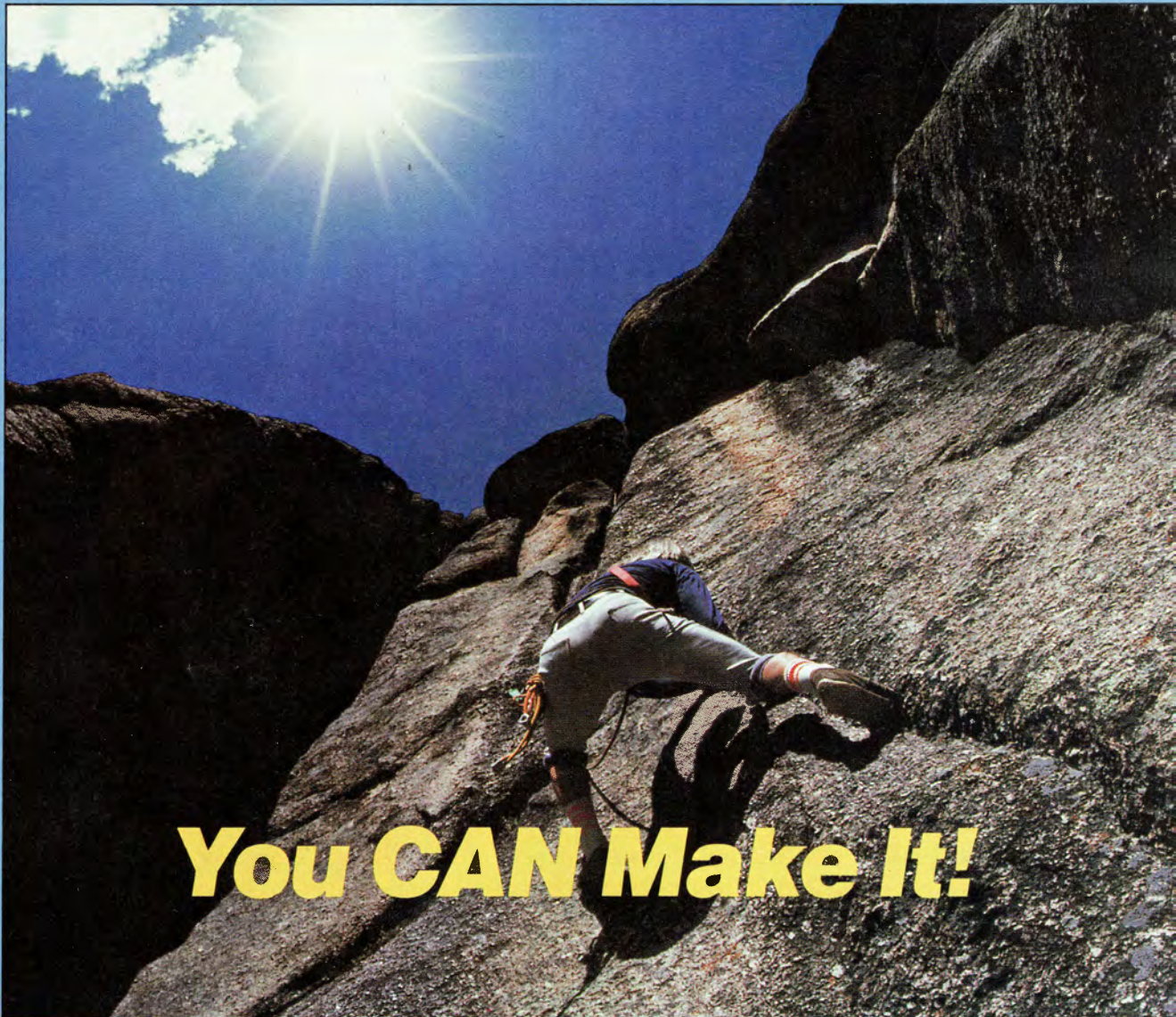




THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

Bible

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE



You CAN Make It!

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"I would like to thank you and your staff very much for making it possible for me to take your course. I am learning things I didn't know before about the Bible. You explain the scriptures so I can understand them better. Thanks a million and may God forever use you and bless you all."

—D.B., Lexington, Mississippi

"I thought Lesson 20 of your Correspondence Course was interesting because I don't hear many people talk about our life being a training ground for rulership in the world tomorrow. Instead, I hear people say that they will be idle in heaven, as if they will have nothing to do. I don't think I could stand doing nothing forever, but I like what the Bible says about people having responsibilities in the world tomorrow, and being on earth and not in heaven."

—P.M., Beaumont, Texas

"I'm learning so many new things and many things which are the direct opposite of what I've always heard before. I realize, of course, that any person who reads the Bible needs help, and the Correspondence Course is the most educational course anyone can take to obtain real knowledge on how to live and what to expect in the future."

—R.G., Cabanatuan City, Philippines

"I have been extremely impressed with the in-depth manner in which these lessons are prepared. . . . They have been eye-opening on many points of Bible doctrine that I have not understood before.

"There are certain points of Bible doctrine presented in the lessons that I would like to discuss with one of your ministers, along with church doctrine, creed, etc. I would appreciate a visit from one of your ministers in my local area."

—W.E., Clarksville, Tennessee

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THE AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

Bible CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 32

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About Our Cover . . .

Those who begin the Christian way of life have made a commitment to serve God. They have embarked on a new life of spiritual growth and overcoming. Like the mountain climber on our cover, they at times will face difficult, seemingly insurmountable obstacles. But God has promised the spiritual power to overcome any and all obstacles. With God's help and our diligent effort, we, like the climber, can make it! We can overcome and grow spiritually, aiming for positions of rulership with Christ in the Kingdom of God!

Four By Five



Ambassador College

A NEW BEGINNING!

Marvelous truths have been revealed to you through the study of your Bible with this course. Yet knowledge, unless it is applied, is of no value. So what will you do now?

YOU were born for an awesome and wonderful purpose! Yet, the wisest and most learned men do not know what it is.

From time immemorial, men have wondered about the purpose of life. Philosophers have pondered it, only to confess total ignorance.

Yet, the priceless knowledge of God's purpose for mankind has been made plain through your study of the Bible with *The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course!*

The most astounding truth your studies have revealed is the fact that God is a Family, and that God is reproducing Himself!

Yes, God's stupendous purpose for your life is that you be "born again" as an immortal, spirit member in the universe-ruling Family of God!

Through this course, now drawing to a close, you have also come to understand the meaning of world events. You have learned the solutions to the seemingly unsolvable problems facing the world today! You have learned the *way* to world peace—the way to freedom from fear and worry, poverty, sickness and unhappiness.

You have also learned the truth about such traditional doctrinal questions as heaven, hell, salvation, law and grace, the Great Tribulation, the

rapture, the resurrection, Christ's Second Coming and the Millennium!

Priceless Knowledge

Yet, what are you doing with this *priceless knowledge*?

Finding the place where one can learn God's truth is like finding a *gold mine*. These lessons of *The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course* have revealed "riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God" (Rom. 11:33).

The world has been *blinded* to this priceless spiritual knowledge (Rev. 12:9). This simply is *not the time* for most people to be called by God (John 6:44). God has *not yet* opened their minds to understand the marvelous truth about His purpose for mankind.

God allows the world to be spiritually blinded (II Cor. 11:13-15). Spiritual blindness covers all nations (Isa. 25:7). But God has begun to remove the blindness from *some*, including you, through His Church that is preaching Christ's Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the world!

To those of you who have taken this course and whom God is calling, Christ says, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear" (Matt. 13:16).

A New Way of Life

If you are like thousands of other students, you have been amazed and thrilled by the *new truths* you've discovered in your Bible. A new "way of life" has been opened up to you as a result of your studies. You have come to understand what it means to be a *real* Christian.

Most Christians, believe it or not, are not even ready to start on the road to living God's way of life! Are you possibly among them?

As the Apostle Paul clearly stated in Romans 12:2, spiritual conversion is a *renewing* of one's mind. This changing of the *mind*, with the power of God's Holy Spirit, is the key to a new and successful way of thinking and living.

Most Christians, believe it or not, are not even ready to *start* on the road to living God's way of life! Are you possibly among them?

One becomes a Christian upon sincere repentance, belief in Jesus Christ and in the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, baptism by immersion, and the receipt of the Holy Spirit after the laying on of hands. At that time God's Spirit enters one's mind and joins with the spirit in man. That is when the person begins to be "converted." The spiritually begotten mind then begins the *process* of being changed or renewed spiritually, and godly character begins to be created.

A newly begotten Christian has made a commitment to serve God. He has embarked on a new life of spiritual growth and fulfillment. But this takes time. Time to apply the spiritual knowledge one is learning. Time to practice God's way of life.

But time does not stand still or wait for anyone!

Now Is the Time to Act

What will you do with the *precious knowledge* you are learning?

Are you really doing something about this knowledge God is giving you? Or do you think you are too "weak" to change? Do you resist having to change? Does it seem too difficult?

We humans don't like to change. Humans don't like to have to admit that one's religion or one's ways may have been wrong.

Notice this striking description of the human mind in Professor James Harvey Robinson's book *The Mind in the Making*: "We are incredibly heedless in the formation of our beliefs, but find ourselves with an illicit passion for them when anyone proposes to rob us of their companionship. It is obviously not the ideas . . . but our self-esteem which is threatened. . . ."

"The little word *my* is the most important one in human affairs, and properly to reckon with it is the beginning of wisdom. It has the same force whether it is *my* dinner, *my* dog, *my* house or *my* faith, *my* country and *my* God. . . ."

"We like to continue to believe what we have been accustomed to accept as true, and the resentment aroused when doubt is cast upon any of our assumptions leads us to seek every manner of excuse for clinging to it. The result is that most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do."

What a true description of the human mind!

Yet, the very key to our future survival is our willingness to repent of our own ways and change our own ideas, customs and beliefs so that they correspond with God's ways and teachings as revealed in the Bible.

Count the Cost

We need seriously to count the cost before committing ourselves to living God's way of life (Luke 14:28-30). We must put God first in our lives, everywhere and always (verses 26-27). We must strive to live God's way of outgoing love and concern for others, based on God's commandments.

This is the cost in answering God's calling—in becoming a true Christian. Not one in a thousand people today understands what this means!

It requires a sense of urgency. It requires putting all other pursuits second. It requires forsaking all the false ways of the world and being willing to take whatever consequences come.

Christ will never leave us while we serve Him in fulfilling this special calling (Heb. 13:5-6). Satan will try to discourage us from finishing the job, sometimes through the influence of our loved ones. But Christ will finish the work He has begun in and through us (Phil. 1:6). He is not a quitter. He risked His own eternal life and position in God's Family for all of us personally, and won!

Therefore, you can win!

But first, you must start!

If God is calling you, you will face perhaps the most difficult thing for any human—admitting you have been wrong. This is the *beginning of real repentance*. You will want to change your life—stop following Satan's way and do what God tells you to do. You will begin to have the power to say *no* to wrong urges, habits, desires and attitudes.

The spiritually mature Christian must have the ability to discern truth from error. But it is *not enough to just hear the truth*. One must respond (Rom. 2:13).

Many today are hearing God's truth proclaimed on the *World Tomorrow* program, in the pages of *The Plain Truth*, *The Good News* and *The Bible Correspondence Course*. But only those who respond, who take action, will be saved!

You have been warned. You have seen the plain truth of God's Word revealed. You have seen for yourself out of your own Bible that the teachings of modern Christianity are false! And you have discovered that God means business!

What are you going to do with this precious, priceless knowledge that God has revealed to you through your diligent study of His revealed Word? The choice is up to you. You are accountable!

COUNTING THE COST before any major undertaking, especially the Christian way of life, is absolutely necessary.



LESSON 32

Repentance Is a New Beginning

Have you come to the place where you see yourself as you really are—as God sees you?

Have you “sized yourself up” by means of the Ten Commandments, as magnified by the entirety of God’s Word, and seen where you fall short? Have you come to the point in your life where you want to give up walking contrary to God and surrender yourself completely to Him? Are you willing to keep all of God’s commandments?

Unless you have come to see yourself as Job saw himself (Job 42:1-6); unless you have cried out to God for forgiveness as David did (Ps. 51:1-10); unless you have begun to change your attitudes, your thoughts, your actions; unless you have been really broken up about your past life; unless you have repented from the heart; unless you have made a complete about-face; unless you have done these things, you simply have not yet begun to start the Christian way of life!

Notice what the Apostle Paul says in II Corinthians 13:5: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.” The prophet John told the Pharisees and Sadducees to “bring forth therefore fruits meet for [befitting] repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

How can you examine—prove—your *own* self? By comparing your life, thoughts, words and actions with the Word of God.

God’s eyes are upon those who are of a meek and contrite spirit—those who tremble before the two-edged sword of His Word. God recognizes a repentant attitude—a broken spirit, a humble seeking for forgiveness and mercy. He wants us all to have the humble, teachable attitude of little children (I Pet. 2:1-2; Matt. 18:2-4).

True repentance requires a permanent change of direction. It is a total commitment. There is no turning back. It is not a temporary, spontaneous emotional response so prevalent today in religious “revival” meetings. It is something deeper and vastly more profound!

Unconditional Surrender to God

Once we repent—completely surrender to God—and are baptized, God puts His Spirit in us, in our minds. It then begins to influence our ways of thinking and living.

But the Holy Spirit does not take away our free

moral agency. It won’t force us to do anything. It only leads us in the direction of God’s truth and gives us the spiritual strength to do His will.

Repentance is giving up your way and turning to God’s way. It means unconditional surrender to live by every word of God. Since the Bible *is* the Word of God, it means to live by the Bible. It means complete and *voluntary* submission to the authority of God, as expressed in His revealed Word!

1. Does surrendering to God mean that we are to put Him ahead of and above all else? Matt. 10:37. Does this include our own *lives*? Luke 14:26.

COMMENT: “Hate” in Luke 14:26 means to love *less* by comparison, as the parallel account in Matthew 10:37 shows.

2. Though it sounds paradoxical, did Jesus say that whoever would quit being his old sinful selfish self, and give up or “lose” his life for Christ’s sake, would live? Matt. 10:39; 16:24-25.

COMMENT: Jesus is talking about giving one’s life in *total* obedience and service to God.

Repentance emphatically does not mean we must give up the use of or appreciation of the worth of material things. What God is interested in is the *attitude* we have toward material things—whether we seek *first*, as our highest priority, His Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

God wants us to prosper and be in good health (III John 2). He wants us to give up those things that are bad for us—that hurt us spiritually and physically. Repentance and conversion make possible our *intelligent use* of God’s material creation through the guidance of His law and His Spirit.

3. Is surrendering to God something requiring serious thought? Must we first “count the cost”—realizing what surrendering to God really requires? Luke 14:27-30.

Beware of False Repentance

Repentance is a required step toward salvation—entering the Kingdom of God. Real repentance is a matter of mind as well as emotion. It is heartfelt realization that we have thought, spoken, and lived contrary to God’s law and that we should quit doing so!

1. Can people *worship* Christ, acknowledging that He is “Lord,” and yet not enter His Kingdom? Matt. 7:21. How else can one worship Him, and yet not be born of God at Christ’s coming?

Matt. 15:7-9. Then *who will* enter God's Kingdom? Matt. 7:21, last part.

COMMENT: Notice what else Jesus said about people who worship Him without keeping God's commandments: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. . . .Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

Carnal man would rather do almost anything else than surrender to God. His natural mind (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 8:7-8) rebels at the thought of submitting to God's law. Some substitute their own laws and traditions in place of God's law. Others claim that God's law is null and void, deceiving themselves by thinking they can receive salvation by merely *believing in* Christ as their Savior.

Human nature wants to *be* right, but it doesn't necessarily want to *do* right! So people often say, "Well, here's the way I look at it"—thus putting *their* concept of righteousness above the Bible. If it "looks right" to them, it becomes their law. This is *self-righteousness*.

Another way Satan has deceived millions about repentance and salvation is through penance. Your Bible clearly shows that no amount of human works can bring about the forgiveness of sin. Even the sacrificial laws of the Old Testament could not bring about full spiritual forgiveness and a clear conscience. They were only symbolic types picturing the supreme sacrifice for sin—Jesus Christ—who was to come much later to die for the sins of mankind (Heb. 9:9-14; 10:4-10).

And the only way Christ's sacrifice can be applied to blot out one's sins is by accepting it, forsaking one's past life of disobedience, and by beginning to obey God. That is true repentance!

2. What does Isaiah 64:6 say about self-righteousness? And what did Jesus say about those who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous"? Luke 18:9-14.

3. How did the Apostle Paul describe the society we live in today? II Tim. 3:1-5, especially verse 5.

COMMENT: Many people profess to be religious—they attend churches—they have a "form of godliness." But they have the attitudes and practices that have made this world what it is today—"this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4).

God requires a complete reversal in the direction we have been going. In other words, God wants us to quit following the ways that seem right according to human reasoning—to completely turn around and begin following the way of God as revealed in the Bible!

4. What else does God say concerning this present evil world in which we have all had a part?

I John 2:15-17. What should we do? Rev. 18:4; Rom. 12:2.

COMMENT: Here is the starting point on the way to salvation. God commands us to come *out* of this world and *forsake* its wrong ways. No longer conforming to its ways that are contrary to God's way, we are to become more and more like Christ by allowing the Holy Spirit to renew our minds.

5. What is the result of this world's kind of sorrow, or "repentance"? II Cor. 7:10, last part. But what kind of sorrow for sin does God accept, and where does it lead? Verse 9, first part of verse 10 and verse 11.

COMMENT: It is commonly believed that repentance is simply a temporary remorseful feeling over past mistakes without a real change in one's way of living. Such "repentance" is not repentance at all. It is totally unacceptable to God and leads only to death!

Real repentance is something far more than a temporary, emotional "experience." True repentance—"godly sorrow"—involves a complete and permanent about-face in our thoughts and deeds!

Win the Christian Fight!

All who have been called to the Christian way of life have three deadly enemies to face, each of which tends to *discourage* us from overcoming sin and developing the character of God.

These deadly foes can come between us and God—separating us from Him. They tend to put wedges into our minds that can grow, gradually separating us from the guidance and power of God's Holy Spirit and the faith of Jesus Christ—if we allow them to.

Real repentance is something far more than a temporary, emotional "experience." True repentance—"godly sorrow"—involves a complete and permanent about-face.

These deadly enemies *must* be defeated and God tells us *how* to do it!

1. Does Paul show that effort is involved in living the Christian life—that eternal life is worth *fighting for* so it does not slip from one's grasp? I Tim. 6:12; 1:18-19; II Tim. 2:3-4.

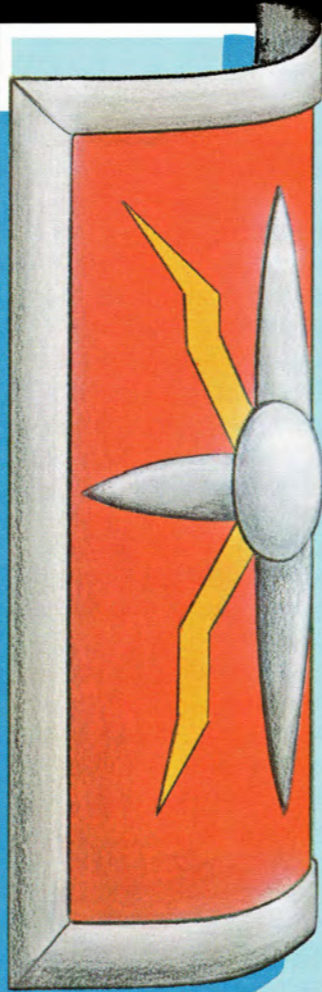
2. Did Paul *steadfastly* follow God's way of life—did he know, shortly before his death, that he had won the Christian fight? II Tim. 4:6-8.

The Armor

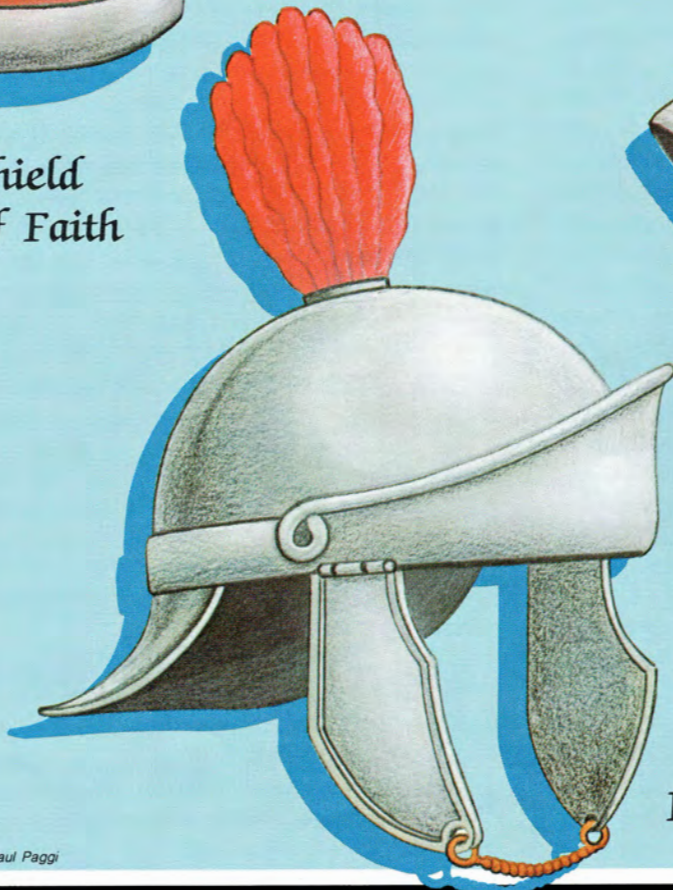
All true Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare. It is not a fight against physical foes, but against three deadly enemies—human nature, the sinful society around us, and Satan the devil.

To defeat these enemies and win the Christian fight, we must put on the spiritual armor of God described in Ephesians 6.

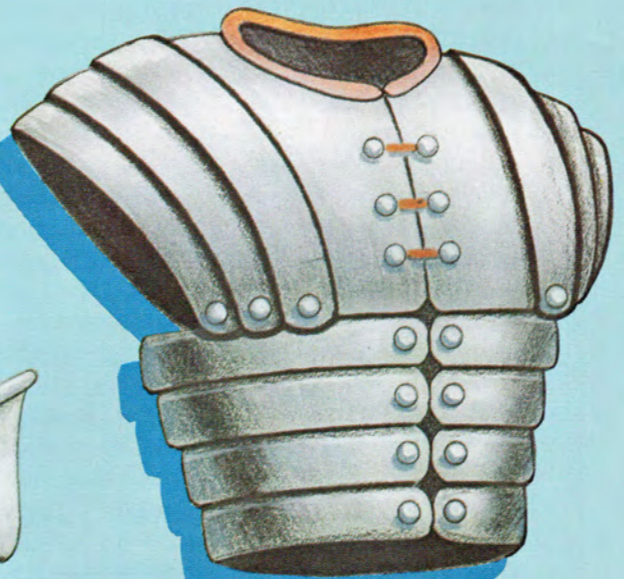
We are to be clothed with the “truth” of God, so we cannot be deceived, and wear the “breastplate of righteousness,” which is the



Shield
of Faith



Helmet of Salvation



Breastplate of Righteousness

or of God

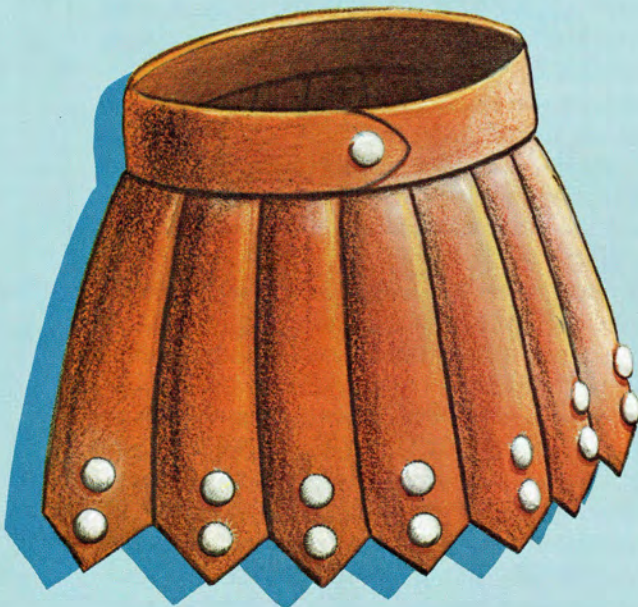
keeping of God's law.

Our feet are to be shod "with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—we are to be doing our part in getting out the message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God.

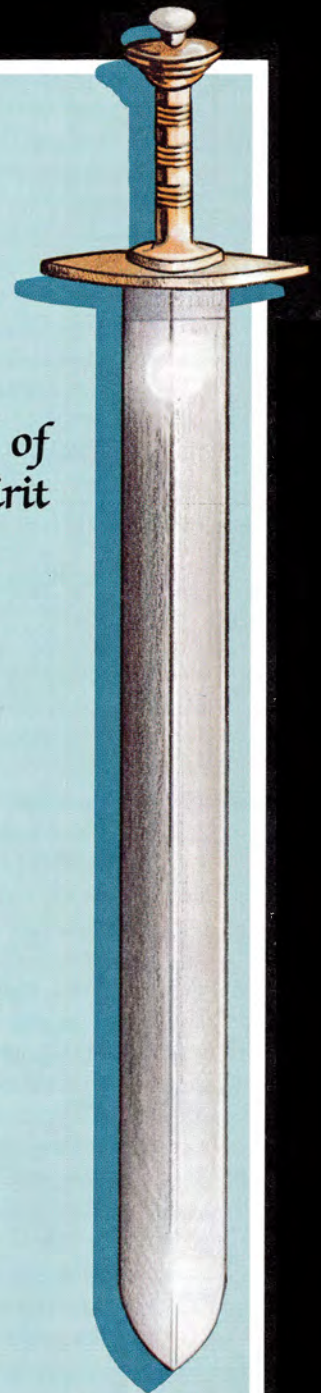
The "shield of faith" helps us ward off attacks and enticements of the wicked, while wearing the "helmet of salvation" keeps us properly mindful of our spiritual goal. We are also to pray and to wield the "sword of the Spirit," which is the written Word of God.

Sword of
the Spirit

Feet Shod
with the
Gospel of
Peace



Girdle of Truth



3. Is our warfare against physical armies? Or is it a *spiritual warfare*? II Cor. 10:3-4. Just what are we to fight against? Verse 5.

COMMENT: The first enemy in our daily warfare is our human nature with its ungodly characteristics (Gal. 5:19-21). This nature causes us to rationalize deceitfully (Jer. 17:9). It encourages us to *sin*—to break God’s spiritual law—thus cutting us off from Him. Wrong habits and impulses can destroy us spiritually, unless we *resist* them.

4. What is the second deadly enemy of true Christians? Gal. 1:4. What should our attitude be toward the world’s social order with its glitter, glamor, status-seeking and appeal? I John 2:15-17.

COMMENT: The Apostle John was referring to the society of this world, so much of which is built on and motivated by vanity, self-centeredness, lust and greed. Because most people are spiritually deceived (Rev. 12:9), they don’t understand how so many of the world’s ways could be wrong in God’s sight. Nevertheless, this world’s ways do bombard us continually with temptations that can lead us away from following Christ!

5. Should we strive to avoid the evil that is in the world? II Cor. 6:14-18; Rev. 18:4. Does this mean that we should move away from populated areas? John 17:15-18. Notice especially the first part of verse 15.

COMMENT: Christ’s prayer in John 17 shows that God does not expect us to move to the mountains or deserts to escape the world’s distractions! Rather, we should strive to be separate *spiritually* and refuse to participate in the sins of the world.

From earliest childhood we began conforming to the customs and practices that we learned from the teachings and examples of others. We merely accepted, without question, most of the practices and life-styles of the society around us. But as we learn about God’s way, we are to conscientiously apply ourselves to our new life in Christ. “Be not

The many snares in the world can be compared to an obstacle course that challenges and strengthens a good soldier in training.

conformed to this world,” said Paul, “but be ye transformed by the *renewing of your mind*, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2).

Unless we cease conforming to this world, we

will not grow in the character of Christ or overcome spiritually. The many snares in the world can be compared to an obstacle course that challenges and strengthens a good soldier in training. We must learn to hurdle those obstacles.

6. Do people always appreciate the person who tries to live according to God’s law? I Pet. 4:3-4; John 15:18-20; 16:33. How should we respond to those who might be antagonistic toward our desire to follow Christ? Matt. 5:43-47; Rom. 12:20-21.

COMMENT: God has not chosen to call everyone at this time. Some may persecute and ridicule those who follow God’s way. Yet they are potential Sons of God, and we are to *love* them! God will eventually open their minds and show them His truth so they, too, can become converted, as depicted by the last step in God’s Master Plan.

7. What, or who, is the third great enemy of every Christian? I Pet. 5:8-9. Is Satan ultimately responsible for inspiring all the evil in this world? II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:1-3. As the invisible ruler, has he deceived the whole world? Rev. 12:9.

COMMENT: Satan the devil became perverted in his thinking and thus developed his evil nature, which he has “broadcasted” to humanity ever since Adam and Eve.

Humans have unsuspectingly acquired Satan’s nature, which we call “human nature.” This natural state of mind, the carnal mind, “is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7).

But once the Holy Spirit of God is added to our minds, we then have access to the spiritual power to resist the attitudes of self-centeredness, lust, greed, vanity, jealousy, envy, resentment, competition, strife, bitterness and hate that are spiritually broadcasted to the mind by Satan.

No one is forced to obey these daily impulses from Satan. But the unsuspecting do so without realizing what is taking place in their minds. Most people just drift along, responding to emotions and impulses that often find expression in “works of the flesh” and vain pursuits (Gal. 5:19-21).

Thus Satan, the “god of this world,” the “prince of the power of the air,” is actually working “in” (Eph. 2:2) the minds of unsuspecting people all over the world. That is why this world is so thoroughly deceived today!

8. After your begetting by God’s Holy Spirit, the devil will continue to try to deceive you, to lead you away from Christ and His way. What did Paul warn the Corinthian Christians? II Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15. Did some Christians in Paul’s day begin to fall victim to the deceptions of the devil’s false ministers once again? Gal. 1:6-8; 3:1.

COMMENT: Conversion does not shield us from Satan's "wavelength." He continues to broadcast his attitudes to our minds in an attempt to spiritually overthrow us. When Jesus spoke of overcoming, He referred to overcoming Satan's way.

Those who have turned from Satan's way are fighting to overcome his subtle urgings, and are striving to remain true to God's way—the way of God's government. They are the ones Satan hates. He is especially interested in destroying them! But with God's protection and restraining power over Satan, which He promises to give us if we remain close to Him, we can overcome!

Before Jesus Christ could qualify to restore the government of God and rule all nations, He, too, had to withstand Satan's most severe temptations. Notice how the devil attempted to deceive and influence Jesus Christ to sin.

9. When Jesus had fasted and was extremely hungry, how did the devil appeal both to human vanity and hunger? Matt. 4:1-3. And to the human desire for prestige, glory and power? Verses 5-9. What were Jesus' immediate responses? Verses 4, 7, 10. What was the outcome of this spiritual battle? Verse 11.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ overcame the devil. He resisted Satan, conquered him and showed His mastery over him! When He gave the devil an order, Satan had to obey. He slunk away, defeated in this supreme spiritual encounter.

Christ overcame the devil's wiles by the Word of God. He responded to the devil's temptations by citing the scripture that applied in each situation. He knew the Word of God thoroughly. He knew God's will. And He obeyed it. Therefore, the devil could not deceive Him!

10. Are we today also to resist the devil with the truth God has revealed to us? I Pet. 5:9. What must the devil do if resisted steadfastly? Jas. 4:7.

11. What instructions on fighting against the impulses and attitudes of the devil does God give us through Paul? Eph. 6:10-12. What are we to put on to be able to fight this spiritual battle? Verses 11, 13. Of what does God's spiritual armor consist? Verses 14-17.

COMMENT: We are to be clothed with the revealed "truth" of God (John 17:17) so we can't be deceived, and wear the "breastplate of righteousness," which is the keeping of God's law (Ps. 119:172).

Our feet are to be shod "with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—we are to be actively doing our part in getting out the message of the soon-coming Kingdom of God that will rule this earth and bring it peace.

The "shield of faith" protects us from the attacks and enticements of Satan. This is not our own human faith, but the faith of Jesus Christ, which can be within us (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 14:12). Christ's faith is imparted to us by God's Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

The "helmet of salvation" (Eph. 6:17) keeps us properly oriented toward our spiritual goal. It is the knowledge of God's awesome purpose for mankind—of becoming Spirit-born members of the Family of God!

The "sword of the Spirit" refers to the written Word of God (Heb. 4:12). It is the only offensive

We have a continuing spiritual fight on our hands. But with the Word of God as our sword and His armor as our protection, if we persevere to the end, we will succeed.

weapon in fighting the devil's influence. To rightly use this weapon we must study the Bible and learn God's will and His promises.

12. What else did Paul say is necessary to win the Christian fight? Eph. 6:18-20.

COMMENT: We are to draw close to God in persevering prayer (I Thess. 5:17), praying for all of God's people, for the work of God's Church and for our own needs.

This is the formula for successfully overcoming Satan and forcing him to flee. This is the perfect strategy for defeating human nature and the sinful attractions of the world, which are both motivated by the archenemy of God.

We have a continuing spiritual fight on our hands. But with the Word of God as our sword and His armor as our protection, if we persevere to the end, we will succeed in overcoming all three deadly foes!

You Can Overcome

Once baptized—and that is by immersion—you have embarked on a new and exciting way of life. But God knows that we still can and sometimes do sin (I John 1:8-9). But our merciful God promises to forgive us if we repent, and will strengthen us so we can continue to overcome and be granted eternal life in His glorious Kingdom.

But exactly how is it possible to continue to overcome, to press on toward the eternal goal, to strive toward developing the perfect, holy and



Warren Watson—AC



Center: Hal Finch—AC, right: Ambassador College

Become as Little Children

If we are to enter the Kingdom of God, we must develop daily, with the help of God's Spirit, innocent, humble and teachable attitudes.

righteous character of Jesus Christ and be born into God's Family? It is through the faith of Christ—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Paul said: "I can do all things [overcome any trial, test, trouble or sin] through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

And so can we!

Yes, through Christ we can please God, fulfill His law and overcome! Let's review how.

1. Did the Apostle Paul, inspired by God's Holy Spirit, say that we must "work out" our own salvation? Phil. 2:12. Also notice II Peter 1:10.

COMMENT: Upon our spiritual begettal, we have something we must begin to do and continue doing for the rest of our natural lives. The Christian life involves "works"—doing something! Christians must put forth effort to overcome. Christ said: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). God's way of life is one of productivity, growth and exciting challenge.

2. Can we earn our salvation by our works? Rom. 6:23; Phil. 2:13; Eph. 2:8-9.

COMMENT: Eternal life is a gift of God. You cannot earn salvation by your works. However, the Christian still has his or her part to do.

We must put away the habits and sins that enslave us. We must overcome ungodly habits and thoughts that would ultimately lead to eternal death (Rom. 6:23). But how? It is impossible to conquer the influences of the world, the flesh

and the devil through human strength alone.

3. Did Paul experience numerous frustrations in striving to overcome his nature? Read Romans 7:7-25, especially noting verses 15, 19 and 23.

COMMENT: Paul found that when he tried to resist his human nature, bad habits and sins would not easily be dismissed. In fact, when his attention was drawn to eradicating personal sins, they seemed to become more pronounced. Paul cried out: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (verse 24).

Of course, Paul did overcome. Shortly before his death, he wrote to Timothy: "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day [the time of the resurrection at Christ's Second Coming], and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (II Tim. 4:6-8, *Revised Standard Version*).

Notice how Paul succeeded in overcoming.

4. What is the key to Christian overcoming? Phil. 4:13; John 15:5; I John 4:4; Rom. 8:37.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ, who has already defeated Satan and qualified to become "King of kings and Lord of lords," will help Christians defeat Satan and this world's influences through the Holy Spirit! He told His disciples to be of good

cheer because He had overcome the world (John 16:33). John further testified that the One who dwells in every true Christian through the Spirit of God is greater than Satan (I John 4:4).

5. But didn't Jesus say He could, of Himself, do nothing? John 5:30.

COMMENT: Even the very Son of God said He could do *nothing* (no *spiritual* works) by His own human power. If Christ, when in the flesh, had no faith in Himself, how much less, then, can we accomplish by trusting in ourselves?

Few realize that Christ's obedience and even the miracles He performed were not done by any supernatural power of His own. All His spiritual works were done through faith in God's power.

6. What was the source of Christ's dynamic faith? John 14:10-11.

COMMENT: The Father who lived in Jesus through the Holy Spirit made His obedience to God's law possible! Christ had the faith of God.

7. Are Christians to live by faith? Heb. 10:38; Rom. 1:17. But is having faith in God all that is required? Rom. 3:31. Is faith without obedience to God a dead faith? Jas. 2:20-22.

COMMENT: The Bible shows that we have a part in the salvation process. Nevertheless, many professing Christians believe that Jesus obeyed God's law in our stead. But a Christian is not excused from overcoming, growing in spiritual character, and enduring in spite of opposition or temptation to quit. The Bible makes it clear that having faith does not excuse us from having spiritual works.

This is a great mystery to those who don't understand God's purpose and plan of salvation. Since we must do these things to be saved, yet are unable to do them of ourselves, many have concluded that God sent Jesus to do it all for us. Nothing could be further from the truth!

The answer is the key to salvation. It is faith. Faith in God's power—the same kind of living faith Jesus had!

8. By whose faith is a Christian's "righteousness"—his obedience to God's spiritual law—made possible? Rev. 14:12.

COMMENT: Spirit-begotten Christians have the very "faith of Jesus." It's not just *our* faith in Him, but His faith—the very faith through which He kept God's law—placed in us and acting in us!

9. Does the Bible call Jesus the author and finisher of our faith? Heb. 12:2-4.

COMMENT: A more accurate translation of the phrase "author and finisher" is "pioneer, perfecter." Jesus led the way, as our pioneer, setting us the supreme example of living faith. But Jesus also perfects His faith *in* us! Here's how.

10. Did the Apostle Paul state that Christ lived in him? Gal. 2:20. How did Christ live in him? Phil. 2:5; Rom. 8:9-10. Did Paul live his life by Christ's faith dwelling in him? Galatians 2:20 again.

COMMENT: Paul didn't live by his own faith. The mind of Christ dwelt in Paul through the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of God implanted in Paul's mind the same faith that can be in your mind! This faith—the faith of Christ—will enable you to live a life of overcoming as did Paul.

11. Is the faith of Jesus Christ, by which we receive eternal salvation, a gift of God? Eph. 2:8-9. Is this faith one of the results of having the Holy Spirit? Gal. 5:22.

COMMENT: The faith that saves is the faith of Christ. Yes, Christ's faith—not our faith. And Christ, who can live in us by God's Spirit, will impart His strong faith to us and thus make our spiritual obedience and overcoming possible!

12. What must you do to receive the Holy Spirit and the faith of Jesus Christ? Acts 2:38. Must you be willing to obey God? Acts 5:32. And must you first show faith toward Christ before He will give you His faith? Acts 20:21; Rom. 1:17.

COMMENT: God will give His Holy Spirit and the resulting faith of Christ only to those who meet these prior conditions. We must show our own faith, or belief, in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed to pay the death penalty our sins have incurred. Upon faith in, and our acceptance of Him as personal Savior, and after repentance and water baptism, God is bound by His Word to give us His Holy Spirit.

Christ, who can live in us by God's Spirit, will impart His strong faith to us and thus make our spiritual obedience and overcoming possible!

13. Once we receive God's Holy Spirit, must the faith that it imparts grow? II Thess. 1:3.

COMMENT: Faith is not implanted in our minds whole and complete at the moment we receive the Spirit of God. Faith must grow. It must be nourished; it needs exercise and practice. That faith must grow by testing and by works. It must be living faith.

We must press toward the goal of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ, to strive toward the perfection of the character of God through the

faith of Christ—“Christ in us, the hope of glory.” And it is all accomplished as a result of having the Holy Spirit in us, and as we exercise it.

We are to keep God’s law and live the Christian life as if it depended altogether on our own effort, but because “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,” God makes up the necessary difference. Like Paul, who was mindful of his own limitations, we look to God for the help to accomplish His purpose in us—“For my very weakness makes me strong in him” (II Cor. 12:10, Phillips).

Through Christ you, too, can conquer every sin, surmount every obstacle, defeat every foe, and overcome every hindrance that threatens to block your way into God’s Family!

Remember the Apostle Paul exuded Christ’s confidence. He was sure! He was certain! Paul walked, talked and lived with Christ and the Father through the Holy Spirit within him. He had the faith and assurance of Jesus Christ.

So can you!

(If you have not already read our free booklet *What Is Faith?* and our reprint article “How to Be an Overcomer,” be sure to request them. They provide additional important details about spiritual growth and overcoming.)

Why Overcoming Is So Important

Those who have been called to the Christian way of life have been called to a life of growing and overcoming. Let’s understand why it is so important, and what it has to do with the responsibilities Spirit-born Christians will have in the Kingdom of God.

1. Did Jesus Christ become perfect? Heb. 5:9; 2:9-10. Notice especially the last part of verse 10.

The more we overcome, the greater the responsibility we will be given in Christ’s government on earth.

What did Christ set as the goal for His true followers? Matt. 5:48. Who are they to become like? Eph. 4:13.

2. Even though Christ was the Son of God and had the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), did He still have to learn obedience? Heb. 5:8-9. Did Christ overcome and did He resist temptation? John 16:33; Heb. 4:15.

COMMENT: Jesus Christ became perfect through

the trials and tests of human experience. He overcame the temptations of the devil, His flesh and the world around Him. In spite of opposition and temptation, He kept God’s commandments perfectly. Thus He was able to become the Savior of mankind and the example of spiritual maturity.

3. How important is overcoming to your being in God’s Kingdom and receiving a reward? Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-27; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7.

COMMENT: Through overcoming the sinful pulls of the flesh, the world and the devil, our spiritual character is being perfected—we are building the character of God. And the more we overcome, the greater the responsibility we will be given in Christ’s government on earth. Thus the greater will be our reward.

But no one can overcome for us. It requires putting forth effort on our part, together with the power of God’s Holy Spirit, to become the kind of spiritually minded and motivated person God can use in His Kingdom.

4. Is overcoming done all at once, or is it a life-long process? Matt. 24:13, 45-47.

COMMENT: Striving to develop the spiritual character of Christ is a process of *overcoming* throughout the Christian life. It is those who overcome to the end—those who are still growing in character at Christ’s return (or at their death, if that comes first)—who shall inherit God’s Kingdom and receive a reward!

5. Does II Peter 1:5-9 show the need for continual growth in the virtues of Christian character as long as a person lives? Do verses 10 and 11 imply that those who don’t continue to grow and overcome will not enter God’s Kingdom?

Qualifying to Rule with Christ

1. By what principle can a person of ordinary ability qualify to take on far greater responsibility in the Kingdom of God? Luke 16:10.

COMMENT: We learn to rule by being *faithful*—conscientious—in whatever we do. We must put into practice in our daily lives the principles and laws we learn from God’s Word. Even the person who considers himself to have only a little ability and natural talent can qualify to rule in God’s Kingdom. We learn to rule in the world tomorrow by learning to manage our own affairs and responsibilities today, no matter how small they may be.

God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11; Gal. 3:28). Whether we were born male or female has no bearing on our reward in God’s Kingdom. Our future reward will be determined by our works in this life. Recall that it is by God’s grace that we



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QUALIFYING TO RULE with Christ requires that we faithfully manage our own affairs today, no matter how small they may be.

will enter His Kingdom, for immortality is a gift from God. But it is our works that will qualify us for an office of responsibility—an opportunity for greater service, for doing more good—once we are born into God’s ruling Family.

But to qualify—to be properly trained—to serve and teach in the world tomorrow, we must learn to serve and teach *now*.

The *only* reason any person is called to salvation now is to qualify to help call and save the thousands of millions during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment period. God hasn’t selected certain ones today for special favors.

The Christian life, therefore, is one of preparing for great service in tomorrow’s world. Spirit-begotten Christians are now in training to help teach the world God’s way and to administer the government of God for the good of humanity!

Are You Qualifying for That Job?

You were born with the awesome potential of becoming a member of the universe-ruling Family of God—and, if God is calling you now, to have a part in governing, teaching and guiding the world in the Millennium and in the Great White Throne Judgment period. And after that, to help

rule the entire universe throughout all eternity!

This is the incredible human potential, the awesome destiny God has in store for those who become members of His Family!

Have you begun the salvation process toward this marvelous goal? Analyze your own life and character. Have you begun obeying God? Are you growing spiritually? Are you growing in self-control? In the ability to restrain wrong desires, selfish motives or vanity? Are you replacing bad habits and attitudes with right thoughts and deeds?

If you have not yet begun to control and constructively guide even the little powers in your care—your temper, your voice, your passions and emotions, your income—then how could God entrust you with far greater responsibilities in the Kingdom of God? If you are not faithful in the use of your present income, who will entrust to your care the true riches and the great power of God?

Ask God for the understanding and wisdom to rightly use and direct the comparatively small powers, abilities and responsibilities that are now yours so you can be a faithful and productive servant of God.

Strive to be faithful over what God has already given you, so one day Christ can say to you: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much” (Matt. 25:21, *Revised Standard Version*).

This life is the training ground. We learn to rule by performing our responsibilities faithfully and by learning to rule over ourselves as we live the Christian way of life.

Preparing to rule in God’s Kingdom begins with submission to His rule now. God will not save any person He does not govern (Luke 19:27). So learn God’s laws. Study them. Think about them. Live by them. And with the power of God’s Holy Spirit, grow in the character of God by obeying Him and overcoming the temptations of the world and the influence of Satan.

Seek God by drawing closer to Him in prayer and Bible study. Grow spiritually. *Change!* Continually build the character of God until death, or until the moment Jesus Christ returns and instantly changes your weak, physical body into a powerful, sinless, glorified spirit body (Phil. 3:20-21). Then you will be ready to rule with Christ—to fulfill your awesome destiny of helping to rule the earth and the universe beyond as a member of the Family of God!

It’s a breathtaking, exciting, incredible calling! A glorious, wonderful future! Have you *begun* this divine calling?

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BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

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