

As For Me And My House

by Dr. Manford George Gutzke

After Joshua had "waxed old and stricken in age" he gathered all the tribes of Israel to Schechem. There called for the officers, the judges and the elders of Israel, they came and presented themselves before God. Then Joshua addressed this solemn assembly, knowing that the day was near when he would leave them. He wanted to give Israel words of counsel and help; leaving with them his final instructions, and a challenge as to their future course as a nation.

With Israel standing before him Joshua spoke: "Thus saith the Lord." He reminded them of their father Abraham who left his home and his kind in answer to God's call. He told them again of God's gracious promise to make of Abraham a great nation and to give him the lands of the heathen nations. Joshua reminded them of Israel's bitter years of servitude in Egypt and the great and mighty deliverance which God wrought for them by the hand of Moses. He recalled to their minds the parting of the Red Sea as they fled before the Egyptians, and their victories over all their enemies by the hand of God.

Joshua went on to tell Israel that if they would live in peace and safety in the promised land which God had given them they must worship God only. He concluded his words by saying, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood in Egypt and serve ye the Lord." After this Joshua challenged all Israel by his own example, saying: "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*"

"As For Me and My House" is taken from these words of Joshua. The succeeding chapters will deal with truths involved in the foundations of the home life of Christians. The phrase "the Christian home," is not a Bible phrase. The Bible speaks of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of master and servants; but it does not say anything about a "home" or a "family." The Bible deals with individuals, it does not address itself to the community. When we think of "the Christian home," we will actually be thinking about individuals living together as Christians.

In a home where Christians live, these people worship God, and will honor God in their home. To honor God in his home, the Christian would first be conscious of the presence of God and the reality of God in his home. As such, the Christian will give thanks to God before each meal. Also there would be a time set aside for family devotions. Here the members of the family would gather to read the Scriptures and spend some time in prayer. Added to this there would be a reverence toward God in his conduct, in his speech, and in his manner of life. The Christian would be aware of the holiness of God and, at no time would the name of God be carelessly used.

I would expect a Christian to respect the Lord's Day. Treat Sunday in a different fashion from the other days of the week.

In the home of a Christian, the adult will lay aside some of his income to support the church and missions. Now let us consider how Christians will act in the home with respect to their relationship to each other. The husband – wife relationship will be maintained on the level of mutual love and esteem. This does not mean that either will necessarily approve everything the other does. They may not always agree, but basically they will appreciate that they do belong to each other. As they work together they will talk things over, sharing in the common tasks in the home. They will worship together, go out together. Sharing in love and esteem all things together.

When there are children in the home the parents will share the responsibilities of their care. Because

the parents are Christians, they will not only provide for their children but also bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In a home where Christians live the adults will maintain a certain pattern of social conduct. There will be honesty, integrity and industry. A Christian, who is motivated from within by the Spirit of God, will do his part in whatever needs to be done. Parents who are Christians, will bring up their children to know that they are responsible to God in their daily conduct. They will never get away from the fact that they belong to God, and will want to walk in His way.

In a home where Christians live, they will be led to honor God; to respect authority, and to be charitable to the poor. They will be led by example, and precept and by discipline of the parents.

Thus it will follow that certain standards will be set up and kept. Parents will be considerate toward each other. The young people and the older people will be thoughtful of one another. Because they honor the Lord and His Word, they will witness to those around them by their conduct, and the Lord Jesus Christ will live in their own homes in such a way as to honor His presence and His name.

The Christian Man In His Home

The Bible sets forth a clear description of the sort of man a Christian could be in his home.

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor. In whose eyes a vile person is condemned; but he honoreth them that fear the Lord. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved." Psalms 15.

Today when a man is a Christian and is living in his home as a husband, perhaps a father of children, a neighbor among neighbors, a good citizen of his country, and wants to be blessed, what could he do? First of all, he can get right with God. Deep down in his own heart, any man can acknowledge that as far as he personally is concerned, he is a sinner: that he has a disposition to be proud and selfish. Such a man can repent from the bottom of his heart. He can look up to God and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." This man will be saved because Jesus Christ died for his sins.

All in the world a man needs to do is to open his heart and receive Jesus Christ. A man must do this to get right with God. After he has accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior, a man can trust the promises of God. He can take to heart God's promises: "I will never leave thee or forsake thee: I will be with thee in the day of trouble." A man who believes and trusts God can receive the Holy Spirit. "To as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the children of God."

In whatever community he lives, he will join the church that stands for the Gospel, and participate. He will attend it regularly and take part in the worship services, supporting it with his gifts. He could invite others to come to church. Bringing someone else to his own church will bring a man as close to his church as he will ever be in his life.

When he is thinking about the church, he needs to remember: "Don't criticize it." If he wants to criticize the church, let him lift up his voice to God and criticize the church; but never find fault with the church before men. It is not their church. It is the Lord's church. Here we may recall the old negro spiritual that goes: "You can talk about me just all you please; I'll talk about you down on my knees."

When a man gets right with God he can pray to God in his own home. The sooner he begins to return thanks at each meal in his own home, the better it will be. I know that for some men it is almost out of the question to have family worship in the home. Many men leave home in the morning before the family is awake, and don't get back till it is so late that everything is so crowded and cluttered that they can do nothing about it. Yet even then family worship is so important that it could not be over emphasized: if

a man wants to be a Christian in his own home, he should plan his home life so that there will be times when the family gets together to read the Bible and to pray to God.

It is possible to begin any time. No matter how long neglected.

Beyond praying with the family I would suggest a time of private prayer. A man might say, "But I just don't know how to do it." I want to tell you something, brother: "Read your Bible in the presence of God. Get a quiet secluded spot and read your Bible out loud. This will give strength.

If a Christian wants his life in this world to be worthwhile, the three essentials I have pointed out are absolutely necessary. Unless a man gets right with God, unites with a church, that man loses tremendous help for his daily living. Without prayer in his own home, he misses the blessing which talking to God brings.

There are other helps for a Christian. He can honor the Lord's day. I am impressed with one thing for sure: I have never seen anyone who neglected the Sabbath Day who was strong spiritually.

If any Christian wants to grow spiritually, this is a very simple procedure: for one day in the week let him cut out everything he possibly can that has to do with personal entertainment and with personal profit because he wants to honor God. The results will be remarkable. Just let it be known that there are some things you will not do because it is Sunday, and the blessing will be yours!

There is something further a Christian can do which will surely bring blessing to him. He can tithe his income. Someone may say, "I do not have much money." In that case it will not cost him much to tithe. Someone else may say, "I have such a large income: you have no idea how big my tithe would be." In that case the person can afford it. There is really no alibi for neglecting to serve God with one's money. I am writing to tell the Christian who does believe in God, who honors the Sabbath Day and tithes, these words apply to him: "Him that honoreth Me, I will honor." That's the promise of Almighty God.

Further, he will respect God's house. He will be careful what he does with the Bible, God's Book. He will be careful about how he feels about the work of the church: its orphanages, its schools and its missions, – everything that is connected with the Lord's work. And I can assure you, God will bless such a man!

With all this in mind we can assure him of a glorious future: he can expect to go to heaven. He can have this wonderful truth in his mind as a daily thought. He can just get himself ready for it. He can keep in mind that when he leaves here he is going there!

Any Christian who lives his daily life in this fashion can certainly expect that the Lord will have done much to get ready for him. He can expect that God will keep him. He will find that as far as the Lord is concerned: "the Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants, and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." God is a gracious God, and He has given promises. God will honor those who honor Him: there is nothing better for a man than that.

The Christian Woman In The Home

We are considering "The Christian in the Home." Now we will consider "The Christian Woman in the Home." One of the most eloquent passages of Scripture in regard to women is found in Proverbs 31:10-31. This famous passage shows clearly what the Old Testament has to say about women. Some people would leave the impression that the Old Testament gives woman an inferior status, suggesting that she is inferior to man. But the Word of God speaks very clearly at this point.

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She

considereth a field and buyeth it : with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband and is known in the gates, where he sitteth among the elders of the land. she maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and called her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates." Proverbs 31:10-31.

It is true that the treatment of woman as inferior to man is the common scandal of human history. But this is not what the Bible teaches. In the Genesis account of the creation of man, woman was taken from the side of man. She was not taken from his head as though she were to dominate him; nor from his feet, as though he should walk on her; but she was taken from his side to be his companion in devotion and affection and love. The Old Testament states "that in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them." In other words, one was not lesser than the other, nor was one better than the other.

Many of the Scriptural truths that have to do with woman are demonstrated by the women of the Bible. The first woman mentioned in the Bible is Eve. It is written she was created to be a "helper" to Adam. This is very profound. The language in the King James version reads, "a helper meet for him." And the word "meet" means equal to.

Now let us note another famous woman: Sarah – the name means princess – the wife of Abraham, There are many things to be learned from the life of Abraham, that great man of faith. At one time in his life there was some confusion in his mind as to what action he should take in regard to sending away Ishmael, his heart seemed to be so affected by his personal affection for the boy. The Word of the Lord came to him saying, "Hearken unto the voice of Sarah thy wife."

We need not study in detail about Hagar, Sarah's maid, who fled when Sarah dealt hardly with her. God spoke to her in the desert to where she had fled, and told her to return and submit herself to her mistress. Thus it was with Hagar, born a servant; she lived as a servant; she died as a servant. Does that mean that she'll be a servant in glory? Oh no! But in this world this was her role, and as a servant she needed to learn submission.

We may call to remembrance the story of Hannah. Hannah felt so deprived. She had cried to God in her deep distress. She wanted God to help her in an unbearable situation. When she put herself totally into His hands, God answered her prayer. Hannah goes down in all history as an outstanding woman whom God heard and whom God answered.

Among all the women of the Bible, Ruth stands out as the faithful one. She would not leave her mother-in-law. Her words were eloquent – they are a classic in their simplicity and in their profound commitment.

"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." Ruth 1:16-17.

History tells us that she became the wife of Boas, a mighty man of wealth. Their eldest son Obed was the father of David, the King. In this way Ruth actually became an ancestor of Jesus of Nazareth.

Another woman of the Old Testament who merits our attention is the widow of Zarephath. She is the one who went out to look for a few sticks of wood to light her last fire, that she might bake a cake with her last bit of meal and oil for her son and herself. They were about to die of starvation because the famine was great in the land. Elijah met her and said to her: "Make me a little cake thereof first." This confronted

her with an amazing challenge: she was to take her last bit of meal and her last drop of oil to make a cake that was to be given to this man of God. How wonderful to read that she did not hesitate! she did according to the request of Elijah, and God worked a miracle. Her barrel of meal never grew empty and the cruse of oil never grew less. Her experience will forever be an encouragement to obey the commandment of God.

In looking into the New Testament it will be helpful to speak of Mary the mother of Jesus, "favored above all women." In her response, "Behold thy handmaiden, be it unto me even as thou wilt," she is an example of total submission. She was willing to yield herself to the will of Almighty God so that miraculous things should happen to her.

Then there was Mary of Bethany, the one who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words; who followed Him even as she loved to listen to Him. when the time of His departure was near, when she knew that the day was coming that He would die, she took a box of precious ointment and poured it over His head and feet. With this act of devotion she anointed the body of her Lord before His death looking forward to His burial.

Next we may note Martha, the worried one. She was a real believer, a truly faithful woman, but overly concerned about little things. Oh, may every woman take these words of Jesus to heart; "Martha, Martha, Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." Jesus also said to her, "thou art worried, fearful about many things." He told her Mary had the right idea: first, the Kingdom of God, then "all other things will be added unto you."

We may also think of Mary Magdalene. This woman had not lived a good nor a fruitful life. She had not been a happy woman, "out of whom went seven devils." But to Mary Magdalene an honor belongs that nobody on earth can ever claim. She was the last at the cross – the first at the grave. Some day each one of us will actually hear from the lips of our risen Lord and Savior, our own personal name spoken as Mary's was. With her tear-blinded eyes, she had looked into His face thinking Him to be the gardener, and had heard her Lord say: "Mary!" Oh how it must have thrilled her soul to hear His voice!

God has a definite place and a definite plan for the life of a Christian woman, "Rejoice, God has His eye on you."

The Baby In The Christian Home

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 19:14.

The Bible teaches little of children. However in the Gospel of Matthew a clear and significant statement is recorded which deals specifically with little children.

It is possible that Jesus was speaking particularly to believers when His disciples asked Him, "who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?" And He replied, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven." Yet surely God has a special interest in little children as such, and He holds adult people directly responsible for what happens to them. "whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." These are words of dire and terrible warning. My own heart is very much concerned when I see parents who conduct themselves in such a way as to mislead their children with reference to Almighty God, and who destroy their faith in Him.

Without a doubt, little children are the responsibility of the parents. Because this is so we will consider "the baby in the home" from the standpoint of the Christian. First let us look at the little child himself. The baby is a complex of many elements.

Does heredity matter? As far as the baby is concerned it is a combination of the parents. Each child

will have some of the characteristics of both parents.

Environment seems in many ways to be even more significant. So far as culture is concerned the baby does not have any choice. The baby is born into a home, the way it is, and there he has parents. If there is quietness and peace, reasonableness and intelligence as a regular procedure, a child learns to develop along those lines. If there is anger and cruelty and unkindness, the child can very early grow into a situation that will be most harmful to him.

The baby itself develops its human nature through association with human beings. Yet there are some basic factors which belong to the baby from birth. Should we call them sinful? Yes, I would. From the time the baby is born, selfishness comes naturally. The infant will think of himself and what he wants. Parents who have had babies in their home could testify. Let us ask such parents: "How old must a baby be before he knows that he should not throw his spoon on the floor?" The truth is that he knows long before he can talk whether he is doing what is agreeable to his parents or agreeable to himself. Sinful? Yes. That is exactly what sin is: disobedience and rebellion. Certainly not to the same degree as an adult; but sinful? Yes!

If I want anyone to see what human nature is like, they should sit at the bedside of a baby, the younger the better. Everything he sees, he wants to grab. Everything he grabs, he wants to hold; whatever he holds, he will hold on to for dear life. Everything he can manage to put into his mouth, he will stick into his mouth. Innocent? Yes, but very real.

In other words, a baby is just a human being that is primarily interested in the things that affect him. Because this is so, parents have both responsibility and an opportunity. Human nature can be trained. When the parents are Christians, the human nature of their child can be trained into patterns of conduct acceptable to the standards of Christians.

Can they give their child a concept of God? Yes, and before he is three years of age, before he can really understand what it is all about. The baby will get a concept of God from the atmosphere of adults and their behavior in the home. When there is quietness and stability in the home atmosphere, because of the strength given by the parents, the child will learn to accept this as being as it should be. It will not be difficult to teach a child in such a home that all good things come from God.

When a child sees affection in the home, the father and mother treating each other with consideration, he will very soon learn that people do things for one another. In such an atmosphere the child will learn very early that the proper thing would be to show consideration and love for others. Such a child is actually ready to believe that God will be kind and gracious.

What parents do openly, so far as God is concerned, makes an impression on the mind of the child. Take this matter of prayer. The baby will notice when the parents return thanks at meals. This is very important for the child to see. The child knows how he eats and what he wants. He may cry until he gets his food, and when he gets his food, he will seize it and start at once to eat it. A baby need not be very old before he will notice the grown persons sitting at the table with food before them. He will notice how they bow their heads and close their eyes. A child would not need to be very old before he will know that the people are thanking Someone for the meal. This has a profound influence on the child.

Another practice that impresses the child is the matter of family worship. The child sees the older people in the family getting together, taking the Bible, opening it and reading it. Even a baby who is just a little toddler will know something important is happening when people open the Bible and when they read that Bible. Then too there is the matter of family prayer. When children see their parents bowing their heads in prayer, it affects them. When children see their parents getting on their knees, they learn more about God than the parents could ever teach if they argued about God. Then there is private prayer. If the child can happen to see the father kneeling in prayer, or the mother praying, this too will profoundly impress him. I would covet for every boy growing up, that he might remember his father on his knees before God.

Also there is such a thing as Sabbath observance. From the time the child is very young, he will notice when one day is treated differently from others. And there are other things a baby will notice before the baby can walk or even talk: he will know about being taken to church. When the child is only a few years old he will notice whether his parents put money into the collection plate, and how they treat other people.

It is also wonderfully true that a child will learn by listening to his parents that there is a wonderful place called heaven. He will learn that his parents some day expect to go there. My prayer is that all Christian parents may realize what profound and lasting results will follow their daily example to their child. "Suffer little children to come unto Me."

The Teen-ager In The Christian Home

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

These words found in the 119th Psalm point up our thinking for this day and age.

It is probably true that of all the members of a family, the teen-ager suffers most from not being understood for what he is. The teen-ager, the adolescent, is at the point of becoming an adult, a time of choosing. He chooses ideals: which person is he going to be like? He chooses heroes among the people he knows.

When he gets a little older he will identify himself with certain causes. He will no longer be looking only for heroes, he will now have a cause, and he will devote himself to that.

With reference to the situation existing between the teen-ager and the adults around him, as far as the teen-ager is concerned there exists a certain state of war between him and society as a whole, with its persons, its principles, and its rules. Sometimes this rebellion is dormant, but it is always real.

Perhaps one of the biggest mistakes being made today, among those who would lead us in dealing with teen-agers' problems, is to gather the teen-agers together in groups that we might discuss world affairs with them. They are not ready for that. There is too much to be learned between where they are and the world outside. I know they'll meet the world eventually, but first they will meet the world in their homes and in their schools. They'll meet the world in their neighborhoods and in their towns. By the time he gets to where he could do something everything will probably be changed anyway.

What about the teen-ager facing the general problems of life as a whole? This is good: he is ready for that. He can think about his own life. What about the teen-ager and God? He is ready, because when he looks up to God and deals with God he is dealing with his own destiny. He can think about eternal life and eternal death. The teen-ager can look ahead and consider what kind of a person he wants to be. He can decide how he wants to act toward God.

One way to appreciate the opportunities and the significance of living for teen-agers, is to notice the various teen-agers in the Bible. When the name of Joseph is mentioned, many will think of him as the man who became prime minister of Egypt. He was the important official who was in charge of the country's whole economy. Joseph is actually introduced in the Bible as a teen-ager, and it was right then that he manifested that he could be trusted.

Another teen-ager to be considered is David. When Samuel the prophet came to anoint him King, David was a shepherd lad. He was old enough to take care of the sheep, but not old enough to be in the army. Apparently he was in his teens, and yet he was given to understand then that he would become King of Israel.

Deep long thoughts may occur in the heart and mind of the teen-ager. In David's case he was anointed to be king while he was still a lad, tending his sheep and playing his flute on the hillside. As a matter of fact he was still very young when he faced Goliath. The giant felt insulted because a mere boy, just a stripling, came up to fight against him.

Daniel was a college student when he took his stand, purposing in his heart that he would not defile himself by partaking of food forbidden by God's law. He did this while under the supervision of a foreign government.

Three other teen-agers in the Scriptures manifest characteristic attitudes and moods that can be found among young people. We could take for instance the case of Moses in what he did when he came of age, just at the end of his adolescent period. "Moses chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season." When Moses tried to compose the difference between two Hebrews who were quarreling, they turned on him, asking him who made him a ruler and a judge over them. Referring to this Stephen said, "He supposed that they would have known, that it was he that should redeem Israel." This reflects one of the characteristic experiences of a teen-ager; perplexity! He can't figure out why people do not realize the importance of what he is going to do. Moses felt that he would be a really important man. And he did become one of the greatest men in all history.

In the days of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, a committee from the people came and asked him to lessen the tax burden which his father had placed upon the people. Solomon had been an extravagant monarch, and had spent so much of their money. He felt that easing the tax load would mean some cut-back in the government program. He showed another characteristic of a young person: "impatience." It's hard for a young man to wait. "Now" is the time for him. So Rehoboam sent back word that if his father had put heavy burdens on them, he'd make them even heavier. In this he was brash and bold and arrogant. The result was dire. He lost more than ten tribes who turned away from him as a consequence of his impatience and foolishness.

Another characteristic problem of youth is exemplified by the Prodigal Son. It is so plain to see his "rebellion." He wanted to get away from everything: he wanted to get away from his father's control – wanted to get away from the home situation. "Give me that which is mine and let me go; and he gathered together all that he had and departed into a far country." The story of the Prodigal Son is well known, and his unhappy experiences is remembered by all.

These three examples illustrate characteristics of young people emerging into maturity: perplexity because other people do not recognize the important events the future holds for them; impatience – because now is the time, tomorrow is too far away; rebellion – freedom to do what they please, freedom from all control.

By looking again into the Scriptures, it is possible to see the common dilemma all young people face. A classic example is the case of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus of Nazareth and asked Him the question. "What must I do that I might have eternal life?" Jesus answered him: "There is just one thing you must do: give away, that is transfer ownership of your possessions. In other words, apply everything you have to the service of other people. Then take up your cross and follow Me." This young man went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. It is not easy to face total surrender to the Lord.

Any young man looking forward into life has a great temptation to take what the world has to offer, to enjoy what the world will layout before him. Again and again there is evidence that some young people are determined to put their enjoyment first. They consider this is exercising their freedom when in reality they do not really have it. It's a freedom they take. No man lives to himself alone. For any young person to act about life as if he was going to live on his own, and be on his own, is just not realistic.

We can be very sure that any young person who knows the Lord, who is trusting the Lord Jesus Christ for his salvation, will find that the Spirit of Christ will prompt him to make a good choice.

There is a further important lesson to learn from Daniel. As a young man he faced this problem: how to live Godly in an ungodly world. He was surrounded by pagans and yet he wanted to live true to God. This is the problem which faces any young Christian today. If he will look into Daniel's life, he will see certain guidance. First of all Daniel had a purpose: "He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." Teen-agers growing up today need to develop some purpose, to set themselves to a definite course. "He

would not defile himself" includes personal purity. Older people will often be surprised at the integrity of some young people: the choices and the decisions they make. There are young Christians who simply will not touch "the unclean thing." Further we may note that as Daniel lived he depended upon God through prayer. And so when the great test came in his life, he had power. Looking at the record of Daniel we can see purpose, purity, prayer, and power. This kind of commitment is possible today. For this reason we would say to our teen-agers again: "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word."

A Christian In His Neighborhood

"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself a servant unto all, that I might gain the more." (I Corinthians 9:19). This was Paul's underlying purpose in getting along with the people. Paul above all else wanted to win men to Christ. This idea is further developed in the verses that follow:

"And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you." (I Corinthians 9:20-23).

When Paul uses the word "weak" in verse 22, he refers to the person who is weak in his understanding of spiritual matters, who is inclined to lean on regulations, who has made a number of rules for himself to keep himself from doing wrong. And yet Paul writes that whenever he comes in contact with anyone who has a number of little rules to keep, he would keep them. Paul would do this because he would want to win such a person to Christ.

Everyone has neighbors: other people living nearby. This word "neighbor" means a number of different things. Mainly, the word neighbor does not depend on kinship, it does not imply that this is a blood relation. It may be a companion or a business partner, but not necessarily. Normally neighbors are folks who see each other day in and day out.

There are a number of old Testament instances where godly men had dealings with people outside their homes. Abraham feared a certain king through those country he journeyed. He was afraid that if King Abimelech saw how beautiful his wife Sarah was, he would take her and kill him. So Abraham deceived the King by saying that Sarah was his sister. This was actually a half truth, because Sarah was his half sister. Though Abraham's fear turned out to be unnecessary, it was still real and caused him to deceive.

The record in the Bible about Joseph and his relationship with his neighbors brings to mind Potiphar's wife. Since Joseph was in and out of the house in his role as an overseer, she could in a sense be considered a neighbor. Potiphar's wife slandered Joseph, and lied about him. He was actually so misrepresented by this evil woman that he was put in prison. We may note this carefully because some people have trouble with neighbors who are unkind and dishonest. Just because a man is a neighbor this does not make him good. This word "neighbor" does not in itself guarantee friendship and good relations. When a man who lives next door, or across the street, is a liar, his neighbors are at his mercy.

In Moses we find another case where a man had a problem with his people. Since the people of Israel were living in the midst of the Egyptians, they could in a sense be considered neighbors. Since the Egyptians were idol worshippers, many in Israel learned this from them. It was this influence of their neighbors in Egypt that caused Israel later to make the golden calf, when they were out in the desert. This great sin, was the direct result of living among godless neighbors.

When Joshua led Israel into the promised land of Canaan they had to do battle with the people who were their neighbors for many years. On one occasion the men of Gibeon who lived near Israel came to

Joshua. Because they feared Israel, they pretended to have come from far away. Joshua believed them and was deceived by them into making a contract with them. He had failed to pray for guidance, and to inquire of the Lord as to what course to take. Before he died Joshua warned the people of Israel against neighbors who might deceive them. When Israel lived in Canaan they were led astray again and again by the neighboring peoples of Midian and Philistia.

The time came when it became obvious in the history of Israel, that they would have peace in their land only after they had subdued their neighbors. It was the age-old struggle between the flesh and the Spirit, the godly and the ungodly.

When a man is a Christian, living a godly life, he will find out that he will be contrary to this element, referred to as the flesh, in his community. The Christian living in his neighborhood is actually a spiritual man, living in a carnal neighborhood.

When I was travelling in the Orient, I had the privilege of being at a Bible conference in the Philippine Islands. I was asked a question there by a Philippine minister. The pastor said, "If I understand what you are teaching, you are saying that humanly speaking we have the flesh, and that spiritually speaking we have the spirit; and that the Christian has both the flesh and the spirit in him. How can that be true?"

As I travelled in the country, I had been watching the agricultural practices – the way they farm down there. I had noticed how much use they make of the water buffalo, which is a large ox. I had noticed that these water buffalo were often guided by boys, who would be sitting on them, riding them, and guiding them while the farmer would be handling the machinery at some distance away. I asked them to think about a water buffalo, and a little eleven year old boy. These two are contrary to one another. The water buffalo doesn't want to work, and the boy wants to make him work. To get these two working together properly, the boy would often ride the water buffalo. I asked them to think of what would happen if the water buffalo was on the boy. From the laughter that went up in that congregation, it was evident they had gotten my point. If the buffalo gets on the boy there would be no peace. Only as long as the boy is on the water buffalo is there peace. If the flesh rules the spirit, there can be no happiness, only disaster. If the flesh is in control a man maybe a Christian, but he will be in unhappy one. If the spirit is in control, ruling over the flesh, a man can have the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Now let us consider what a Christian can have in mind as he lives in his neighborhood. In the first place, every Christian who is rejoicing in the blessing of God in his soul, should remember that in this world he is a stranger. He won't be here long. He serves as an ambassador for Christ. Because the Christian is a stranger he will not imitate his neighbor; when his neighbor is not walking in the way of God.

Generally speaking, a Christian will do nothing to aggravate his neighbor. The Christian would be most careful to seek the blessing of God. It would be far better for him to be close to God than close to man, far better for him to put his trust in God than put his trust in any man. No matter how kind or thoughtful the neighbor may be, his kindness could never compare with the loving kindness of the Lord.

At the same time every Christian is to be a witness to his neighbor. He is to be a witness for the Gospel. The really important thing will be how he walks, how he lives, because his neighbor will be watching him, day by day.

To begin with, the Christian should walk in reverence. This means he should go to church, take part in the church, for this is the House of God. A Christian should watch his language. He must never even get close to profanity. Honor the Sabbath. I have found it to be true, that no Christian who fails to honor the Lord's Day will grow spiritually. There is a special blessing attached to being careful and thoughtful in the observance of the Lord's day.

A Christian will handle the Bible with reverence. He will talk about it in a way that plainly indicates his complete trust and confidence in the Bible as the Word of God. When a Christian does less than this, in the community where he lives, he has lost his witness and his testimony.

In addition to being reverent a Christian will be careful in the matter of obeying the laws of the

community. He will also show consideration for other people by keeping his home neat and attractive. A Christian in order to affect other people should be thoughtful and considerate of them at all times as he is inwardly led by the Spirit.

To add to the glory of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, a Christian will be charitable, generous, kind and hospitable. He will help anyone in need. When he does such things, his neighbors will feel that he lives what he professes. Christians are to be as shining lights in the community. If that light is bright, it will bring blessing to the whole neighborhood; but if it is dim, how great is the darkness! May Christians everywhere be given the strength to be intelligent, honest and wise in all their dealings with others.