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THIS WEEK'S SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

Golden Text—I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.—1 Tim. 2:1,2.

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

Approach to the Lesson.
Prayer is a much discussed, much preached about, much written about subject, but as an exercise it is much neglected. What most of us want is to have prayer made easy, because it refuses to be easy, because there is no discoverable technique to make it easy, we just neglect it.

We are not proficient in prayer because we do not regard it as of primary importance. It is a spare time activity—very spare! Other things, which we profess to regard as trivial in comparison, are given priority. Which of us men, for instance, if we found ourselves with time only to shave or pray before rushing to the morning train, would choose prayer and let the shave go? We are still tied to earthly things, and because prayer is a heavenly exercise, it is relegated to the category of things which we do "when we have time."

That attitude has been carried into our public worship—or what we call public worship. We go to church to hear a sermon but it would be too much like a mere public lecture if there were nothing but the sermon. So we have the preliminaries to lead up to the atmosphere for the sermon, and the prayer is one of the preliminaries. The Reformation did indeed restore the preaching of the Word to its rightful place in the church, but it is to be feared that the modern trend is to deny other exercises their due importance—the reading of the Scriptures—the lifting of the heart in ador-

ation and praise and prayer. And it is painful to have to admit that our fundamental churches are usually the most guilty in this respect. There are exceptions, but they are all too few. I do not speak of the evangelistic meeting, but of the gathering of the church for worship.

I would make, especially for those who engage in public prayer, a few suggestions:

Read such a book as W. Graham Scroggie's "Method in Prayer" (evidently out of print) and put it into practice.

Read the Psalms often, and the prayers of the Bible, especially Paul's prayer for the saints, and let both their truth and their language become the warp and woof of your own prayers.

Read the prayers of the great liturgies, and the pulpit prayers of such masters of free prayer as Spurgeon and Maclaren, and let your mind and heart be enriched by them.

Dwell much on the Lord's Prayer, the pattern prayer. Study it and learn its great lessons. (I have expressed my own study of the Lord's Prayer in a small volume entitled "After This Manner," published by Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 3 Mich., \$1.50; reviewed in S.S. TIMES).

Seek the enabling of the Holy Spirit, spoken of in the Romans section of our lesson. Let mind and heart be in His control. He "helpeth our infirmities."

Verse by Verse
1 Tim. 2:1—"Supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving thanks . . . for all men." For the differences in these words for prayer see "Topics for Development." Notice that prayer is to be accompanied by thanksgiving (Phil. 4:6; Col. 1:3), and that Christian praying must embrace all men. Nothing narrow or selfish here.

Verse 2—"For kings . . . that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Prayer for rulers is

a Christian duty. The ancient rituals contain such prayers, many of them echoing the words of this verse. Godliness here refers to the fear of God. For "honesty" read gravity. The word suggests the dignity and sobriety of the man of God.

Verse 3—"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." The "this" refers back to the exhortation to pray for all men, and is the connecting link with verse 1.

Verse 4—"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." God's saving purpose extends to all men, and this constitutes our encouragement to pray for all. This is no promise of universal salvation, however. Other factors besides the general benevolence of God are involved.

Verse 5—" . . . one God, and one mediator . . . the man of Christ Jesus." This is "the truth" referred to in verse 4. Since there is "one God," it is only by knowing Him, "the only true God," that men can be saved. Since there is "one mediator," only those who "come unto God by him" can be saved. Jesus Christ is the only one who can "lay his hand upon us both" (Job 9:33); since He is both God and man.

Verse 6—"Who gave himself a ransom for all." See Mark 10:45. Note the voluntary giving of himself, and the redemptive nature of that self-giving, to rescue us and buy us back into divine possession.

Verse 7—"Whereunto I am ordained a preacher . . . of the Gentiles in faith and verity." Paul was fully conscious of His divine appointment to the apostolate of the Gentiles (Acts: 22:17-21; Gal. 2:7-9), and defended his apostleship against every challenge.

Verse 8—"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." The article should be inserted before men (the men). The apostle is speaking of public prayer, in the assembly. The custom then was not to clasp or fold hands. (Continued on Next Page)

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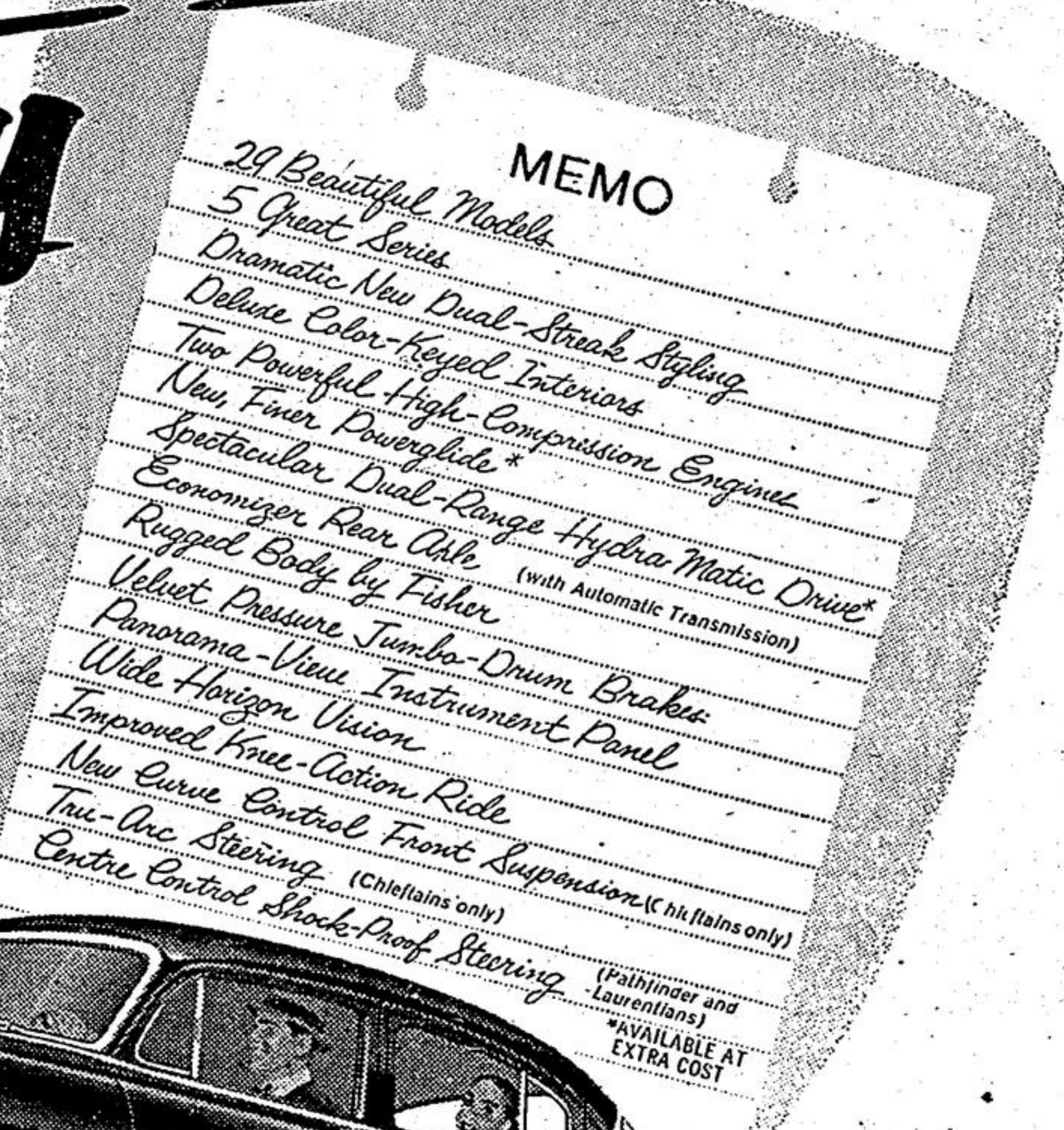
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