

Aug 19, 81

Pastor's Pen

Gary White of Askewville, N. C. met his finest hour in the last minute of his life. Gary was a Christian and often sang in Askewville Baptist Church. He had a deep love for music and took his talents as far as Nashville, Tenn.

He made a living driving his oil tank truck. Then there was the fatal accident on U. S. 58 near Bowers Hill. Gary was trapped in the burning wreckage of his truck. Several people rushed up to his rescue and he waved them off only seconds before his large oil tanker exploded. Pastor Stansbury put a pointed question during the funeral: "How many of us, knowing we only had a moment to live would have screamed for help?" The pastor answered the question: "It was the Christian in him that saved the lives of many people seeking to help."

We all must realize life is a journey. It is an on-going process and someday we will come to the end. But as Dag Hammarskjold said, "The longest journey is the journey inward." When we meet that crisis that demands inner strength, it is frightful to be in poverty. Gary found the gift of faith, courage, and confidence. He had an instant package of inner strength when there was no way to cancel the tragedy.

I think we need to stop and check our direction. Many people are trying to go everywhere at once.

C. A. McClain said there was a Methodist preacher around when he was a boy and he would often greet you by saying, "How is your soul?" People today would think he was a religious fanatic. We say, "How is your health, or business, or your stock investment." I think the old preacher was really asking a good question. He wanted to know in what direction is your life going?

What is the content of your life. How is your soul? When the final test arrives will the passion be for self or others. Gary, rich in inward strength, could not save himself, but did save others! That is the message of the cross.

July 31, 81

Pastor's Pen

I wonder if you use the good opportunities? Some person may need an encouraging word, a sick person would appreciate a kindness, some weak individual is in need of support, the backsliden person is waiting a kind invitation to return, and thousands of other doors open for your entrance.

In writing about this I want to tell you a story, that I am certain most of you have heard about, because every preacher has told it: This little fellow had never had all of the watermelon that he wanted to eat. Some benefactor bought him a 60-pound Georgia watermelon, and said, "Now son, this is yours, and you can eat all of it."

It is said that the boy took a knife and cut that watermelon open, looking up toward Heaven, and said, "Oh God help my ability to be equal to my opportunity!"

Now that is such an everyday story that even a child can understand the point.

Here we are with loads of opportunities to serve humanity and let them go down the drain.

Think what it would mean to the congregation for you to economize valuable time to visit the sick; to be regular attendants upon the church services; to continuously pray for the welfare of your pastor; to give out of your poverty to the budget of the church; and pray for ability to be equal to daily opportunities! Don't waste the watermelon opportunity.

Aug 28, 81

Pastor's Pen

Stepping Heavenward is not like A B C for all travelers. There are seasons of struggle for some, while some may embrace the cross joyfully and penitently.

Love for Christ ought to become the abiding inmost principle of life. Intimate communion with Christ is the power for saintly living. And God's will becomes dear as you submit.

In 1831 Katharine Prentiss was sixteen and began writing a diary. In it one finds the every day facts of life. "How easy it is to make good resolutions, and how easy it is to break them!" That line was entered of January 31. Therefore, it required only a month to break the New Year's Resolutions of the first day in the year.

The Preacher came by on a visit - her comment, "I wish he would mind his own business." Her mother answered, "I think he is minding his own business, His Master's business."

About two years pass and she went to visit the Preacher. She was greeted in a cheerful way, "I am very glad to see you my dear child." She said I intended to be very dignified and cold, but his few warm words just upset me. At last she spoke "you would not speak so kindly, if you knew what a dreadful creature I am. I am angry with myself, and angry with everybody, and angry with God. I can't be good two minutes at a time. I do everything I do not want to do, and do nothing I try and pray to do. Everybody plagues me and tempts me. And God does not answer my prayers, and I am just desperate."

"Poor, heart sick child, that cannot see what I can see, that its God's loving arms are all about you", the Preacher replied. She stopped crying, to strain her ears to listen, as he went on, "Katy, all that you say may be true. But God loves you. He loves you." She said, "If only I could believe that! If I could believe that, after all the promises I have broken, all the foolish, wrong things I have done, God perhaps still loves me!"

The Preacher said, "This is the Gospel for you this day. Go home and say over and over I am foolish but He loves me. I have disobeyed and grieved Him ten thousand times, but He loves me." She left his house - fought the battle on her knees. "My wicked, wasted life stared me in the face." I looked at it, and said with tears of joy, "But God loves me! Never in my life did I feel so rested, quiet, yet satisfied."

Have you taken this Heavenward step?

Aug 21, 81

Pastor's Pen

Too fast, even for friendship – let's hurry – we don't have time for that and so life pushes us on.

Families are so busy and like things quicker. Diane Bonnema went on a strike to get her husband and three children aged 12, 14, and 15, involved in family life. On a Friday she put a "strike, more help" sign on a broom handle, propped it against a picnic table in the front yard and sat down in a lawn chair with a radio, food, coffee and a fly swatter to wait for some response.

At 1:30 A. M. Saturday she and her husband and children finally reached a settlement. She said she didn't get their promises in writing, "But I have their word". So she went inside. If the deal breaks down, she said, the picket sign is ready.

This is our day and we need to make it worth while. Like this poem of which the source is unknown:

*Around the corner I have a friend
In this great city that has no end;
Yet days go by, and weeks rush on,
And before I know it a year has gone.
And I never see my old friend's face,
For life is a swift and terrible race,
He knows I like him just as well
As in the days I rang his bell,
And he rang mine. We were younger
then,
And now we're busy, tired men;
Tired with playing a foolish game,
Tired with trying to make a name,
"Tomorrow", I say, "I'll call on Jim
Just to show that I'm thinking of him."
But tomorrow comes, and tomorrow
goes,
And the distance between us grows and
grows.
Around the corner – and yet miles
away . . .
"Here's a telegram, Sir . . . Jim died*

today."

*And that's what we get, and deserve in
the end –*

Around the corner, a vanished friend.

Please don't postpone living, today is your day, stay in touch with family and friends. Jesus in prayer said, "Give us this day."

Sept 4, 81

Pastor's Pen

"What's Happening" is a common by-word among this generation. This question is sometimes put in a short form "What's Hap-nen!"

It is not unusual for someone to complain – nothing spiritual ever happens in my life! There are those who look for some peculiar secrets, thousands of people go to church every Sunday hoping to solve this mystery. At conferences, at meetings, many have reached the very brink of blessings, but somehow lost the revelation. A few try poring over books of every religion on the face of the earth. But nothing happens!

My advice to you is begin with the word. Christ, himself, was a word, a word made flesh. Make His words flesh; do them, keep them, live them, abide in them, and live in His presence. "He it is that keepeth my commandments, he it is that loveth me." You must feel the touch of His life upon yours.

Another thing, your growth may take place in a noiseless way. You may think nothing is happening because you do not see yourself grow. The Bible talks about "The inward man being renewed day by day." Slow but the development of maturity makes progress. The Spirit of our Lord will do his part. To become like Christ is the only thing in this world worth our time. Remember only an angel has an effortless religion, but this is not true of man. The forces of a man's soul must always be drawn to Christ. Much that happens depends upon what man does.

In the Galerie des Beaux Arts in Paris there stands a famous statue. It was the last works of a great genius. He was very poor and lived in one room which served as studio and sleeping room. When the statue was about finished, one midnight a sudden frost fell

upon Paris. The sculptor lay awake in the fireless room and thought of the still moist clay, thought how the water would freeze in the pores and destroy in an hour the dream of his life. So the old man rose from his couch and heaped the bed clothes reverently around his work. In the morning when the neighbors entered the room the sculptor was dead. But the statue lived.

The image of Christ that is forming within us – that is our life's one command. Let everything else stand aside "Till Christ be formed." No task is finished and not much has "happened" until we have been changed into his likeness. Put on Christ and the world will exclaim "What's Happen?"

Sept 11, 81

Pastor's Pen

"Medfly spreads; disaster feared." Think of a little fly making the headlines in The Pilot, August 27, 1981! Surely a fly can be managed with screen wire, the flit can, or a swatter. Yet 3,140 square miles in Northern California has been under quarantine and a threat of statewide quarantine is under consideration.

The medfly can prey on some 200 varieties of California produce with an annual worth of \$4.7 billion. Aerial pesticide spraying, along with ground spraying programs in fighting the medfly could reach \$1 billion in cost. The fruit is being fumigated in the infested areas.

Agriculture men are upset when two or five flies are trapped in new citrus groves. Why? Fruit is destroyed by maggots produced by these flies.

The wise man Solomon gave us an illustration of this in Ecclesiastes 10:1. He said a dead fly causes the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour. Not just the bite, but the insect carries infection and brings corruption to anything it touches — fruits, food, or ointment. Here is a container with precious perfume, one dead fly and it begins to ferment, lose its fragrance. The dealer cannot sell the ointment. The dead body of one fly is so insignificant as a source of corruption, that it surprises us to discover one fly has tainted the precious fluid. That little wretch of a fly with weight so little, has corrupted a large vessel of ointment.

What Solomon was speaking about was not flies, but the destructiveness of one evil in a man's life. Just one, not a dozen, it only takes one! One grossly inconsistent member of the church can damage the cause of Christ. One Achan can defeat the whole church in some venture for the Master.

On the other hand one Christian with a sensitive ear with small faith can remove mountains. One sinner destroyeth much good. Ecc. 9:18. Adam's sin infected the whole race of man. Priests and Kings were anointed with precious ointment and the bottle was never carelessly left open. Get rid of your one sin before deterioration has set in.

Sept 18, 81

Pastor's Pen

The word lost has a sad ring to it. A feeling of hopelessness takes control. A farmer in Lake Park, Iowa lost his son in September of this year and was ready to call off the search.

Justin Stahly age 2½ years was found in a cornfield just hours after the tearful father told the search party, "Justin will no longer be with us."

One man, George DeGroot refused to give up the search and found little Justin shivering in a field about ten o'clock at night.

The boy disappeared at noon on a Thursday and was not found until Saturday night. He had wandered away from the farm house with his dog. The dog returned home alone. Searchers on horseback and on foot combed nearby soybean and corn fields. Two airplanes and a helicopter equipped with heat-sensing devices were called in.

After two days they hadn't found a trace of the little boy. The father breaking into tears said, "I'm afraid it's too late for my son, you have done everything that possibly can be done."

The search had stopped at a fence around a neighboring farm field, the searchers assuming Justin would have been unable to climb the fence. However, he had managed to scale the fence and was found in the distant field crying.

The father of the son was sitting in the yard of his home when he heard DeGroot shout "We've found him. We've found him!" The father jumped to his feet and ran to meet him. In Luke 15:20 the story Jesus told was filled with joy.

The story of the lost boy should speak to our hearts about those who are lost spiritually. First, it did not take much thinking for the boy to be

lost. He accomplished that step by himself. Second, the lost boy did not know how to rescue himself. He needed assistance. Third, if left alone he would have died. Death was certain. Fourth, there was concern and compassion shown by more than 4,000 people who volunteered to join the search seeking the lost son. Fifth, some who could not go to the fields presented gifts of \$16,000 to aid in finding the lost boy. Sixth, there was joy when the shout went up "We've found him."

This boy is a perfect example of people lost in sin. Have you expressed any concern lately for someone unsaved?

Nov 14, 80

Pastor's Pen

Will New Testament methods work in the present day? This is a question worth consideration. I will note for you some mission work in the New Testament. Can these methods be used in the local church?

First, wayside-open air witnessing. Mark 6:34 - "And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd; and He began to teach them many things." The great mass of the unsaved are not attending our church services today. The church must take the message to them. They crowd the streets, parks, and public places.

Second, the printed page. I John 2:12, 13 "I am writing these things to all of you, my little children, because your sins have been forgiven in the name of Jesus as Saviour. I am writing these things to you older men because you really know Christ, the one who has been alive from the beginning. And you young men, I am talking to you because you have won your battle with Satan. And I am writing to you younger boys and girls because you, too, have learned to know God our Father."

Paul believed in sending letters to encourage and bring to faith. Christian men today can do the same. Dr. John F. Cowan tells the story of a retired minister who was able only to write. He used his leisure time in writing appeals to persons in his former parish. He urged them to turn to Christ. His first year of letters proved more fruitful than a whole year of preaching. This should encourage us to distribute carefully chosen books and helpful tracts.

Third, laymen. Acts 8:4 - "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." The success in New Testament times was

due in large measure to all laymen taking an active part. The Kingdom will never come through a few ministers, missionaries, and Evangelists preaching the Gospel. The Lord's work can spread only as every layman shares the Gospel in his daily walk.

Will these methods work? The message has not changed - it is still Christ, The Saviour from sin.

Nov 21, 80

Pastor's Pen

Will New Testament methods work in the present day? We mentioned wayside witnessing, the printed page, and the work of laymen in our last article. Let us now consider some others.

First, Industrial and Social. Luke 4:18. "He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." There was no doubt that Christ's message was inclusive. It will work no evil to a neighbor, an employer, or an employee. It will cause social wrongs to be set right, and social obligations to be fulfilled by getting men first of all to love God and then to love one another. A redeemed person makes for better community ideals, community conditions and better community life.

Second, Personal. John 1:45. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, we have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth." Preaching to one person is the greatest preaching in the world. The New Testament is full of examples of personal work: Christ went far out of His way to meet the woman of Samaria; Philip left a great revival to go down into the desert where he won an individual, a Eunuch of Ethiopia; Andrew brought his brother.

It might be possible for God to save people without the use of other individuals, yet it does not seem to be His way. Even Saul who heard the voice of Christ on the way to Damascus, was simply referred to an individual by the name of Ananias, who was to tell him what he was to do. It was personal work that characterized the life and the ministry of Paul.

Every Christian should consider it

his greatest privilege to win individuals for Christ. It is more than a privilege, it is a responsibility.

The church whose members fail to put forth personal effort in winning others has forfeited its right to exist. In seeking to save the soul of others we save our own. Wonder of all wonders, if you are a Christian, God can use your personal testimony. Make use of it today!

Nov. 25, 80

Pastor's Pen

"Alas, alas, things are not what they used to be." Have you heard that tune lately? The above statement was found on a piece of pottery found among the ancient ruins of the Mid-East. Even young people concede that decency in manners and dress are things of the past. We have come upon a time when evil seems to be called good.

I want to suggest to you that thankfulness is the road back to God. We think about things centuries ago, or think about the first people in our land gathered around a table for the first Thanksgiving dinner. Measured by our standards, they did not have much. Cold, hunger, and sickness threatened their very lives.

We have come a long way since the first day of Thanks in 1621. But like the Pilgrims - we have great needs. We are concerned for energy shortages, and inflation is pushing up the cost of nearly everything the average family wants and needs.

At a time such as this, real thankfulness may be just the turning point we need. For thankfulness to God can be a long and important step back toward things we have forgotten. Why should we be thankful to God?

First, because we owe thanks to God. God is worthy of our thanks because he is our maker. Rev. 4:11. All that we are and have is from God's hand.

Second, when we express gratitude we understand God's love. Unthankfulness, by contrast, blinds the eyes. He fulfills our needs for food, clothing, and shelter.

Third, thankfulness in all things is to recognize the circumstances of life are in God's hands. 1 Thess. 5:18 - "In everything give thanks." The Christian is the only one who can do this. Even in time of tears we trust and thank him for his goodness.

Thankfulness will keep you in touch with God. Are you one of God's thankful people? If not, you should be! Why not thank him today for His "unspeakable gift" and things will be better than they used to be.

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Dec 5-80

Pastor's Pen

Honoring the collection plate in your church - giving to the Lord is something more than handing over money to a good cause. Giving is a matter of the heart as well as a decision to open the pocket book. Some may put a dime in looking for cheap respectability. A man may give a penny to a beggar and fail to make a gift: It is only the amount you pay to get rid of him, or bring peace to a disturbed conscience.

The modern Cain is not a murderer. He is a man who goes to God with an unacceptable offering. He may have made his money dishonestly, and instead of repenting of his sins and going to God with a sin offering, he goes with a thank offering and gives an endowment for some Christian college.

The measure of a gift is the love that goes with it. If no love goes with it, there is no gift though it involves a million dollars. If love goes with it, it is a useful gift, though it be but one penny.

We can easily recognize this truth in everyday life. We know full well that a gift to a friend to be a gift must be accompanied by the heart. We are never concerned about the value of anything that comes to us from another until we are assured that it is accompanied by the love of the sender, and that it is not a bid for a present in return. If it is sent to us grudgingly we can never regard it as a gift.

Why can we not use the same common sense in our dealings with God. We ask a great many questions about the Christian duty of giving. We never ask such questions when it comes to giving a gift to a wife, mother, or father. There is no mystery about that kind of gift. You would not palm off a sick sheep or a lame lamb on a friend. We

know how to express our friendship. No cheap shoddy thing from a bargain store will serve the purpose.

When we appear before God in worship let us not deliberately withhold from God his due. Put your heart and love in your gift. Just as when you send a flower or note to some sick friend. The collection plate will then be blessed by a cheerful giver.

Dec 12, 1980.

Pastor's Pen

Sabbath desecration is so common that we have lost the reason for its existence. The day is not the arbitrary command of God, it meets the necessities of man. God foresaw that you would need it.

First, your body needs it. We do not take this seriously today. This is not just a matter of opinion, but it is a matter of fact. A man can accomplish more if he will rest one day in the week than he can accomplish by working seven days in the week. Industry gets more from a man who rests on the seventh day. The muscle and brain need a change.

Second, your soul needs it. The tendency of man in the midst of the world is downward, and not upward. Man becomes engrossed in the things of this earth. It is only a question of time when he will bury himself in the earth. God saw this disposition in us and he provided us the Sabbath. Without this day we would soon forget God.

Third, your spirit needs it. A day of formal worship refreshes a man's spirit. Without this day we would not keep alive the spirit of prayer. God set this day that one day each week there would be the ever-recurring sacred day to keep alive the spirit of worship. He that breaks the Sabbath sins against God; sins against his body; sins against his soul; and sins against society.

Fourth, your heart will tell you when you break it. People often question, shall I do a certain thing on the Sabbath day? I believe there is a principle which answers all doubts about how to observe the day. The test is this, "Is it an act of mercy." God wants us doing merciful deeds. A man loves to worship, he will love the Sabbath. He is glad when Sunday comes and he can go to church and be with God's people. He loves the Kingdom.

Sad to say, there are some who don't see much in church anyway, they never get pleasure out of worship; and thus never help the church in the service of mercy.

The writer of Psalms is full of joy because he is glad to go to the house of God, because he loves God. His whole heart is in the worship of God.

Do you want your life to be one un-failing stream of happiness? Do you want your religion and church to become a delight? Keeping the Sabbath is the answer! ~~me~~

Dec 19, 80

Pastor's Pen

Taking God at His Word. We are in the Christmas Season and yet many cry for signs. We are very childish. Stand a baby in the middle of the floor, and insist upon its walking, and it will try to crawl. It longs to feel the floor with its hands as well as its feet. This is a sign of weakness and the baby wants to lean on something. It takes strength to stand up and venture out upon the invisible. The baby that takes the venture finds that he can walk and is happy. He no longer wants to feel the floor with his hands.

When we learn to walk by faith, we have outgrown a faith that has to crawl. We no longer ask for signs, but take God at His Word.

A good Bible story about the nobleman at Capernaum illustrates the truth for us. The main point of the story is that he took Jesus at His Word. He did not ask for a sign to assure him that Jesus would heal his son. He did not try to dictate to Jesus as to when or how he should heal him. He put his burden in the hands of the Master. He went away feeling that in his own good time he would keep his promise. John 4:50.

I have not, nor have you, responded in a crisis as did the nobleman. We wonder if God is ever going to answer our prayers. Do you remember the last time you went to Jesus in an hour of great difficulties and laid your case before him? You were up against the wall, your burden was greater than you could bear, and you told the Lord you were going to lay it on him.

But, when you rose from your knees you deliberately took up your burden again and carried it away on your own heart. You could not trust Jesus with it, and you carried it away and struggled with it until your heart was aching worse than before. You say, "I believe

God is going to help me, but oh! if he would only do something to show that he really is interested in my case!"

We ask in faith and then we get desperate. We want to tell Him how to answer our prayer, we want an answer today! We are uncertain about trusting His Word. The nobleman took Jesus at His Word. "For unto you is born . . . a Saviour", is God's Word for you at Christmas.

Dec 26, 1980

Pastor's Pen

Knowing the Lord, makes a difference. At Christmas time many things will appear. Religious music, drama about the birth in Bethlehem, special lights, and church services.

The history of Christ will be wrapped up in a nutshell. The human side will be set forth with the divine touch. This will be done simply to get men to know the Lord.

John said he was the Lamb of God who alone could take away their sins. The people sought his presence and wanted to know him.

It is a personal matter. If we know him we will love him; if we love him, we will serve him; if we serve him, we will bring others to know him and therefore to serve him. You and I must personally know a personal Christ.

If we want to love Christ more and serve him better we must get better acquainted with him. If we want to get others to know him we must first know him ourselves. There is no substitute for this method. Sometimes folks sit with a cold heart and say why don't something happen to make us love God better. Meanwhile they neglect the Bible and prayer. By this means men are brought face to face with God. We can wait for a miracle til doomsday; but so long as we neglect the opportunities we have to know Jesus better we will never learn to love him better, and we will never serve him better. To complain of our coldness toward God is to confess that we have neglected our opportunities to commune with him.

The Christmas Season is a good time for getting to know the Lord. Don't be satisfied with second hand knowledge. Follow the shepherds (Luke 2:15) and with them you will

glorify and praise God for your added knowledge.

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Dec 19, 80

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Jan 2 - 81

Pastor's Pen

Taking hazardous risks during the New Year. Life is full of perils and I doubt if there is a spot on earth that is free from possible danger. Many a man has lost his life lying in bed, by the falling of a wall. Wherever we travel in the New Year, there is but a step between us and death. I don't believe we can eliminate all of the dangers, but we can steer clear of certain peril and exert the utmost care while walking amid other possible dangers.

We might try to divide between the dangers which must be met and the dangers which should be avoided.

Danger lurks in the air we breathe. Now for sure we cannot avoid breathing. But we can take precaution against breathing bad air.

Danger lurks in the cars we ride in. Driving a car is a vain thing for safety. Some people after seeing a wreck will drive carefully for several blocks.

There are some things so dangerous that we cannot even afford to come near them. Drink, for example, is one of these dangers. This is one of the dangers we cannot afford to handle even with care. It is something to run from. The wise man in Proverbs places drink on a level with serpents. When a man finds himself in the neighborhood of a poisonous serpent, the only sensible thing to do is get away as quickly as possible. Drink is like the serpents charm upon men. They see it in the glass with pretty beaded bubbles, sparkling and foaming. They are drawn towards it.

Presently when it has you in its power, it turns to sting you. It is the way of a charming serpent. Only a fool will hang around with a serpent. Don't take this risk during the New Year.

Jan 9, 1981

Pastor's Pen

I want to give you a word about temptation. Like Adam, we want to put the blame for our misconduct upon God. But God did not bring sin into the world. He gave us hearts endowed with power to open either to good or evil.

Evil came from the enemy of God. Satan is the author of evil. God is the author of redemption from evil.

Satan tempts us to sin, to do wrong, but he cannot force us to do wrong. God does not condemn us for being tempted. A man is not responsible for robber's entrance if he comes through a door which he has left unlocked.

A man has no right to put his soul in the way of temptation. Jesus did not go into the wilderness to be tempted; he went because he was led by the Spirit.

Daniel lived amid all the corruption of the world, yet kept himself unspotted from the world. Why may I not do the same? The answer is that Daniel lived "under the shadow of the almighty."

There are some little rules you must follow if you want to overcome temptation.

First, never put yourself in the way of the tempter. Do not enter the path of the wicked, if you are in the path of duty God will keep you.

Second, never look upon forbidden fruit. "Look not upon wine when it is red."

Third, never be friendly with the devil. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Fourth, keep the fear of God before you. The fear of God will keep you out of sin.

Fifth, keep yourself well in hand. Keep your body under subjection.

The simple Bible Story of David and Goliath has truth to help you with temptation. Three things helped

David in his fight.

First, he called to mind his former deliverances. If God has helped before, he can help again.

Second, he remembered that the battle was the Lord's.

Third, he realized the superiority of Spiritual equipment over all earthly armor. "You come to me with sword, but I come unto Thee in the name of the Lord of hosts. Before that name every giant goes down. Bring this name to bear upon your temptations.

Jan 16, 81

Pastor's Pen

What is my place in the world? Am I making the most of my talents? God put me here in his world and I am his servant. My place, whatever it may be, is a post of duty. Every man, woman, and child is on duty for God.

While we have life in us, while we have much or little strength left in us, we have something to do. It may be a big thing or a little thing which God expects of us, but he will expect that one thing. He has given us the strength and the opportunity to do it. If we do have a talent, God will require nothing.

The big question is not whether our opportunities are many or few. Really it is not whether we have great talents or small talents. But, whether we are making the most of the opportunity with the ability we have. Do I scatter as much sunshine as I can, or do I sit down and fold my hands because my talent is so trifling.

The parable about the man who received one talent is interesting. The man was not expected to produce five other talents. It was inexcusable he did not make use of the one, for he might have deposited it where it could have drawn interest. The teaching is plain; there is absolutely no excuse for a man who has a single talent if he neglects to use that talent. Therefore, it is not necessary that a man have many talents, but, use what he has for the good and glory of God.

Am I making the most of the small ability I have? Count up the things God has put in your hands — the everyday opportunities of life, the capacity to show love for God, the ability to scatter sunshine, a message of comfort for some lonely person, fellowship with Christian friends on Sunday in worship, and countless other every day opportunities.

Am I using my talents faithfully?
Will I stand before the Master and make
my report without shame?

* * *

Jan 23, 81

Pastor's Pen

Some folks are full of questions. They know how to raise questions, but know very little about finding the answers.

First, how did I get here? Did I just happen? What about all of these things around me? Is life just chance, like a game? No, this world did not just happen. "God created the Heaven and the earth. God created man in his own image."

Most of us enter this world, we look around and fail to see the owner. We then straightway proceed to do as we please.

It is through the school of "hard knocks" that we find out who made this earth and who owns it. What a wonderful experience is that which comes to a man when he accepts the plan of God. He now goes in the direction of God's will and obeys the laws of righteousness. He follows in the Father's footsteps.

Second, what did God put me here for? Why did he not put me in Heaven or on another planet?

For one thing, he tells me, I am on the earth to "subdue" it. God put me here to subdue the earth, not to be subdued by it. If this is true then I have no right to give way to the difficulties that surround me.

I am not to be the victim of circumstances; I am to be the victor.

I am not to lay down my hoe because the ground is too hard, or the grass grows too fast. God did not put me here to whine because it is too cold or too hot. Shall I conquer or shall I be conquered?

We are to devote our lives to the work of subduing the world. God had great concern for the world.

If you had a garden, you would put it in charge of the best person available. That is the reason God has put you in charge of the earth. As you plant and sow and harvest you will grow. You will learn lessons of faith. You will grow up to be God-like. Don't

dig up the seed of faith to see if it has sprouted, but wait for the sprout to shoot above the ground. Have patience and your questions will be answered.

Jan 30, 81

Pastor's Pen

Most men go their own way and seldom become a helper.

Here is a man who, for thirty-eight years, has been a helpless invalid. During this whole time he has been hoping to get well. For some time his hopes have been centered upon a spring which is supposed to have miraculous curative properties. Day after day he has dragged himself painfully to the porch of the spring and waited for an opportunity to test its virtues. Day after day he has struggled forward to reach the bubbling water, and each time another has stepped down before him, and shut him off. It has happened so many times that the poor man has almost given up. Still every morning comes new hope and he drags his withered body back to the spring again. He is not only helpless, but there is no friend who will wait with him for the bubbling of the water. There is no helper!

One day this man attracts the eye of Jesus as he passes by. This helpless case was urgent in the eyes of our Lord. He had a way of helping the helpless. He did not spend his time on those who did not need him. But his heart was open to those who might need his help.

As we look about us today, we wonder if Jesus is thinking of us? Does he really care about our helpless situations? Will Jesus ever pass by and touch our special problems? Yes, we wonder if Jesus ever intends to provide us a way of escape.

Remember, the whole story of Jesus is one of the helper helping the helpless! Yet when we are helpless we are prone to doubt that he will come to our aid. We need today a vision of Jesus as the helper of the helpless!

If you are down and out, dragging yourself to some false spring of hope,

don't despair. Jesus loves to help those who feel their need and he will help those who need him most.

Feb. 6, 81

Pastor's Pen

Why not give the old downtown church an "A" rating. This is the church that did not run off and leave her people! It is a challenge to keep the church alive in the midst of an old deteriorating area of the city.

We are often prone to give much praise to churches in fast-growing areas of new work. It has been well said by a modern philosopher, "God pity the nation whose factory chimneys rise above her church spires."

A church in a poor community on the coast of England was destroyed by a storm some years ago. Later a representative of the British admiralty came to the community to inquire about reconstruction of the church. The community was too poor to restore the church. The British Navy had the church rebuilt, stating, "The spire of that church was on all our charts and maps. It has long been a landmark by which our ships steer their course." The rebuilding of the church, that it might remain a landmark on the charts for ships, was indeed symbolic of the need for a church as a symbol for life.

Why do you need this church in the heart of the city? Why do you need a pastor? Why do you need a Bible School? Why do you need a choir and all of the other organizations in the life of this church? One word answers all of these questions: People!

Thank God for faithful Christians who remain loyal in serving through the downtown church. Actually some of the churches struggle to maintain their status quo. There is no magical formula in trying to survive.

The thing that keeps the downtown church alive is the leadership of the Holy Spirit and members of the body of Christ, who are interested in people. Don't forsake the old landmark, give her your love.