

SPIRITICITY, June 1954

## OUR FATHER

By Alden Truesdell

"God commanded, saying, Honour thy father."

Any man assuming the responsible position of father takes on a measure of his original inheritance. It is safe to say that no man has ever assumed - in good faith, with good intent and purpose - this parental office without a conscious realization of his spiritual status. This is the reason why a man feels a sense of guilt when a member of his family falls sick or is unhappy. This is the reason why a substantial economic status is of utmost importance to him. He knows that he should be - in his realm of influence, as the Heavenly Father is in His - reliable, strong, sturdy, able to provide and advise.

I believe that every man holds direct communion with his own Lord at some time during his experience in this world, and the most logical time for such communion is when a child is born to him. Childbirth is difficult for fathers. Though most of them survive the ordeal, they are never exactly the same afterwards; for the experience means new responsibilities, the shouldering of which calls for integrity. Of all titles, the one of "Father" is worthy of the highest place. The father, accepting his responsibility, is holder of a key position and is entitled to exercise his voice of authority in the counsels of men and in his own family.

Fathers on earth, however, are limited, no matter how diligent they are in the exercise of their office. An earthly father gives what he has, but his provision is limited to what he has. The Heavenly Father can supply all demand and have adequate provision for all future demands that can possibly be made. The earthly father will protect his children with his life, but earthly life is not impregnable; it is sometimes very fragile. The protection of the Father in Heaven is more dependable and enduring, lasting forever and able to turn every thrust into a trust and every threat into a treat. The earthly parent will exercise his mental, physical, and moral strength in his endeavor to do well by his family and household; but such strength has been proved inadequate.

Man, as a man and as a father, is not an entirely dependable basis for an established life. The Heavenly Father can be depended upon in an emergency. The greater the emergency, the more capable the performance. Too, the more frequent the demonstrations the better the acquaintance with the Demonstrator. In spiritual experience, as in other exercises, practice makes perfect. Practice of the Presence of the Father in Heaven hastens the time when the Father and the Son will come and dwell with the practitioner. "If a man love me," Jesus said, "he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

In the world, some love earthly parents dearly. Some have ideal fathers, and some idolize fathers who seem to be less than ideal. However, whether the parents are especially good or otherwise, if an amount of attention equal to what they have received were given to the Heavenly Parent, life would be different and much, much better. Could the attention given to the Father in Heaven be steadfast, a satisfactory way of life would be established. There would be stability, security, satisfaction - all of which constitute the spiritual way of life.

In the business of being a spiritual child of the Heavenly Father, the emphasis is not always to be on what the Father is going to give the son for his birthday, or for Christmas, or just on general principles. There is also the matter of the son's responsibility to measure up to his spiritual stature and to qualify to receive his spiritual heritage. "The heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." As sons of the Heavenly Father, we are to grow up until we are worthy of our inheritance, "till we all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

We are told by our Lord to honor our earthly fathers, and this we do - at least on Father's Day. Some fathers no doubt have their good traits exaggerated, but such practice only tends to emphasize those traits and gives subtle praise to the Progenitor of all progenitors. For all praise, correctly interpreted, gives honor to the Heavenly Father, who is responsible for all visible goodness. No one has seen this Father at any time. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." We may listen to the witness of this Son:

"My Father is greater than I."

"My Father . . . is greater than all."

"Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done."

Until such time as one becomes conversant with his own spiritual nature, he is obliged to take God on faith. But, when one becomes aware of his spiritual heritage, he no longer needs to take God on trust; for he learns to know Him in whom he has believed. Our own Lord's Prayer serves as a letter of introduction to this Father in Heaven, who is Ruler of all; Creator, Sustainer, Maintainer of all; Giver of every good and perfect gift; Planter and Cultivator of "the fruit of the Spirit."

The Father of Jesus Christ, the Father of us all, is best comprehended by the communication of Him who knew Him best. Chapter 17 of John is made up of such an expression in Jesus' prayer to His beloved Father:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

In this prayer is to be found the right method of honoring the Father - finishing the work at hand, doing all things heartily, "as to the Lord"; but having done all, knowing it is only what is to be expected from a son of God.

As for pleasing God, we must believe it is God's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom; and we must be as willing to accept as we are to serve. We all know how a child can best give gratification to a parent, and that is by being pleased with what the parent has done for him. If, therefore, we would please

and honor our Heavenly Father, we should accept with appreciation what He has given, as He has given it, for the glory of His Name.

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SPIRITICITY, June 1954

EPHESIANS

By Robert Applegate

(Continued from last month)

"We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."\*

The purpose of the practice of Truth is to "put on Christ." It may seem paradoxical, however, that Paul spends so much time explaining that it is by the gift of God, not by our own efforts, that we attain this; and then spends an equal amount of time telling us what to do in order to attain. If salvation is a free gift, what is there for us to do? Well, the purpose of practice is to make us ready to receive. We do not earn God's favor; we cannot influence God in any way. But we can make ourselves receptive; we can be prepared. The necessity for preparedness was emphasized repeatedly by Jesus: "You also must be ready; for the Son of man (the consciousness of your own Sonship) is coming at an hour you do not expect."

Early Christians were known as those who were "of the Way," and truly Christianity is a Way of life. Our practice of this Way does not do anything to God, but it does something to us. It acquaints us with God; it greatly increases our faith; it makes us receptive to the ineffably wondrous gift that is given to us; it keeps us from being beguiled away from the Truth. This, then, is the reason for our practice, and it is sufficient reason. We do not always like to hear Christian instruction, because it is not easy to let go of old habits of thought and action; but the reward is well worth the effort, and we do have God for a Helper. In a sense, our practice consists of our receiving His help. We ask God to help us keep on the Way "this day." And, as we ask and receive, we grow in Spirit. We "put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God." We accept that newness each day.

In what else does the practice of the Way of Christ consist? We know the instruction well, but we all need to be reminded of it; for the Way is narrow and we need to be brought back to it again and again, until we cannot stray from it. The basic practice, the one essential, is to look to God. "Pray at all times in the Spirit. To that end watch with all perseverance." What else can we do? Paul mentions five practices, and we can consider them in order.

1. Forgive. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. It is not easy to forgive, but it is the one practice that Jesus urged the most strongly. As long as you remember wrongs done to you, nurse grudges, and harbor resentments, you cannot receive that which God would give you. Let them all go. Whenever any hurt comes to mind, say quickly - and repeatedly, if necessary - "I forgive you." The gift of God is so incommensurably greater than any hurts that have come to you that they are of the utmost insignificance. Therefore forgive, and ready your heart to receive God.

2. Watch your tongue. "Let no evil (useless) talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying (building up), as fits the occasion. Let there be no filthiness, nor silly talk, nor levity; which are not fitting; but instead let there be thanksgiving." This instruction is not sanctimonious nor pious when it is correctly understood. We make our lives by our words. We do everything by means of words, and we seldom realize how much we can hurt ourselves by our careless utterances. "By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." If we condemn ourselves to futility by our words, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

Men know that joy is good, and they desire it; but, like everything else, they seek it outwardly. Thus there is a straining on the part of many to be funny or clever. But this does not give joy - only a pale reflection of it; and it soon palls. It leaves the jester empty. "Men will render account for every careless word they utter," Jesus said. What we say, of course, reveals what is in our hearts. Therefore, when we find ourselves wasting ourselves with idle chatter - or with descriptions of sickness or misfortune or unhappiness (which are also silly) - we should turn to God and silently describe Him.

3. Give thanks. "Be filled with the Spirit, . . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father." This does not mean the formal amenity of thanking someone who has done us a favor, but a heart-felt giving of thanks to God "for everything." This practice gives the abiding joy that "levity" simulates. To say inwardly, "I thank you, Father, I thank you," in every situation, even a seemingly negative one will bring out the good that is in the situation for you. This is such an unsophisticated practice that it may seem infantile, but there is no other practice so filled with good. Try it.

4. Love. "Walk in love, as Christ loved us." Love is probably the most misused word in the English language; yet love, in its proper sense, is the only way to God. Love of God comes first, and is kindled by our contemplation of God's Love for us. Love of neighbor follows this. Jesus defined this love in saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." How do you love yourself? You do not gush or emote over yourself; you do not try to possess yourself; but you desire good for yourself. Therefore desire good for your neighbor, as you do for yourself. This is the love that is "the fulfilling of the law."

5. Resist not. "Be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, . . . in singleness of heart, as to Christ; not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." To obey those who are in positions of authority over us is not servility but mastery. In whatever situation you are, you are there for your good. You will receive that good most quickly - and joy and peace along with it - by giving "all of them their dues, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due." If a situation is unpleasant, you will be freed from it, not by resisting it, but by giving to it what is required, "as to Christ." When we repeat our Lord's Prayer, we pray, "Thy will be done." We do not have to fight any situation, nor any person; for having prayed thus, we know that God's will is being done; and that is what we want.

This, then, is the practice that Paul urges upon us: Forgive, hold your peace, give thanks, love, resist not. The time to start practicing is now, today. Having started, we need just one more thing, endurance. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand. . . . To that end watch with all perseverance."

If we do persevere, we shall completely "put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness."

\*( All quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.)

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SPIRITICITY, June 1954

A LESSON FROM WEEDS

By Nell Truesdell

The next time that you have an opportunity to pull up a common weed observe how tenaciously its roots lay hold of the ground. If the ground is dry, you will probably break off the stalk an inch or two above ground. If you succeed in pulling up a weed, notice how strong its root system is. Look at the sturdy tap root that is several times longer than the stalk of the growing young plant. Note the countless roots that surround the tap root at the point where the plant above ground joins it and see the many tiny rootlets that spring along its entire length. A weed is a very determined plant. It will exist under the most rigorous circumstances: thrive in the poorest soils, withstand drought, and outlive pestilences of all sorts. If a weed is cut down close to the ground - even if it is cut down repeatedly - it will hug the earth and develop the flowers and seeds necessary to propagate its species. If a weed is allowed to grow in rich, well-watered soil, it will lengthen and broaden itself into a lush and vigorous plant, so that smaller surrounding plants are dwarfed by being deprived of light, food, and water. A weed starts its growth with the first breath of Spring and it thrives until the first wintry blasts wilt its leaves and chill the sap in its stalk.

Cultivated plants are not so hardy. Their root systems are less abundant. The plants are unable to withstand prolonged drought; they are more subject to disease; they are consumed by garden pests; they need constant care and a continuous food supply. If they are cut down close to the earth, they are not apt to survive.

We may draw a comparison between the negative, destructive tendencies and attitudes in our consciousness and our positive, constructive inclinations. How easy are the lines along which the negative trends move! Once established, how hard it is for us to uproot devastating attitudes! We attempt to root them out and find that we succeed only in retarding their growth for a little while. We try to cover them up or we make an effort to mow them down; still they thrive.

What can we do to rid ourselves of bad habits of thought and action? First, we must make certain that we really want to get rid of them. When we look into the matter, we are surprised to find that we enjoy our self-limitations. While we may say that we wish we were free from some unworthy habit, the chances are that we are rather proud of our limitations. They enable us to make excuses for our shortcomings, our inabilities, our failures. All too frequently our friends and relatives agree with our excuses and we are restricted further. Often our admitted weaknesses purchase privileges that are bought at too high a price - self-indulgence. One flourishing negative tendency may crowd out several good-intentioned attitudes of mind. It is much easier to give in to the stronger trend in consciousness, and that trend is always negative. Direction toward the Good must be cultivated carefully, persistently,

willingly. There can be no vacation time in this occupation. We must be constant.

How can we start? Where shall we begin? Sidney Lanier puts the answer in beautiful poetic form in The Marshes of Glynn.

"As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,  
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:  
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh-hen flies  
In the freedom that fills all the space  
'twixt the marsh and the skies;  
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod  
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God."

"Pray to the Father in secret," instructed Jesus Christ. We begin in our timid and insecure mind to think about God and we keep on thinking about Him until we get a definite sense of response from Him. Then we actually begin to watch toward Him. The "mind" is the watery sod on which we build our hopes, our aspirations, our longings for God and for His lovingkindness and tender mercies. Like the marsh-hen we hide our secret practice from scoffers who with a word might destroy all our efforts to stand fast in the faith that will ultimately deliver us from the limitations of our own negative formulations. Gradually, we open our heart to God; and once we succeed in constructing a receptacle (nest) for our added ideas of God and of His Good, we are free to stretch our wings and fly into freedom. That freedom has been here all the time but we have a job to do before we can claim its advantages for ourselves. We must first lay hold on God as a weed lays hold on the earth. We set our attention steadfastly toward Him, and we refuse to loosen our hold on Him when an enticing invitation to stray comes our way.

By the time a person reaches the adult stage of his existence, he possesses a consciousness overrun with the unsightly, rank growth of injurious, negative states of mind. He stands in awe of the vast area of damaging evidence that attests to his careless keeping of his garden. (For his consciousness {mind} should be the exclusive working ground of the Spirit.) As long as he is alive, he may entertain the hope that he can clear his field and plant wanted states of mind; and he can. One by one he can pull the obnoxious weeds. One by one he can plant good seeds, being careful to guard them night and day from the inroads of faster growing negations. The main work is to lay hold on God: to study, to look toward, to rely on, God; and to keep at the practice until it becomes a habit. Eventually a heavenly release sets heart, soul, and mind free.

Alphabet of  
DAILY MEDITATIONS  
For Every Week Day Of The Month

JUNE 1954

1. The Lord's mercies . . . are new every morning.
2. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.
3. Nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest.
4. He drew me out of many waters.
5. Take no thought . . . for your body.  
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7. Thou hast found favour with God.
8. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving.
9. I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight.
10. I, the Lord, which call thee by name, am . . . God.
11. My yoke is easy.
12. Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks.  
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14. Do it heartily, as to the Lord.
15. Underneath are the everlasting arms.
16. Behold, now is the accepted time.
17. In all thy ways acknowledge Him.
18. My God shall supply all your need.
19. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.  
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21. Ye shall be free indeed.
22. God meant it unto good.
23. Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free.
24. With God all things are possible.
25. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.
26. Ye are all the children of God.  
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28. Peace be within thy walls.
29. I will give thee . . . hidden riches of secret places.
30. O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give thanks.  
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"When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

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As electricity is the working power of the electrical principle,  
SPIRITICITY is the working power of the Spiritual Principle.