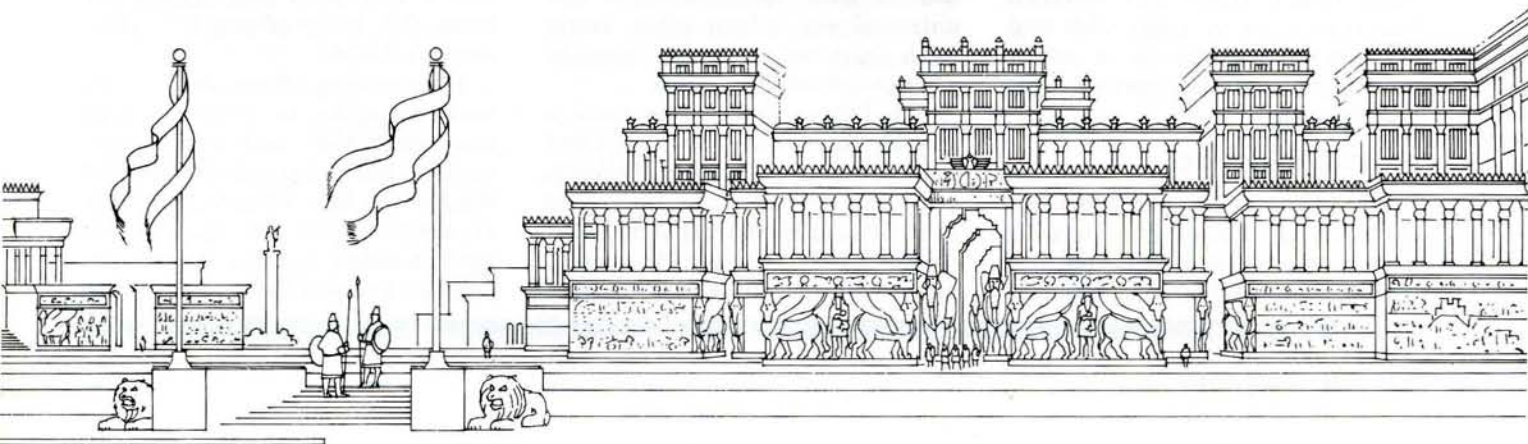
"Even scientifically minded travelers who know from the Bible the existence (of Nineveh) attempted to find it and several times passed over the very ruins without knowing it" (Edward Chiera, *They Wrote on Clay*, page 40).

The disappearance of Nineveh was labeled one of the most bewildering riddles of history. So complete was its burial that the Iraqis built a village atop one of the mounds covering the once-proud metropolis. Even today excavators must bore through 30 to 45 feet of debris before Assyrian strata come to view.

There is absolutely no way that a Jewish seer could have engineered all of these events and then made them come to pass across a time span of more than 2,300 years!

Nahum's fifth and sixth predictions are the crowning proof: He was inspired by the supreme God! Only God could have brought these predictions to pass so accurately and so minutely over the millennia!

The evidence is in: Prophecy is proof of the overruling power of God. That is why Nahum, God's bold and colorful servant, prevailed against Nineveh (Isaiah 40:17)! □



A Vital Dimension in Overcoming

Overcoming is one of the most vital keys to salvation. Only those who overcome are promised eternal life, membership in the Family of God and rulership over the nations on this earth.

This promise is graphically emphasized in Revelation 21:7: "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son." It is also mentioned at least seven other times in the book of Revelation (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28, 3:5, 12, 21).

Because overcoming is so important to our eternal destiny, we need to thoroughly understand what it is.

What is overcoming?

Most of us as God's people have understood overcoming to mean the process of rooting out sinful habits and conduct from our lives. We have thought of it as forsaking and conquering such lawbreaking practices as swearing, lying, cheating, drunkenness, smoking and other sins.

These habits became acutely apparent to us when we began to learn God's truth and realized that they must be dealt with and overcome. The battle is often intense and requires much prayer and diligence.

Another dimension

This is certainly one aspect of overcoming. However, there is yet another dimension equally as important to overcoming. What is

it? Read on. Jesus Christ, the pioneer of our salvation, said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). We know that we must follow in His footsteps to qualify for eternal life (1 Peter 2:21). Exactly how did Jesus overcome? How are we to imitate Him?

During His 33½ years on earth, Jesus Christ never sinned once! While living in human flesh, our Savior led a perfect life. He had no bad or sinful habits to master. What, then, did Jesus overcome?

During His human life, Jesus was tempted in all points as we are (Hebrews 4:15). The world and its lures constantly tried, tested and tempted Him in much the same way as we are tried today.

Satan particularly was active and persistent in trying to overthrow Jesus. Remember how the devil tried every trick at his disposal to tempt Jesus to sin after Jesus' 40-day fast in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11)?

Yet, Jesus never succumbed to commit a single sin. As Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Not once did He allow the conception and entry of sin, which often starts with just one wrong thought (James 1:14-15).

To Jesus, overcoming was a day-by-day, hour-by-hour and even minute-by-minute process. He had to reject every wrong thought and each temptation as it came into His mind. He had to always be on guard against and

prepared to counteract Satan's subtle and treacherous devices.

Yet, it was only through God's power in Him and His continuous contact with His Father in heaven that Jesus was able to do this (John 5:30).

How we can overcome

Today, each one of us is also in a continual spiritual warfare: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

This world in which we live can be a caldron of temptation. The atmosphere around us is literally surcharged and electrified with the evil influence of Satan the devil. We as Christians are assailed and attacked at every turn.

Additionally, the carnal pull to sin still drives and influences our mortal minds and poses a constant threat to our daily walk with God: "For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:22-24).

Overcoming, then, has to do with engaging in battle against sin, temptation and wrong attitudes that continually thrust themselves into our lives. It may at times mean an all-out war against Satan and his fiery darts. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay

hold on eternal life," said Paul (I Timothy 6:12). "Resist the devil and he will flee from you," stated James (James 4:7).

In this context, overcoming involves enduring to the bitter end — until victory is won. "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Timothy 2:3).

We may find ourselves in hand-to-hand combat with our spiritual enemies several times a day. Imagine how many fiery darts — impure thoughts, lusts, wrong attitudes — Satan hurls at us daily.

This is why we are commanded to bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5).

What we must realize is that overcoming means dealing with the *cause* of sin instead of the *effect*.

With this in mind, overcoming should have a far greater meaning to our day-to-day spiritual lives. It is much more than just rooting out old habits or lingering problems. It also means putting to death any uprisings of lusts or sinful attitudes that may appear at any moment.

We need God's help

Just like Jesus Christ when He walked on this earth, we of and by ourselves are powerless. However, we can draw on the same invisible help, power and strength that Jesus had available.

And just like Jesus Christ, we can gain the victory.

Therefore, the first step in continuous and successful overcoming is a close, daily contact with God. We need to learn how to walk and talk with our heavenly Father at all times, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer" (Romans 12:12). "Pray without ceasing," wrote Paul (I Thessalonians 5:17).

In addition, we must diligently study and drink in of God's Word. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of

truth" (II Timothy 2:15, Authorized Version).

We must also follow the lead of God's Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14 reveals, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." We need to learn to recognize when the Holy Spirit is being grieved or quenched, and strive to keep it from happening (Ephesians 4:30, I Thessalonians 5:19).

And when we slip and fall prey to sin, we must repent instantly — turn from and reject the thought or temptation that led to the sin — to prevent our relationship with the Creator from being weakened or severed. Let's allow nothing to come between us and our heavenly Father!

The next step to hour-by-hour and minute-by-minute overcoming,

We as Christians are soldiers in a lifelong battle against human nature, the world and fallen spirit beings. Like warriors, we must be disciplined and uncompromising, and never let down or take it easy.

so vital in winning this Christian struggle, is vigilance.

Be vigilant

We need to constantly watch out for Satan's clever and subtle devices. Satan, after all, is like a stealthy, ferocious lion: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (I Peter 5:8).

Satan's goal is to prevent our eternal life in God's Family. Today the devil is more angry than ever before, knowing he has but a short time left: "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time" (Revelation 12:12).

Satan will try to wear out God's people if he can. We must

be on guard against all forms of wrong and destructive thinking — emotions such as negativism, discouragement, envy, resentment and jealousy.

We must not succumb to Satan's broadcasting and temptations. Ephesians 4:27 tells us not to "give place to the devil."

We also have to be on guard against the tremendous number of negative influences of today's society, never compromising with God's truth or the way of life He has revealed.

We should be aware of our worst enemy — self — and not allow any potentially sinful thoughts to take root. God commands us to crucify the flesh and its lustful desires (Luke 9:23, Romans 8:13). We are to flee from tempting situations and ask

God for help in resisting potential sin.

We as Christians are soldiers in a lifelong battle against human nature, the world and fallen spirit beings. Therefore, it's incumbent on us never to let down and take it easy. Like warriors, we must be highly disciplined and uncompromising.

Only when we master each temptation as it comes are we successful overcomers. Let us be diligent and be able to say with the apostle Paul: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day." The crown of righteousness, after all, will not be given to Paul only, "but also to all who have loved His appearing" (II Timothy 4:7-8) — us included! □

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