

The Sword AND Staff

“Preach the Word” (II Timothy 4:2) • “Feed the Flock” (I Peter 5:2)

“Little Things Mean a Lot”

• By JAMES E. GIBBONS—1535 W. Fairfield Drive—Mt. Airy, NC 27030 USA

This article is long and a little different. You may want to read it in more than one sitting, but we think that you will find the lesson and scriptural material very edifying.—Editor



SOMETIMES when studying the Scriptures certain truths just seem to leap out and impact us unexpectedly. This happened recently with this writer in studying Matthew 25:21-46. This Scripture is about the Judgment. The truths as noticed here play an important part in determining our eternal destiny, whether in a positive or negative way. In each pronouncement of judgment these words stand out (with “not” being added to the negative pronouncement): “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat [food]: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in [showed hospitality]: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Some food given, a drink of water, visitation—these were not “great” and monumental things. They seem like little things and so inconsequential. But they enter into judgment that involves eternal life.

Thinking about these truths, these words immediately came to mind, “Little things mean a lot.” And that was the name of a popular “love” song

many years ago in the secular world. Yes, back when most music was not abrupt, crude and rude noise, signifying nothing. Although the said song was a worldly song, the words for the most part were good and wholesome; even tender, caring and meaningful in the expression of love. Words like these were found in the song.

Give me your arm as we cross the street.
Call me at six on the dot.
A line a day when you're far away,
Little things mean a lot.

Give me a hand when I've lost the way.
Give me your shoulder to cry on.
Whether the day is bright or gray,
Give me your heart to rely on.

Send me the warmth of a secret smile
To show me you haven't forgot
For now and forever, that's always and ever,
Honey, little things mean a lot.

Coming from another perspective, the word “little” stands out in a number of places in the book of Proverbs, interestingly getting our attention. Solomon prodding, asked, “How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard [lazy person]? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a *little* sleep, a *little* slumber, a *little* folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man” (Proverbs 6:9-11; likewise notice 24:33-34). Also Proverbs 30:24-28 makes an interesting observation about little things. “There be four things which are *little* upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat [food] in the summer; The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.”

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—THANK YOU—

Proverbially **SPEAKING...**

I WOULDN'T miss heaven for the world, would you?

We need to *simply* trust HIM when life becomes *complex* and out of control.

It is always wise to think twice before we speak once.

We should live right because it is the right thing to do; we should be good for goodness sake, not for some selfish motive like the devil accused Job of (Job 1:8-11); we should serve God because God is God, and we are man.

Spending much time on our knees keeps us in good standing before God.

Eve understood God's command was not only to not eat of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 2:16-17), but to not touch it either (Genesis 3:2-3); all that was a detriment to keeping the command was implied in the prohibition.

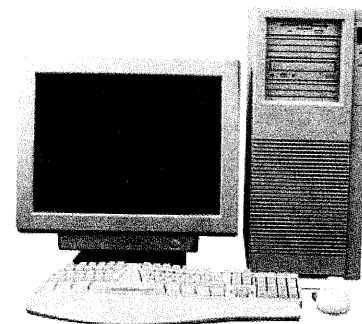
There is not anything in life that does not have a religious implication.

If pain and sorrow were not anticipated to be a part of our lives as mortals, why did God make us with the capacity to weep and shed tears?

When stripped naked of the things of the world, like Job, we see who we really are.

If you kill time, you are murdering opportunities.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS



WHEN THAT WHICH SHOULD BE THE LORD'S IS NO LONGER HIS

NOTICE 1 Corinthians 11:20. It is a most interesting and provocative verse of Scripture. The KJV has translated it this way, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is ***not to eat the Lord's Supper.***" Reading along a little further we see just exactly what the situation was here. They were bringing their own food from home and simply eating it as a regular meal, even indulgently, not really thinking about or discerning the Lord's suffering and death. The poor people in their number were being left out altogether in this eating. So that is why Paul is saying their coming together was not to eat the Lord's Supper (for the way they were doing it, it was not the Lord's Supper nor its observance). Newer translations render this verse in terms unmistakable, like the NIV, "When you come together, it is ***not the Lord's Supper you eat.***" This makes it plain that this Scripture is not at variance with Acts 20:7, which reads, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." The early New Testament church met on the first day of every week to observe the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians supposedly were doing this, going through the procedure, but were reducing it to a common meal. It was not the Lord's Supper they were eating.

In the same vein of thought, or mode of reference, the Lord spoke of the temple. Early in his ministry Jesus had driven the money changers out of the temple, saying, "Take these things hence; make not ***my Father's house*** an house of merchandise" (John 2:13-17). Three years later a like scenario was seen with a second cleansing of the temple. He quoted Scripture, saying, "It is written, ***My house*** shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:12,13). The week before his crucifixion, as Jesus wept over Jerusalem, he said, "Behold, ***your house*** is left unto you desolate" (Matthew 23:37, 38). He could foresee the destruction of the temple that took place 70 A.D. He told his disciples not one stone would be left unturned. This stands out in what he said. That which he called "my Father's house" (the temple), he now calls "your house." When Jesus died on the cross, "the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke 23:45). God vacated the temple. It was no longer "my Father's house," but "your house."

Earlier the high priest and religious leaders had decided that Jesus must die (John 11:47-53). They said, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come

and take away both *our place* and *nation*.” In the Old Testament, the high priest was “God’s high priest” (Acts 23:4), occupying this sacred position. God had repeatedly said the Israelites were his chosen people (Leviticus 26:12-13), a special nation unto himself. But now these Jewish religious leaders looked upon it from their own selfish viewpoint as “our place and nation.” They laid claim like everything personally belonged to them. God was not part of the equation.

The same thing was true in reference to the law. The night before his crucifixion, the Lord said to his disciples, “But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in *their law*, They hated me without a cause” (John 15:25). The Jews looked upon the law as their own personal possession, disallowing what Christ had to say about it. So speaking impersonally, as if removed from the picture, Jesus calls the law “their law.” If they regarded themselves as the sole possessors, they should look into this law. They would be surprised that it said much about Jesus Christ (John 5:39,46). And in making it “their law,” they had gone about to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:1-3).

In view of all that we have just written here, let us simply state that the church of Christ belongs to Christ (Matthew 16:18). The church, and everything connected with it, is uniquely his. He purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). The very purpose for the existence of the church is singular and unique, which is spiritual (1 Peter 2:5). It is the “pillar and ground” of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and by it the “manifold wisdom” of God is made known (Ephesians 3:10; Matthew 28:18-20). When it assembles, its activities are decidedly spiritual. God is Spirit and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Paul in giving guidelines for the assembly, writes, “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Corinthians 14:26), and, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40). It is the church of Christ and everything should be conducted accordingly.

But today the religious world is in a muddled mess. Unholy hands have seized upon that which is supposed to be uniquely his. Beginning with denominational names, to all kinds of secular activities, this is glaringly evident. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, “For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, *are ye not carnal?*” (1 Corinthians 3:4; 1:10-13; Acts 4:12; Colossians 1:18). Take this verse of Scripture and insert the name of any denomination where it says, “I am of _____.” You get the picture, don’t you?

That which should be uniquely Christ’s is spoken of with another identity. Along with this, the traditions of men are joined to make denominational bodies distinctly different from the church we read about in the New Testament.

It would seem that the world has invaded the church today. But, no. Rather the doors of the “church” have been slung wide open for the world to come in largely intact. The distinctive and exclusive spiritual mission of the church has been pushed aside (if “we” are “too” spiritual, “we” can’t attract people that way). In some places the “church” is no more than a community center, with no distinctive message. Any and all kinds of activities usually associated with the secular world take place. Entertainment, recreation and sporting activities are common features. Some so-called churches actually have worldly dancing, and with others it is more in the guise of religion. One lady wrote that their worship where she attended was more like a “sock hop,” a rock concert. We heard a religious entertainer say that he used to sing in the bars and night clubs, but when he “got saved” (as he called it) he took the same tunes from these songs he had sung and put religious words to them. But if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it is still a duck.

These words are just a little prodding lest it be said of us like Paul said to the Corinthians, “When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat.” Yes, lest it be said, “When you come together in one place, this is not the Lord’s worship in which you are engaged” (It is fleshly entertainment). In the assembly everything is to be done unto spiritual edification, and done decently and in order. The church belongs to Christ, not us. And we exist as a spiritual entity. The church, and everything connected with it, is uniquely, distinctly and exclusively spiritual. Let’s keep it that way. □



My Jubilee

O God, let me discern your simple truth,
Which Jesus said would set me free.
Help me to cast aside the human myth;
Let him declare my jubilee.

By James E. Gibbons



God made us for himself, and we are not right until we are right with him.



“Little Things Mean a Lot”

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The apostle John repeatedly makes use of the word “little” in the epistle of 1 John, in directly addressing his readers. “My *little children*, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). This expression, “little children,” used in this capacity, is further found throughout this epistle in chapter 2:12-13,18,28; chapter 3:7,18; and chapter 4:4. This mode of reference ends in chapter 5:21, which reads, “*Little children*, keep yourselves from idols.” Perhaps writing now as John the aged and from the position of his readers’ beloved spiritual leader, he affectionately addresses them as “little children.” How expressive and meaningful!

With these things being said, let us now get into our lesson on “Little Things Mean a Lot.” And they do mean a lot.

I. LITTLE THINGS HAVE BEEN USED BY GOD IN A BIG WAY

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil

There are many examples of God using little things in a big way throughout the Bible, starting with the tree in the midst of the Garden of Eden and the forbidden fruit. This may seem especially small to us, but God used one tree and its fruit as a representation of all right and wrong. Man had been created a moral being in the very image and likeness of God. With the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there exhibited in contrast with the other trees in the Garden, he was given the special opportunity to exercise himself in a moral capacity that was very simple and that could not be misunderstood (Genesis 2:16-17). We know the rest of the story of just how big this little thing involving the tree of the knowledge of good and evil really was. It was “big time” big as man failed in this initial chance to faithfully exercise himself as the being that he had been created to be. We experience the consequences of what happened unto this day. “Little things mean a lot.”

Moses and the Rod of God

Choosing another illustration, Moses and his shepherd’s rod are very impressive as to how God has used little things in a big way. After Moses’ forty years of exile in the wilderness, following the slaying of the Egyptian taskmaster, God appeared to him from the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-10). He tells him to go back into Egypt to deliver the children of Israel from their bondage. Considering eve-

rything, Moses was very reluctant to go. But God reassures him that He will be with him, as well as having his older brother Aaron to be his spokesman in confronting Pharaoh. As God abruptly questions Moses, we read, “What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.” It makes for highly interesting reading in seeing how God used this simple rod in many different situations in the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Check out all of these amazing Scriptures: Exodus 4:2-17,20; 7:8-20; 8:5-17; 9:22-26; 10:12-15; 14:13-16; 17:1-6; 17:8-13; Numbers 20:7-12. From confronting the magicians of Pharaoh, the sending of the plagues upon Egypt, the parting of the waters of the Red Sea, to the striking of the rock in the desert to bring forth water, this little rod was used by God in ways that we would have never imagined. “Little things mean a lot.” They become big things in the hands of God.

David and Five Little Stones

David was a young man, still very much a lad, when he came out to visit his older brothers who were in King Saul’s army. The army of Israel was somewhat in a standoff with the Philistines, their longstanding enemy. They faced one another from adjacent mountains with the valley of Elah in between them. Every day this giant Goliath from Gath would come out into the valley and challenge any Israelite to come and fight with him personally. No one was about to step forward and take on this man who was about ten feet tall. Upon “getting up” with his brothers, David was made aware of Goliath and his taunting. He was greatly disturbed that this godless heathen would speak so contemptuously and “defy the armies of the living God.” He therewith personally volunteered to confront the giant, much to the dismay of his brothers. (Read all about this in the 17th chapter of 1 Samuel). He was provided armor like the rest of the soldiers wore into battle, which he declined. “And [rather] he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd’s bag...and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine.” David was mocked and belittled by Goliath, wherewith he replied, “I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” He ran to meet the giant, and taking one smooth stone from his bag, he let it fly.

It found its mark in Goliath's forehead, and he came tumbling down. That which was little was used in a big way. One little stone put to silence this blasphemous giant.

(And as a matter of curiosity, one might ask why David took five stones when he needed only one. We read in 2 Samuel 21:22 that there were four other giants from Gath among the Philistines. We wonder, was David getting ready in case he had to deal with them, too?)

Elijah, the Poor Widow and Her Barrel of Meal and Cruse of Oil

When considering how God has used little things in a big way, there is another happening that we will never forget. It involves Elijah and the poor widow near Zidon (1 Kings 17:1-16). It was at a time when God showed his disapproval of the idolatry of King Ahab by a prolonged drought that plagued the land. As the streams dried up and food supply became scarce, God took care of Elijah in wondrous ways. Part of this time he was sustained by a poor widow who had run out of food. Following God's directions, Elijah went to this woman, requesting food. We read, "And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah." Amazing! Elijah and the poor widow passed the remaining time of the three and half years of famine, having sufficient food as the meal and oil never ran out. Little becomes a lot when God has something to do with it. That which was little became much.

The Feeding of the 5000 and 4000 by the Lord Jesus Christ

As we now turn to the New Testament Scriptures, again we find that little in the hands of God becomes much. This stands out with the feeding of the 5000 and the 4000 by the Lord Jesus Christ. This was so impressive that the feeding of the 5000 is recorded in all four gospel accounts (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:31-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-

14). Jesus left with his disciples by boat to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, seeking solitude and much needed rest. The people in the towns along the shore could see where Christ was headed. In excitement, their number swells as by foot they run along the way and beat Jesus and his disciples to their destination. Although seeking rest, the Lord filled with overflowing compassion could not turn these people away. He taught them, and he healed them. Time passed, "the day was now far spent," but the excited crowd had not thought of bringing food. Preoccupied with the Lord, they seemed to be oblivious of their situation. The disciples thought about sending them away. But the Lord restrained them as they found among their number a little boy with "five barley loaves and two small fishes." The circumstance was similar when the 4000 were fed (Matthew 15:32-38; Mark 8:1-9). We read, "And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few *little* fishes." In each case, the Lord prayed and the little became much. As he blessed the loaves and a "few little fishes," the supply was multiplied and seemed unending. From this he fed 5000 and 4000, not even counting the women and children who were there, and there was food left over. Little becomes much when God is involved in it. These little things were used by the Lord in a big way.

"O Little Town of Bethlehem" and "the Preaching of the Cross"

Many more illustrations could be brought forth showing how God has used that which was little, seemingly insignificant, and inconsequential, in a big way, but we will fittingly stop with this one. It involves God and the salvation of mankind. Micah had prophesied many, many years ago, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be *little* among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler of Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). This Scripture was quoted in the 2nd chapter of Matthew and applied to Christ. Not only was this a small village, seemingly of little renown, the birth of Jesus took place here in the most humble of circumstances as he was placed in a manger. He lived and grew up in Nazareth, of which it was asked, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Then the life of Christ upon earth was concluded on an old rugged cross. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 to see how little the cross was esteemed in the first century, being used only to execute slaves and criminals of

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the worse sort. The cross was a despised object. Man's fall into sin had involved a tree in the Garden of Eden, a relatively small thing. Now the cross, a tree of another kind (and scripturally called a “tree,” Acts 5:30; 10:39; 13:29; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24), becomes the vehicle used by God in connection with man's redemption. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). “Little things mean a lot” when God has something to do with them. That which was regarded with utter contempt has become a symbol of great respect and dignity. The world may mock, belittle and look down upon the cross as little, and next to nothing, but to us as Christians it means everything.

II. LITTLE THINGS IN REFERENCE TO THE KINGDOM

Like a Grain of Mustard Seed

From various angles, the word “little” stands out when we talk about the kingdom of Christ. One of the parables of the Lord brings this out. We read, “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the **least** of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs [garden plants], and becometh a tree [a shrub, tree-like plant], so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof” (Matthew 13:31-32). We can think of this as a small beginning when the gospel seed is planted in the heart of an individual or more generally to the expansion of the church throughout the world. (The mustard seed smallness was also used to illustrate faith, Luke 17:6). Although representatively and relatively small in the Roman Empire, the church was destined to spread to the furthest bounds of the Empire and ultimately the world. At the end of time we will know just how great and extensive this expanse really has been when all of the redeemed are in heaven together.

“Few There Be that Find It”

But from another perspective, the number in the kingdom will not be great in comparison to the world. The Lord Jesus himself said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and **few** there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Little

seems to stand out here. Jesus said to his disciples, “Fear not, **little flock**; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). We are told that before the 2nd coming of Christ the days will be like unto “the days of Noah” (Luke 17:26). This involves several things, but there were only eight people saved on the ark (1 Peter 3:20). Faithfulness to the Lord is not determined by numbers. Elijah thought he was the only one left, but God had his remnant that had not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:1-18; Romans 11:3-4). Notice Paul's observation of the situation in his day when he said “not many” (1 Corinthians 1:26-27). Regardless of the number, small or large, let us press on. We are in good company with the saints of all ages. Little means a lot to God.

“Become As Little Children”

“Little” stands out as being very important if we would be in the kingdom of heaven. Misunderstanding the nature of the coming kingdom of Christ (it was and is spiritual), the disciples had been disputing among themselves as to which of them would be the greatest in this kingdom. The Lord dealt with this problem head-on by taking a little child up into his arms, and saying, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as **little** children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). They wouldn't even be in the kingdom, let alone thinking who would be the greatest, if they didn't change the way they were thinking! They must become as a little child. This means to be humble, lowly, teachable and trusting. And in the next chapter (Matthew 19:14), keeping Matthew 18:3 in mind, notice that Jesus said, “Suffer **little** children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Yes, “little” is anything but little, if we would be in the kingdom.

“Thou Hast a Little Strength”

Of the seven churches in Asia in the book of Revelation, the one that is noted for its “poverty” (Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11) and the one for its being of “little strength” (Philadelphia, Revelation 3:7-12), thought to mean small in number, stand out as the only ones of which the Lord found no fault. Those with the mind-set of the world would not look upon it this way today. The one that is said to be poor, parenthetically is called “rich” (2:9). The wealthy church of the Laodiceans did not have this said about them; just the opposite (3:14-18). In fact, their wealth seemed to be a stumbling block to their spirituality. Spiritual riches supersede and really cannot be compared with the other kind (2

Corinthians 6:10; James 2:5; Romans 8:17). And God looked beyond the smallness in number of the church at Philadelphia, and said, "I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a **little strength**, and hast kept my word, and has not denied my name...Because thou hast kept the word of my patience [enduring patiently], I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation [trial]..." (3:8,10). Sometimes largeness in number may indicate compromise and that the Word of the Lord has not been kept. Their faithfulness, although they were small, was being recognized and rewarded. And although many today may have the herd mentality and want the big crowd at any cost (including going the broad way, Matthew 7:13-14), the Lord said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

III. LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT WHEN THAT'S ALL YOU'VE GOT

David and Solomon Testify

The 37th Psalm begins our thoughts here as the wicked and the righteous are thrown over against one another in contrast. The psalmist tells us to not fret because of evildoers or be envious of their prosperity. He says, "A **little** that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked" (37:16). That is because they have the Lord, live accordingly, and that the wicked will eventually come to a bad end. Although the righteous man may sometimes be poor, David testifies from his own experience, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (37:25).

Solomon in Proverbs 15:16-17 continues this theme, "Better is **little** with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs [vegetables] where love is, than a stalled ox [eating T-bone steak] and hatred therewith." He rounds this out in Proverbs 16:8 by saying, "Better is a **little** with righteousness than great revenues without right."

Yes, "little things mean a lot when that's all you've got" if you have the Lord in your life. It means everything. .

Further Thoughts on This

In the New Testament the apostle Paul gives us some further thoughts on this. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall

into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all [kinds of] evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Hebrews 13:5-6 further exhorts and with these reassuring words: "Let your conversation [the way that you live] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me." The apostle Peter likewise tells his readers to be "casting all your care [even little things] upon him [God]; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

The Poor Widow and Her Mites

The poor widow and her mites is a great illustration of "little things mean a lot when that's all you've got." We read, "And he [Jesus] looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury [poverty] hath cast in all the living that she had" (Luke 21:1-4). The mite, a copper coin, was the smallest in size and value of the Jewish coins. Compared to the giving of the rich people, the giving of this poor widow didn't amount to much. But the way that God looks at it, she had "cast in more than they all." God looks upon it from the viewpoint of how much we have left after we have given. The widow's giving was little, but in proportion to the rich men's giving (and what they had left over after giving) she had given more than all of them. "Little things mean a lot when that's all you've got" in the sight of God.

The "One Talent" Man

"Little things mean a lot when that's all you've got" when it comes to our responsibilities toward God. This is made plain in the parable of the talents. We read about this in Matthew 25:14-30. In this parable this man is pictured as going into a far country, and in leaving he gave talents of money to his servants to be responsible for while he was away. To each was given according to his ability, what the master thought he could handle. The sums that were given were five talents, two talents and one. As the parable unfolds, we see that each was expected to trade, invest and make increase of

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“Little Things Mean a Lot”

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that which had been given to him. The master returns. The “five talent” man and the “two talent” man had doubled the amounts that had been entrusted to them. They were highly commended and rewarded. However, the “one talent” man, being fearful, had done nothing with his master’s money except bury it in the earth. We know the sad ending of the story with him. We may think that we are a “one talent” person, but that does not relieve us of our responsibility, even if indeed we are a “one talent” person. Although we may think of ourselves as little, of little value or consequence, we are nonetheless responsible and are expected to exercise ourselves within the range of our ability and within the capacity the Lord has given us. We are important to the work of the Lord and will be held accountable. “Little things mean a lot” (and especially if that’s all we have got).

IV. LITTLE THINGS CONSTITUTE AND ARE INDICATIVE OF BIG THINGS

Little Things Constitute Big Things

It takes little things to make big things. This is true of anything. This is true of time when we think in terms of seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks, months, years, centuries, or millennia. This is true whether we are talking about lifeless matter that is made up of minute molecules or the very cells of our body. Dollars are made up of pennies. We have heard it said, “Take care of your pennies and your dollars will take care of themselves.” And if you do a good job in little things you will likely be up for promotion to bigger things. Do the little things well and you will be entrusted with the big things. The Lord said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). Some, while aimlessly pondering a situation, have said, “Oh, if I had a million dollars, just think of all the good that I could do.” In the context of what we are saying here, and what the Lord said, what are you doing with that which you do have? Big things are very much related to little things.

The “Great Commandment”

What we are saying about little things making up or being the sum total of the big is further seen in what Christ said was the “great commandment” and the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:34-40). Both had to do with love, the first with God and the second with man. If they loved the

LORD God with all of their hearts and they loved their neighbors as themselves, obedience to all of the other commandments would be prompted and

(Continued on Page 11)

BIBLE QUESTIONS

(Random Questions Over the Bible)

1. Where did Job live who went through so many trying experiences?
2. What is God distinctly called in the book of Job, found there thirty-one times and only eleven times elsewhere in the Bible?
3. Where in the Bible do we find the names of constellations of stars?
4. How did men vent and express their anguish and grief in ancient times (as we find in the Bible)?
5. Who did Abraham marry in his old age after the death of Sarah?
6. What men of the Old Testament are spoken of as wearing golden earrings, which distinguished who they were?
7. Of mount Gerizim and mount Ebal, upon which the tribes of Israel would gather after coming into the Promised Land, which was the mount of blessing and which was the mount of cursing as the people responded with an “amen” to what the Levites said?
8. How long was an Israelite man exempt from military service after getting married?
9. The Edmonites, whose land was located southeast of Israel, were the descendants of what man?
10. How many times does it say that the LORD God appeared unto Solomon (and what were the circumstances)?
11. Where did the book of Proverbs say that it was “better to dwell” than with a contentious and angry woman?
12. What are two reasons Jesus taught in parables?
13. In the division of the night into four watches, as we find in the Bible, which watch was called the “cock-crowing” watch?
14. What gospel writer speaks of himself distinctly in the third person as he writes (and what two other gospel writers in a less obvious way)?
15. What two secret disciples of Jesus were involved with taking care of his body after his crucifixion?
16. In which New Testament epistle does the writer call that which he has written “the word of exhortation,” and in the book of Acts what is called a “word of exhortation”?
17. The apostle Paul was from which tribe of Israel?
18. Who is the only New Testament writer outside of the gospel accounts that uses the term “hell” (gehenna) in his writings (the word used by Christ for the place of eternal punishment)?
19. Are there any other churches in Asia (the Roman province of Asia) mentioned in the New Testament besides the seven churches in Asia in the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:11)?
20. In John’s initial vision on the isle of Patmos in the book of Revelation, what do the seven stars and the seven gold candlesticks (lamp stands) represent?

(NOTE: Answers found elsewhere in this issue of the paper)

READERS'

...Response

APOLOGY: Please accept our humble apology for slowness in getting correspondence answered. "We" have no staff of secretaries, etc. to handle such, and this is done by the "editor" as time allows. Be it known that you are sincerely appreciated. ☐

SOUTH CAROLINA:

■ *"I think that THE SWORD AND STAFF is great and you back every thing with Scripture straight from God's Word. I thank God for your ability to publish this and I pray that God will be at your side and keep you healthy and able to continue for many years..."*

NORTH CAROLINA:

■ *"I am sending a small token of appreciation for all the benefits I have received from having THE SWORD AND STAFF. I have used it for so many things. I have copied the poetry to include in letters and presents. I've passed them to people in hospitals. It has meant so much to me through the years. If you have some bound copies or booklets, you can send them to me. I would like to have them..."*

TENNESSEE:

■ *"I'm so thankful for your SWORD AND STAFF. You have done a great service for God's kingdom all these years."*

KENTUCKY:

■ *"Please send me one copy [set] of the eighteen bound volumes [of THE SWORD AND STAFF] and one copy of 'Objections to the Necessity of Baptism Answered' and one copy of 'The Subject of the Holy Spirit Made Simple,' a study.*

"Keep up the good work that you are doing for God's Kingdom."

PENNSYLVANIA:

■ *"Please remove from your mailing list. Thanks!"*

■ *"Brother James, keep up the good work with the Word. May God bless your labor."*

■ *"Please accept this donation to your publication THE SWORD AND STAFF. I would like to add an additional address to your mailing list. I've included a donation for that as well. Thank you for continuing your hard work for our Lord."*

■ *"I always appreciate THE SWORD AND STAFF, and the last issue was full of great ideas from front to back! I used the article 'The Old Electric Chair' as a Lord's Supper exhortation.*

"I hope to use some of the articles as sermon starters. The quote from McGarvey on Pastors was right to the point. Seems like too many want to be like the denominations around them and be called Pastor. Reminds me of the Israelites wanting a king like the nations around them."

MARYLAND:

■ *"I don't know where to begin; so I'll just start in the middle.*

"Volume 48 # 3, Great! I have never seen or heard of your publication before. It caught my eye; I liked the title. I read your headline 'Excuses Answered.'

"This title headline is exactly what I'm teaching my middle school Sunday School class, I read it right there and then.

"I took it home and read the print right off the pages.

"I'm sure most of your first time responses sound much like mine. I want it. I'm going to look forward for each copy every time, just as I was a kid waiting for the BOY LIFE magazine.

"Please put me on your mailing list. Also I would like NOBODY LEFT BEHIND and the bound volumes 1991-1992 and 1993-1994.

"I hope the enclosed check will cover my requests."

MICHIGAN:

■ *"Please cancel my subscription to THE SWORD AND STAFF..."*

OHIO:

■ *"Thank you so very much for all you do for the Lord. You are greatly appreciated and admired...Enclosed is my contribution which I seem to have failed in mailing lately."*

■ *"Grace and peace to all of you from God our Father through Christ Jesus our Lord..."*

"Through several years we've received THE SWORD AND STAFF—and used many items in leading worship and lesson teaching. Our sincere thanks for the truth and studies. I am anxious to begin using the valuable Scriptural material recently sent. I plan to read, use, and share the information provided.

"May our Savior richly provide many blessings until he comes again."

INDIANA:

■ *"Enjoy your paper. Keep up the good work. We need more people like you."*

(Continued on Next Page)

READERS'...Response

(Continued from Previous Page)

■ "I have been receiving *THE SWORD AND STAFF* for years and have sent money a few times. Please send me 2 sets of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* [the bound volumes]..."

■ "Thank you so much for your offer of booklets and for the faithful teaching over the years. Carry on as long as the Lord gives you time and resources. Enclosed is a check for shipping and handling."

■ "Several years ago, at least 15 or 20, I used to receive *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. We have moved numerous times, and I have not gotten it. I had time to read one article in Volume 48, Number 3, and would like to receive this on a regular basis. I would also like to receive the one above, if possible, so I can continue with the reading.

"I also heard that you have bound volumes from the last few years. I would like to receive some of these also.

"I am enclosing a check..."

■ "Dear brother in Christ Jesus, my eternal brother, I am sending for some more of your 'on target' and 'Powerful Material.'

"Sometime ago I ordered all of your back issues of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. Upon receiving the materials, I began to distribute different pieces of that material to others in the fellowship. It has been so well received that I would like you to send me another set of all the bound volumes that you still have in print!

"Also, if you would please, send me a sample of all the booklets, tracts, etc..."

"I commend you for your tremendous work for the KING! Thank God for the printed page sent out by you and the Lord...Enclosed is a donation for your work. Thanks so much!"

ILLINOIS:

■ "I have seen your paper *THE SWORD AND STAFF*. I have not had the opportunity to read it, but it looks interesting and helpful. I would like to receive your paper in our home..."

MISSOURI:

■ "May this be of some help. May it be an encouragement. May it serve to advance the kingdom, and may it bring honor to our blessed Lord and to His dear Son." (Thanks—**Editor**)

■ "Through the years I have read a few of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* publications and enjoyed what you have written. Don't know why I have waited so long to get on your mailing list..."

"I would appreciate the bound volumes of *THE SWORD AND STAFF* (1989-2008) and some sample pamphlets. Also would like to be added to your present mailing list. Contribution enclosed.

"Thank you..."

LOUISIANA:

■ "For many years I had read *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, then I moved without forwarding an address to you. Therefore my subscription lapsed. Just recently I changed congregations (ours closed) and I saw a copy of the paper in their tract rack. I brought a copy home and read it, enjoying it very much.

"In the Readers' Response there was an answer to the question, 'Is the Sabbath day binding and for us today?' I found your answer to be very biblical and complete. I would like to reprint it and mail it to a 7th Day Adventist. Due to the content of most TV programs, I very seldom watch anything but the news or the religious programs. In the early AM I watch Derek Morris and enjoy the Bible teachings very much. With your permission I would like to mail him your answer to the question.

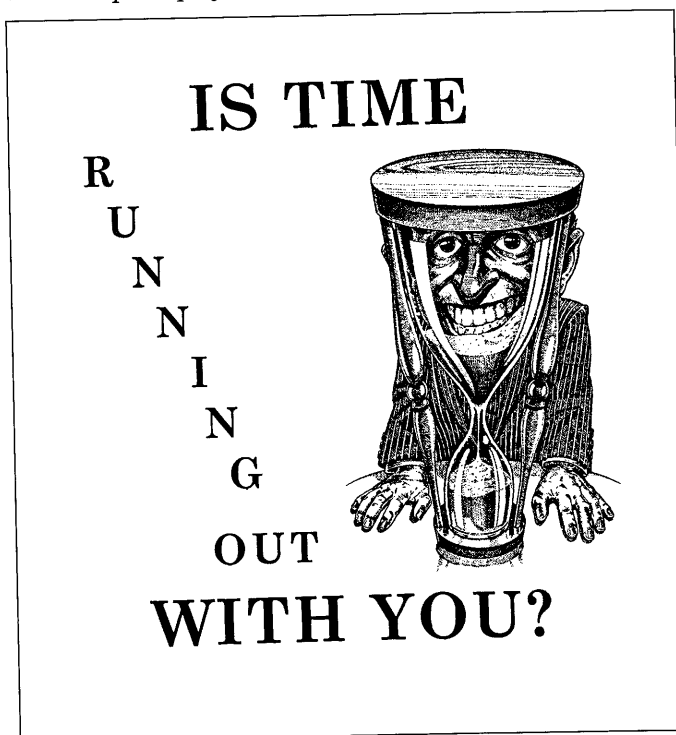
"We love your work, knowing it has touched many people. Even though we have never met you, we love you as a Christian brother."

KANSAS:

■ "Keep up the good work! We appreciate your work very much!"

COLORADO:

■ "I recently ordered all the available bound volumes of *THE SWORD AND STAFF*, which I shall treasure and hopefully read over many times—thank you so much for the book of poems and for shipping all of the above so promptly!"



Scriptures about Time: Ecclesiastes 3:1-2; Psalms 90:1-12; 2 Corinthians 6:2; Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 5:14-17; 1 Peter 1:15-17; Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 25:46.

"I greatly appreciate your dedication to speaking the truth, especially in these perilous and decadent times..."

NEW MEXICO:

■ *"Greetings in the Name of our Lord. I have been receiving your very fine paper for a number of years and have greatly benefited from your teaching..."*

"God bless and keep you strong in the Lord." □

"Little Things Mean a Lot"

(Continued from Page 8)

governed by this (and would take place), falling under these categories. That is why Jesus said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Enter the Scribes and Pharisees

But leave it to the confirmed sectarians to get things all messed up! Of and to these very same people (the Pharisees) who had asked the Lord this weighty question about the "great commandment," he said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23). They were majoring in minors while at the same time disregarding the major. A little part of the big picture was being magnified without even seeing the rest of the picture wherein all of it was framed. Jesus did not condemn them for what they were doing in tithing of little things, but for that which they had left undone (judgment, mercy and faith).

We are not without such problems today. Let us learn from the simple lesson. Let us stand for all of the truth in its fullness (Matthew 28:20).

V. LITTLE THINGS AND THEIR FAR REACHING IMPACT

The "Wages" of One Sin

Sin is an awful thing before God who is holy and says to man (made in his image), "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). God is perfection. The apostle Paul states in Romans 6:23 that "the wages of sin is death..." Please note grammatically that the word "sin" here is singular. The "wages" of one sin is death. That is how bad sin is to God. This can be seen from the beginning in the Garden of Eden experience of man. Consequently, the far reaching impact of the original sin is felt even today, and the extended results of sin will continue throughout eternity. However, it is great to know

that not only is God holy, he is love (1 John 4:8,16; John 3:16). How wonderful to read the rest of Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; *but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Yes, the impact of sin is awful and far reaching, but, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15). We have a Savior; there is a plan of salvation.

"How Great a Matter a Little Fire Kindleth"

In telling us how little things can make a big impact, James said, "Even so the tongue is a *little* member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a *little* fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (James 3:5-6). The tongue may be little, but like a little fire out of control it can be most destructive. Potentially, the whole world could become ablaze because of one little fire. James says the tongue "is set on fire of hell." This is the only time Gehennah is found outside of the synoptic gospels. It is the Greek word that is translated "hell," the place of punishment. Here the devil, his angels, and all who serve him will be assigned for eternity (Matthew 25:41,46). The great devastation coming from the tongue, the little member, is pictured as coming straight from hell.

"A Little Leaven Leaveneth the Whole Lump"

Evidently this must have been a saying in circulation and well understood by the early church. A lump of leaven is small, but when it accomplishes its purpose, the results are big. The apostle Paul uses this saying two times in his writings (1 Corinthians 5:6 and Galatians 5:9). He uses it to show how sin had permeated the church at Corinth and had really become a big problem that had to be dealt with. The second reference in Galatians has to do with Judaism coming into the Gentile churches in Galatia. They had given these false teachers a hearing and before they knew it the churches were given over to a perverted gospel, combining the Law of Moses with the gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-8; 5:4). A foothold was all that was needed by the Judaizers. Then they worked their havoc "big time" among the fickle Galatians. "A *little* leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Perhaps today we need to revive this little proverb and take warning. Little things not dealt with become big before we know it.

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“Little Things Mean a Lot”

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A Little Folly and a Man's Reputation

“Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary [the oil of the perfumer] to send forth a stinking savour [odor]: so doth a *little* folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour” (Ecclesiastes 10:1). Special ointments were prepared to be used as holy anointing oil and fragrance in connection with the religious activities of the tabernacle and later the temple (Exodus 30:22-38). At times it seems that flies would get into the ointment and it would produce an awful odor. Likewise, doing wrong can mess up a good man's reputation in a big way. If we live it up, we may have a hard time living it down. David experienced this. One act of indiscretion messed up his whole life (2 Samuel 11:1-12:14). To try to cover up his adultery, and the conception that took place, David called Bathsheba's husband (Uriah) home from the battlefield, thinking he would sleep with her, and it would look like he had fathered the child. Uriah wouldn't cooperate, so David had him sent to the front line of battle where he was killed. Later the prophet Nathan confronted David, and told him because of what he had done “the sword will never depart from they house.” A “little folly” messed up his reputation and its consequence followed him the rest of his life. Little things can be far reaching in their impact.

VI. LITTLE THINGS ARE INVOLVED IN CHRISTIAN LIVING AND THE COMING JUDGMENT Life Made Up of Little Things

Normal everyday living is usually made up of many little things and only occasionally something “big.” The same is true of Christian living, only that “little things” are not little in the eyes of God. Everything is important. “Little things mean a lot.” The apostle Paul said, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Showing the significance even of the smallest, the Lord said, “For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward” (Mark 9:41). Jesus further said, “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account there-of in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37). Christianity is about every facet and finger of life. The angel said to the apostles, “Go, stand and

speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20). Christianity is life itself.

From Another Perspective

But from another perspective, little is not a lot in determining our acceptance with God, but a lot in the other direction. When people love the Lord just a little, someone has said: A little rain, a little cold, a little company, a little excuse can keep them from attending church. A little money is given the Lord; a little half-hearted service is rendered a little. Prayer and Bible study are engaged in a little, if a little at all. Little grief is manifested over sin and personal shortcomings. There will be little persecution and little cross-bearing. Little concern is provoked because of lost sinners in the world and backsliders in the church. This kind of little is big, but not big as far as acceptance with God is concerned. Little infractions indicate big spiritual problems. In the Day of Judgment, we will see just how big these little things really are.

“Little Things” and the Day of Judgment

We come back now to the Scripture that got our attention at the beginning of this article, Matthew 25:21-46 (the Day of Judgment). The Lord said, “For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat [food]: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in [showed hospitality]: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Some food given, a drink of water, visitation—these things, though seemingly small, enter into eternal judgment. The Lord explained, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,” and, “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me” (Matthew 25:40,45; Colossians 3:23). At the end of the chapter (Matthew 25:46), we find the concluding words, “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” Yes, it will happen just like Paul said, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). In the Day of Judgment, everything will be taken into consideration. “Little things mean a lot.”

Deeds Are Works of Faith

Certainly many other things will be involved in how we are judged besides benevolent deeds that we have done (Matthew 7:21-23; Mark 16:16; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 1:8; 5:19-21; Revelation

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Ways It Won't Work

IT IS SAID that Thomas Edison performed 50,000 experiments before he succeeded in producing a storage battery. We might assume the famous inventor would have had some serious doubts along the way. But when asked if he ever became discouraged working so long without results, Edison replied, "Results? Why, I know 50,000 things that won't work."

—Selected



BARBS

...with a POINT

WHERE is hell? At the end of an ungodly life.

You must be right with God and live right before you can die right (and if you are not right then, you will never be right).

Grace is all about saving us from our sins, not in our sins.

If you fall as a Christian, it is from a very great height (i.e., heavenly places—Ephesians 2:6) and consequently can be totally devastating.

It is hard to find a sensible explanation for a foolish action.

If you trim yourself to fit everybody, pretty soon there won't be much of you left (and you won't know who you really are).

People with discord in their lives sow discord among their brethren.

If you are really clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27; Romans 13:14; Colossians 3:10), your spiritual life will not be threadbare.

So many of our problems that are to our undoing are because of our wrongdoing.

You cannot spend money that you do not have, so don't pretend that you can (it will only be to your hurtful consequence).

It is human to err, divine to forgive, but devilish to continue in our sins.

To tack religion on to your life, when you have never repented of your sins and surrendered your all unto God, is but to feign religion and engage in an exercise of futility.

Long term decisions should not be made in the midst of short term confusion.

Regardless how a person's sexual orientation came about of being disposed toward homosexuality, there is no way that it can be called right.

If you try to run away from your problems, you will find they can run faster than you.

A person all wrapped up in himself makes a mighty small package.

When we repent of self-righteousness, let us be careful lest we throw righteousness out the door.

You cannot escape the flames of hell by throwing yourself into the fire.

If we compromise and lower God's standards to accommodate our children, do you think that God will compromise and lower his standards to accommodate us in what we have done.

With the "one talent" man, the fear of failure made him a failure (Matthew 25:25).

People who think that they have all the answers evidently haven't heard all of the questions yet.

When you no longer love the truth, it is easy to lose your distinctive convictions.

If you are a person who likes to say what you think, you better think before you say it.

Some people have the ability to talk much and to say little.


Some people who "pride" themselves in thinking "outside of the box" probably were never in the box to start with.

If you overdo something, you will probably have to do it over.

The successful marriage is where our mates have learned all about us, with our many weaknesses and shortcomings (and who doesn't have them?), and they love us anyhow.

To the extent that we surrender our responsibilities we surrender our liberties..

If you love the LORD God with all of your heart, you shouldn't have any problem in wanting to obey all of the commandments of the LORD. □



A Horse Can't Pull While Kicking

A horse can't pull while kicking.
This fact we merely mention.
And he can't kick while pulling,
Which is our chief contention.

Let's imitate the good old horse
And lead a life that's fitting;
Just pull an honest load, and then
There'll be no time for kicking.

—Anonymous

“Little Things Mean a Lot”

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22:18-19; etc.). And we should not look upon the deeds whereby we are judged as works of human merit or righteousness. Didn't Paul say, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved up, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]" (Titus 3:5; John 3:5; Acts 2:28)? (Likewise, he wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"). Our works as a Christian are works of faith (James 2:14-26), not works of merit. We could never merit or earn salvation. Our deeds and works are proof of faith whereby we are thereby justified (Romans 5:1) They are the outworking of our faith. "Little things mean a lot."

Closing Statement

AGAIN, as we close out this article on "Little Things," which has turned out to be anything but little, we repeat, "Little things mean a lot." Remember that well. Let us not underrate, undervalue, or think that well. Let us not despise the "day of small things," as the prophet Zechariah said (Zechariah 4:10). We serve the Almighty God who is big beyond our comprehension. With the apostle Paul we ask, and reassuringly take note. "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). That makes the difference. Amen! □

—G. K. Chesterton

“Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found hard and not tried.”

—G. K. Chesterton

The Ten Persecutions

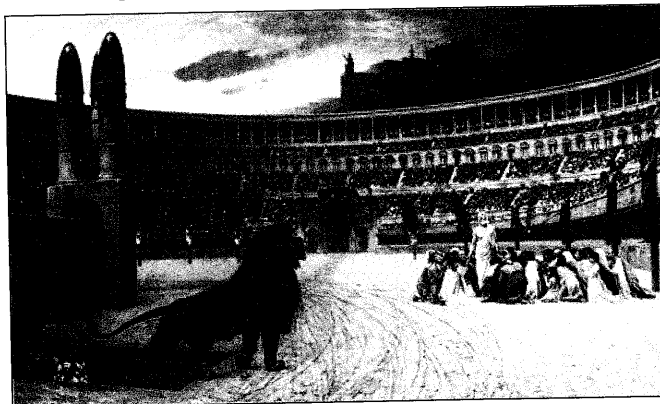
Question: When Were the 10 Christian Persecutions in the Early Church?

Answer: Many people have heard of Nero throwing Christians to the lions, but Nero isn't the only emperor who was involved in persecuting the early Christians. The following are the 10 major persecutions of Christians under the various emperors named.

1. Nero (64 A.D.)
2. Domitian (c.90-96)
3. Trajan (98-117)
4. Hadrian (117-138)
5. Marcus Aurelius (161-181)
6. Septimus Severus (202-211)
7. Maximus the Thracian (235-251)
8. Decius (249-251)
9. Valerian (257-260)
10. Diocletian / Galerius (303-311)

—Selected

Tacitus on Nero, Christ and Christianity



ON JULY 19TH, 64 AD, a fire raged in Rome and burned for nine days, finally destroying or damaging almost three-fourths of the city, including many public buildings. Rumors spread and persisted that the fire had been started by Nero. And according to Tacitus, to put an end to such rumors, Nero blamed the disaster on the Christians. They were arrested and subjected to the worst cruelty and death.

Tacitus was a Roman historian of renown who lived from 56 A.D. to 120 A.D. This quotation from his *Annals of Imperial Rome* was one of the earliest references to Christ and Christianity from a non-Christian source, written about 116 A.D. It shows how pagan Rome generally looked upon Christianity. We are startled by the savage and insensitive brutality of the emperor Nero. Here are the words of Tacitus.

44.2. "Yet no human effort, no princely largess nor offerings to the gods could make that infamous rumor disappear that Nero had somehow ordered the fire. Therefore, in order to abolish that rumor, Nero falsely accused and executed with the most exquisite punishments those people called Christians, who were infamous for their abominations."

44.3. "The originator of the name, Christ, was executed as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius; and though repressed, this destructive superstition erupted again, not only through Judea, which was the origin of this evil, but also through the city of Rome, to which all that is horrible and shameful floods together and is celebrated."

44.4. "Therefore, first those were seized who admitted their faith, and then, using the information they provided, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much for the crime of burning the city, but for hatred of the human race. And perishing they were additionally made into sports: they were killed by dogs by having the hides of beasts attached to them, or they were nailed to crosses or set aflame, and, when the daylight passed away, they were used as night-time lamps."

44.5. "Nero gave his own gardens for this spectacle and performed a Circus game, in the habit of a charioteer mixing with the plebs or driving about the race-course. Even though they were clearly guilty and merited being made the most recent example of the consequences of crime, people began to pity these sufferers, because they were consumed not for the public good but on account of the fierceness of one man." □

O Church, Shape Up! Stand Up! and Speak Up!

A church once stood for truth and right;
To have it preached was its delight;
But things today are not the same;
Alas! Has all gone down the drain?

That church is now an empty shell;
Poured out is truth it would not tell;
Its message now has lost its ring,
As with the world it has its fling.

O church, shape up! And be yourself;
Stand up; speak up, for we're not deaf;
Again speak up with certain sound;
The word of truth and right expound!

—By James E. Gibbons

Where is Happiness?

Not in unbelief —

Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."

Not in pleasure —

Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure, if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and the grief are mine alone."

Not in money —

Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."

Not in position and fame —

Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood, a struggle; old age, a regret."

Not in military glory —

Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept, because, he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where, then, is happiness found? The answer is simple: In Christ alone. He said, "I will see you

again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

See: Ecc. 2:10-11; Luke 10:20; John 16:20-22

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Some new booklets have just been added to the list of printed materials available and listed on the back page. They are "EXCUSES ANSWERED" (This appeared in last issue of *The Sword and Staff* and has already been requested) and "You, Your Insecurities and God" (Many have checked this out on our website). We believe you can make good use of this material. Some already have.—Editor □

HELP US get out the message of God's Word. If this publication has been a blessing to you, help us increase our mailing list by enrolling others to receive this paper.—Editor □

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Answers to:

BIBLE QUESTIONS

1. Job 1:1; 2. The Almighty (Job 5:17, etc.); 3. Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8; 4. Genesis 37:34; Job 1:20; Jeremiah 48:37 (Deuteronomy 14:1-2); 5. Genesis 25:1-4; 6. Judges 8:24; 7. Deuteronomy 11:29 (27:11-28:14, etc.); 8. Deuteronomy 24:5; 9. Genesis 36; 10. 1 Kings 3:5-15; 9:2-9; 11. Proverbs 21:9, 19; 12. To reveal and to conceal (Matthew 13:11); 13. Mark 13:35; 14. John (13:23; 19:26; 21:20-24); Matthew (9:9-13) and Mark (14:51-52, this is believed to be Mark); 15. John 19:38-42 (Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53); 16. Hebrews 13:22; Acts 13:15-41 (it was the lesson or sermon that was spoken); 17. Philippians 3:4-6; 18. James 3:6; 19. Acts 20:5-7; Colossians 1:1-2; 4:15, etc.; 20. Revelation 1:20. □

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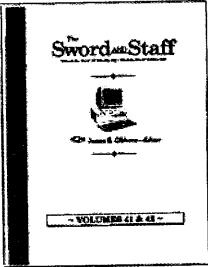
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