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EDITORIAL

A New Heaven And A New Earth

The time is one of the most valuable and precious commodities that man has. We live on this earth only one time, in one life. Once this earthly life is over we will be gone for ever into eternity, where there will be no time, and, surely, no choice. The inspired writer of the Bible wrote: "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:15, 16). Certainly we are living today in the days which are most evil. The very things which are being spoken and exhibited with so much boldness in every place, even in our living rooms, today, would have caused immense embarrassment to people even if they were to discuss such things in private in the years bygone. Immorality and immodesty and corruption is rampant everywhere. No longer people know how to be ashamed, and certainly they have forgotten even how to blush. Almost two thousand years ago the author of the Bible had said: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without selfcontrol, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Just think of every, word mentioned in

these five verses of the Scripture, and ponder to see if its not true of today!

Yet, the apostle Peter, in his epistle, by the inspiration of God's Spirit, wrote: "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for the new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter 3:8-14).

God, in the beginning, did not create an imperfect and evil world. The man and woman whom God had created to live in the world in the beginning were innocent, sinless and without blame. (Genesis 1). Man himself sinned and got himself separated from his Creator (Isaiah 59:1, 2). But, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).

The day will come, the day of the Lord, when the Lord Jesus Christ will appear again to judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31). On that day of the Lord this old sinful earth and the old heavens (sky) will be done away. But God's people, who walk and live according to His will, look forward, according to His promise, to live in the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness will dwell.

The apostle John, who was shown a preview of the glorious new heaven and the new earth in the first century thus wrote in his book of Revelation: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out

of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death; nor sorrow, nor crying and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:1-4). However, remember, said John, the inspired writer, "But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." (Revelation 21:27). Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Have you been washed by the blood of the Lamb? Are you walking by the will of God? is your life lived as He has revealed in the pages of His book?

Thank God for another year that He has given us. Thank God for more time that he has given us. But let us be wise. Time is flying. Time passed will never, never come back. One of the song writers wrote thus:

Years I spent in vanity and pride,
Caring not my Lord was crucified,
Knowing not it was for me He died
On Calvary

Mercy there was great, and grace was free
Pardon there was multiplied to me
There my burdened soul found liberty,
At Calvary.

Yes, God loves you. His mercy and grace has appeared for all men of every age through the cross of Calvary, where He allowed His Son to die as a propitiation for the sins of the world. (1 John 4:10). What are you going to do with Jesus Christ in 1994?

Where Are the Dead?

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible teaches that we will all die or put off the physical body at

the second coming of Christ. (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). We are also told that "it is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). The Apostle Paul declared, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Perhaps the biggest question at this point would be, "what happens to one between the time he dies and the judgment?" In other words, during that time, where does one abide? Is he still alive? Is he conscious? Or does he remain in the tomb or the place of the dead in an unconscious state?

In Luke 16:19-31 Christ tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. He says that both of these men died. The poor man's soul was taken by angels to Abraham's bosom or to the place of the righteous dead, which is described as being paradise. But the rich man's soul went to hell and was tormented in the flames. Then he cried out to Father Abraham to have mercy on him and to send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue. Abraham reminded him that in his life he had received all of the good things that the physical world had to offer, but Lazarus received the evil things or had done without. Then he goes on to say that now Lazarus is comforted but he is tormented.

It is explained to the rich man that it would be impossible anyway for Lazarus to come to him since there was a great gulf between the two and that one could not pass over to the other.

Next, the rich man requested that Abraham send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers not to come to that place of torment. Abraham told him that they had Moses and the prophets to listen to and if they would not hear them then they would not listen even though one rose from the dead to warn them.

But the rich man is already in hell or torment here and Lazarus has already gone to paradise. What about a resurrection (John 5:28, 29), and a general resurrection for all? There is no problem here. Just as in this life, if a murderer is caught, he is kept in prison until his judgment day and the time he is sentenced to pay for his crime. The scriptures therefore teach that when the righteous man or the faithful Christian dies that he will go immediately to paradise or the place of the righteous

dead. It further teaches that when the wicked person dies that he will go immediately to torment or to the place of the wicked dead.

Then when the Lord returns (1 Thessalonians 4:16), all will hear his voice and will be resurrected from the grave or will come forth from paradise and torment to appear before the Lord to be judged and sentenced. (Acts 17:31; Matthew 25:31-46). Finally, the record says in the words of Jesus that the wicked or unsaved "shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:46).

That means then that those who die remain conscious of who they are, of what they have done, and of others. The soul or spirit then goes into paradise or torment, according to whether they are saved or lost. Then at the judgment they will be sentenced by the righteous judge to an eternal hell with the devil and his angels or to live with the Lord in heaven with all of the saved forever more.

Death and the judgment will be final and one's destination will be eternal. There will be no second chance and neither will the wicked cease to exist. The soul will live on forever either in heaven or hell.

My friend, we have today to prepare to meet the Lord and to get our souls ready to live in heaven. Please do not neglect your salvation and end up lost for all eternity.

Especially For Women

To The Lost

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

When we look into the Scriptures for examples of evangelistic work being done in the Lord's church by Christian women, we read Paul's words to the church in Philippi: "And I urge you also, true companion, help those women who labored with me in the gospel . . ." (Philippians 4:3) In Romans 16, Paul mentioned numerous ones who

were his fellow-workers: "Greet Mary, who labored much for us." (v. 6) "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house." (v. 3-5)

We first read of this couple in Acts 18:2, 3. Paul had arrived in Corinth, "And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla . . . and he [Paul] came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers."

Whether Aquila and Priscilla were already Christians, or whether they were converted as a result of their association with Paul in Corinth, the Scriptures don't say. But we do know that they were an effective team in the early church.

Acts 18:24 introduces a man by the name of Apollos who came to Ephesus. He was, ". . . an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures . . . This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John [the Baptist]".

Aquila and Priscilla were also living in Ephesus. Acts 18:26 says, "So he [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. And when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately . . ." This example shows us that even though teaching in the public assembly is the responsibility of Christian men, a Christian woman may teach privately. "They"—both Aquila and Priscilla—helped Apollos to gain a clearer understanding of the truths regarding Jesus Christ.

It is vital that Christian women today learn the Scriptures and that they develop the ability to teach others. Much of the world's population is made up of women, young people, and children. A woman, well-studied in the God's word, can have many opportunities to teach the Gospel to her friends, associates, and relatives. She can invite them to her home, singly or as a neighborhood gathering, perhaps once a week, for a friendly cup of coffee or tea and time to sit together to study God's word.

It is also good if the husband and wife arrange visits together in the homes of friends and acquaintances, for the purpose of sharing the truth. Perhaps two or three evenings each week could be spent this way.

The Christian woman may also have the opportunity to encourage the children in the neighborhood to gather at her home for a special weekly Bible class. She can teach songs, memory verses, and Bible stories. In time, probably the children and even their parents will grow in their understanding so that they may obey the gospel and become a part of the Lord's church. A strong woman in a neighborhood can have a far-reaching influence through all of these ways.

Though men have the responsibility of public leadership, the church in any area will never be really strong until there are strong Christian women, providing leadership among the women and living as godly examples for others to follow. Each one of us who has become a Christian should pray and work to develop as leaders among women.

“Lay Up Treasures In Heaven”

CLEM THURMAN

We live in a materialistic world. “What’s in it for me? How much can I sell it for? What will the salary be? how much time off do I get?” Such questions dominate the thinking of most people in our society, because they deal with the real goals most people have: the material things of life. Solomon points out the emptiness of a life that is based on such goals, for this man who had wisdom, wealth, entertainment, prestige and power, wrote: *“What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? . . . I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad . . . I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine . . . I made me great works . . . I got me servants and maidens . . . I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me . . . I hated life because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation.*

of spirit" (Eccle. 1:2-3; 2:1-17).

When people have little, they want much. When people have much, they want more. We are never satisfied, never have enough. The reason is simple: the material things are not enough to satisfy. The Lord knew this, and gave warning: "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also*" (Matt. 6:19-21). In this materialistic age, we need to be reminded constantly of that priority. If we set our minds on the material, we will never have enough to satisfy. Only by changing our focus, as Jesus here directs, can we achieve what is possible and desirable with our lives.

THE FOLLY OF TRUSTING IN MATERIAL THINGS

A rich young man came to Jesus, wanting to have eternal life and seemingly willing to do whatever was required to achieve that. Jesus told him, "*Go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.*" Sadly, the young man "*went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions*" (Matt. 19:16-22). That is the result of trusting in material things. He refused to give up material riches for short while in order to enjoy "*the unsearchable riches of Christ*" for eternity (Eph. 3:8). The apostle Paul wrote, "*We brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out . . . They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and snare . . . For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Tim. 6:7-10). Isn't it ridiculous to spend a lifetime accumulating an impressive list of "things" which shall all be left behind when we depart this life?

Jesus told a story that well illustrates the attitude that many people foolishly hold. A rich man was greatly prospered by God, then turned from God to consider only his own selfish desires: "*I will pull down my barns and build greater . . . I will say to my soul, soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry*" (Lk. 12:18-19). God said to him, "*Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?*" (v. 20). He was blessed with material wealth, then selfishly

decided to leave God out of his life while he enjoyed the wealth God gave him. But he never enjoyed it. Neither can we. Too many are so busy "building bigger barns" that they never find time to serve the God who gave it to them.

WE MUST SEEK AFTER SPIRITUAL THINGS

The whole purpose of man is to "*Fear God and keep his commandments*" (Eccle. 12:13). If we are going to "*lay up treasures in heaven*" it is not going to be by sending money up there! We are laying up treasures in God's bank whenever we are serving Him—in any way. Presenting our bodies "*a living sacrifice*" is called "*Your spiritual service*" (Rom. 12:1). Worship, study, feeding the hungry, teaching the lost: all of this is "*spiritual service*" and it is the way we "*lay up treasures in heaven.*" We must focus on spiritual values, learn to view things with spiritual eyes. The apostle showed the view we need: "*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Saul of Tarsus had a lot going for him. He was apparently well-respected among his peers with a good education, prestige, popularity and probably some degree of wealth. Then he became a Christian and things changed: "*We hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place. . . . We are made as the filth of the world*" (1 Cor. 4:11-13). What had changed the most was not how the world viewed Paul but how Paul viewed the world. He wrote about that, "*What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yes verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus and my Lord: for whom I suffer the loss of things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ*" (Phil. 3:7-8). Because his perspective had changed, material things were not as important as they had been. He looked for spiritual values, he "*looked at the things not seen.*"

WE MUST PUT JESUS FIRST IN OUR LIVES

After Jesus had said, "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,*" He then explained part of what is involved: "*seek ye first the kingdom of*

God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Jesus demands first place in our lives, and if He is not in first place then He will not have any place. He taught plainly, "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me*" (Matt. 10:37). We must learn the right priorities, putting first things first. When we "*seek first*" the things of God, we will seek after the spiritual instead of material, we will make our goal the heavenly instead of the earthly.

True allegiance to the Lord Jesus will surely make a difference in the way we live. Under the Old Testament, the Lord required the sacrifices of animals, which meant their death. But now He tells us, "*Present your bodies a living sacrifice*" (Rom. 12:1). The sacrifice He wants from us is a life. We need to recognize that Christ bought us with His own blood, so that, "*Ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price*" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Paul knew that, "*I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal. 2:20). That is "*seeking first*" the Lord and His will. When we do that, His promises are ours: "*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world . . . We are more than conquerors through him that loved us . . . Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ . . . I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me*" (Matt. 28:20; Rom. 8:37; 1 Cor. 15:57; Phil. 4:13).

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, YOUR HEART FOLLOWS

We sometimes try to turn this saying around and say that we put our treasure where our heart is. Jesus said it this way: "*Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also*" (Matt. 6:21). Our heart follows our treasure. When we avidly seek the things of the world, it is because we have invested our dreams, time, money and energy in those things. It is very easy, from this rule the Lord gave, to determine where our heart is. But it is also easy to determine where our heart will be in the future!

If a man puts all of his "treasure" into his business, that's where his heart will be. If we put all our treasure into benefits for children, that's where our hearts will be. Some lavish their time and money on a home; that's where the heart is. And this principle is true with regard to spiritual things. Many people have little interest in the church, and there is the reason. If you will give generously and sacrificially of your time, money

and ability, to the church, I guarantee that your heart will be there! That is precisely what the Lord is talking about (Matt. 6:19-33).

Do you think, plan and talk about going to heaven? I'm afraid too many of us want to go to heaven only when we have finished with all the pleasures of this world. But why don't we have more interest in heaven? Why isn't our heart there? The Lord answers, "*Where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.*" When we really "*lay up treasures in heaven*" our hearts will be in heaven. We will then long to go and enjoy the treasures we have sent in ahead. May God help us all to "*lay up treasure in heaven*" daily, so that we can one day go where our heart is and enjoy those eternal treasures.

Lost

ROY GOODMILLER

"The loss of wealth is much;
The loss of health is more;
But the loss of Christ is such a loss
That no man can restore."

Someone else has written; "Sheep get lost, not because of the thicket, but because they wander away too far from the shepherd."

When the late Adlai Stevenson ran for President of the United States and lost to General Dwight Eisenhower, he said after the election, "I feel like the little boy who stubbed his toe; I'm too old to cry, but it hurts too much to laugh." It always hurts when we stop to realize that most of the world will be lost eternally, and we can do so little about it. It hurts when we realize that some are "not far from the kingdom;" and we can't persuade them to be "altogether as I am," Acts 26:29. It hurts when we realize that there are so many in the church who were "once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift," Hebrews 6:4, and yet have turned their backs on the Lord and serve Him no more.

A very wise writer said concerning those who fall away, "Someone asks why so many church members fall. Here's one answer in a parable. When a boy was asked why he fell out of bed, he replied, 'I guess it's because I stayed too close to the getting-in place.'"

Lessons From Acts 10

CLIFFORD DIXON

In this chapter we have the conversion of the first Gentile to Christianity. The person God gave this opportunity to was a great man who already believed in God, but who needed the words of the gospel whereby he and his house could be saved. Peter is the spokesman who was told by Christ that he, along with the other apostles were given the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:18, 19; 18:18). let us notice some things about this man's conversion that stands out.

1. He was a **PROMINENT** man. He was a Centurion, which was a leader in a Roman cohort which could have been 1,000 men. This band was Italian so they were Romans. He was a leader with humility that is worthy of our emulation. The people thought a great deal of him because his servants explained that he was "of good report among all the nation of the Jews" (Acts 10:22). This is saying much of a Gentile, but in spite of this he needed the truth of the gospel so he could believe in and obey Christ, and have the remission of sins (Acts 10:43, 47, 48).

2. He was **PIOUS** man, which means that he was devout, being devoted to religion and religious duties. He feared God, which is a characteristic all need (Matthew 10:28). He was a giver to help the needy, and a man who prayed to God and worshipped God. When the angel appeared to him he was observing the Jewish hour of prayer, so he worshipped God under what ever light he had from the Mosaical law, having learned it from the Jews. Being very religious doesn't mean that a person is saved because it is the truth that makes men free (John 8:32).

3. He was a **PHILANTHROPIC** man in that he believed in helping

the needy. Pure religion requires that one visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (James 1:27). God is a judge of the fatherless (Psalm 10:18), and a father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5). The Jews were told to enter not into the fields of the fatherless (Proverbs 23:10), and to do no violence to the stranger and fatherless (Jeremiah 22:3). Such a man was Cornelius who helped them rather than trying to take that which they had. One can be ever so benevolent and still not be saved, because one must do more than fear God and help the needy. He must work righteousness to be saved (Acts 10:34, 35). To work righteousness means to obey the commands of Christ (Romans 10:16, 17).

4. He was a PRAYING man. Notice that Cornelius prayed and his prayers were heard yet he was unsaved. The reason this is so is because prayer is not God's plan of salvation. Man can call on the Lord in prayer, yet refuse to do what God commands, and God will not recognize him as acceptable (Matthew 7:21-23). The only thing the prayers of Cornelius did for him was that God gave him the opportunity of hearing the gospel, then it was up to him to act upon the gospel in order to be saved.

5. He was a PROMPT man. As soon as the angel departed from him, he sent two household servants and a devout soldier to Joppa for Peter. When he determined what time Peter would arrive, he had the crowd ready. We need to be prompt in what we do. Much valuable time that could be used for the Lord is wasted because of hesitation to begin.

6. This man PLANNED FOR A GOSPEL MEETING. He called together his kinsmen and near friends, and had them all ready when Peter arrived. He knew that if an angel sent him after a preacher that an important message would be presented. He wanted all his friends and family to hear that message. Are we as anxious that our friends hear the gospel?

7. They were PRESENT to hear all things that the Lord commanded (Acts 10:33). Oh, that people of our day would only gather to hear what the Lord commanded! What a blessing it would be to their souls!

8. The result of this meeting was that God's PLAN was obeyed. They believed (verse 43), repented (Acts 11:18), and were baptized by

the authority of Jesus Christ (verses 47, 48).

“The Truth Shall Make You Free”

DAVID WADE

Jesus declares that truth makes us free (John 8:32). However, he predicates freedom on our knowing the truth. “Ye shall KNOW the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” This principle has application in every realm of life: spiritual, secular, scientific, legal, political, medical, or whatever. Truth in every realm leads to freedom. It is all the more important that we study God’s record of spiritual truth, the Bible, in order that we, by it, may be made spiritually free.

The Bible is replete with examples of those who failed in this endeavor. The experiences of Paul in dealing with false teachers and their false ways graphically illustrates the bondage of falsehood. “This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck, of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme” (I Timothy 1:18-20).

Although Alexander faded from the scene, the evil work of Hymenaeus continued. Paul further charged Timothy: “Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babbling, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His, and, let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (II Timothy 2:15-18).

As a servant of Jesus Christ, Paul had no choice but to confront the error and expose it. To do anything less than this places "truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne" (James Russell Lowell). Paul further admonishes: "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taking captive by him to do his will." (II Timothy 2:23-26).

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (II Timothy 4:2-5). "The truth shall make you free."

He "Strengthened His Hand In God"!

JOE E. GALLOWAY

Jonathan and David were the closest of friends (1 Samuel 18:1), a friendship which continued even though Jonathan's father, king Saul, was attempting to assassinate David. For self-protection David was living in the woods, in the wilderness of Ziph. At this time I Samuel 23:16 tells us. "And Jonathan, Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God."

Would to God all of our relationships with each other as Christians could be summed up with these same words! They should be. God expects us to "care one for another" (I Corinthians 12:25). We are to always do that which will edify (strengthen) one another (Romans

14:19). We are to bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

There are so many ways we can "strengthen" each other "in God." We can express our appreciation for good that we see others doing. We can encourage by word and action when we see others discouraged. We can "prod" those who are slack in doing God's will to exert more effort to serve the Lord. This means of strengthening each other as described in these words in Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works . . ." One example of this is encouraging those who are newer or weaker to attend services more regularly. This is the matter at hand in the above text, for the next verse continues the thought, ". . . not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Sometimes strengthening others may require correcting them in the right spirit, or even restoring them to the Lord (see Galatians 6:1). Even the extreme act of withdrawing fellowship is properly done for the purpose of strengthening the body of Christ, and with the hope of regaining the erring one (II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15). One important way of strengthening others in God is to live an exemplary life before them.

To be effective in strengthening others in God we must get to know them well. This will involve some time and effort, for it will mean inviting others into our homes and also going into their homes. Each Christian should try to become better acquainted with every member of the congregation. As soon as new members are added, whether by conversion or by moving in and placing membership, we should make an extra effort to become acquainted with them. Members who visit each other become close to each other. And, only those who are close to others are in position to strengthen their hand in God. Let's all make an effort to do this!

What Did Jesus Build?

DALTON KEY

When the Lord promised, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), what did he have in mind to build? We realize the

actual, original word used by Christ would better be translated as "the called out" or "the assembly." Quibbles over the varied implications of "church" as compared with "assembly" are insignificant, however, when weighed against the question of Christ's meaning. The more important matter is not one of semantics, but of understanding. What did Jesus promise to build? What did he build?

It should be obvious to all of us that Christ had no intentions of erecting a building. Though by law the son of Joseph, the carpenter, we have no record of Christ building any physical structure whatsoever the elaborate and ornate structures of the Romish church, or for that matter, of any religious organization, are not what our Lord promised to build. His blood was shed to purchase the church, his body (Acts 20:28); buildings are bought with money, bonds and notes. While a comfortable building may be a useful expedient, it is not, of itself, that which Jesus promised to build or that for which he shed his blood.

Neither did Christ intend to establish a social or political body. He promised to build his church, which he described as the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:18,19). And yet during his appearance before Pilate he explained, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). He refused to be crowned as a temporal king over an earthly kingdom (John 6:15). Religious bodies which have social concerns or political issues as their chief concern can not be that which Christ had in mind when he promised, "I will build my church."

Did the Lord intend to establish a denomination? No. A denomination, by definition, is a named part of a larger whole. The scores of denominational bodies around us, which claim allegiance to Christ, purport to exist as but parts or units of the larger, universal body of Christians. They distinguish themselves by means of their unique teachings and practices and by names. Christ could not have had a denomination in mind when he promised to build his church, for that which he built was to be, not a part of a larger whole, but the whole itself. After the church was established on Pentecost day, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts, the saved were being added to the church (Acts 2:47). If the saved are in the church, and the church is comprised of the saved, the church can not possibly be a part or unit of a larger whole.

What, then, did our Lord promise to build? What did he purchase

with his blood? What did he establish, in Acts chapter two?

The church which Jesus promised to build is simply the body of people saved by the blood of Christ and submitting to him as head. Because all those who obey the gospel and are saved are added to the church. "There is one body" (Ephesians 4:4). Wherever and whenever sincere saints are found, who have received salvation from sin by the grace of God at the time of their gospel obedience, the church may be found. As the body of Christ, under his headship (Ephesians 1:22, 23), the church of Christ must be subject to his divine will in all matters pertaining to work and worship (Ephesians 5:24; Colossians 3:17). To deny the authority of Christ as head is to lose life as his body.

In the light of these facts, is "one church just as good as another?" Should we not make certain we are members of the church Jesus promised to build? To settle for anything less than his church would be foolhardy at best and eternally dangerous at last.

"This One Thing I Do"

CECIL MAY, JR.

Paul the Apostle was a single-minded man. That is one of the reasons he was able to evangelize much of Asia Minor and the European continent.

To the Philippians he expressed his purpose in general terms: "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, but this one thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). "This one thing I do;" not, "These forty things I dabble in."

To the Corinthians he was more specific: "For though I be free from all men, yet I have made myself slave to all, that I might gain the more . . . I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

"This one thing I do." "By all means save some." Paul's life manifests this single desire of his heart. Our Lord's purpose is the same: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). It ought also to be our guiding star, giving meaning to all we do.

There are many ways to serve, but saving souls should be the root and guiding principle of all. It is better to save one soul from death than to be Dr. Theologicus, Ph.D., Th.D., and be published by the learned Society of Biblical Literature. It is better to bring one person to know Jesus than to be Bro. Epitome Of Soundness and win debates with the greatest proponents of error. The greatest joy in heaven is "over one sinner that repents" (Luke 15:7, 10). That should be our greatest joy, as well.

Please note well: The above can be a means to saving souls, and I do not denigrate them when dedicated to that purpose, but let every activity be that, not an end in itself, nor a means for personal glory or self-aggrandizement. Whatever our talents or preferences for work, let us single-heartedly labour that we might "by all means save some."

Give us a watchword for the hour, a thrilling word, a word with power, A battle cry! A flaming breath, that calls, "To conquest! or to death!" A word to rise the church from rest to heed the Master's highest request! The call is given; ye hosts, arise; the watchword is, *Evangelize*.

The martyred saints now all proclaim, "Through all the earth," in Jesus' name. *This* word is ringing through the skys, *Evangelize*, *Evangelize*. To dying men, a fallen race, make known the gift of gospel grace; The world that now in darkness lies. Oh, Church of Christ, evangelize!

The Influence Of The Bible

BOBBY DOCKERY

One of the great proofs that the Bible is a Book from God is the

influence which it has in the world. Wherever the Bible has gone, it has made men better. Civilization has followed in its wake. Because people have loved the Bible and sought to live its truths, hospitals have been built, orphanages have been opened, and schools have been established. Though the last lines of this Book were penned almost 2,000 years ago, they still have a profound effect on the everyday lives of men and women in the 20th Century. Men of genius from every walk of life have recognized the greatness of the Bible and paid tribute to its influence.

One measure, for example, of the profound influence of the Bible on human thinking is the respect which great men of learning have maintained for it. *Sir Isaac Newton* wrote, "I find more sure marks of authority in the Bible than in any profane history whatever." The great astronomer, *Sir William Herschel*, said: "All human discoveries seem to be made for the purpose of confirming more and more strongly the truths contained in the sacred Scriptures."

Great men of literature have also spoken of the greatness of the Bible. *Alfred Tennyson* insisted that "Bible reading is an education in itself." *Charles Dickens* commented that "The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known to the world." *John Ruskin* wrote "All that I have taught of art, everything that I have written, whatever greatness there has been in any thought of mine . . . has simply been due to the fact that, when I was a child, my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible . . ."

George Washington said, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible." *Andrew Jackson* said: "That Book is the rock on which our republic rests." *Patrick Henry* wrote, "The Bible is worth all other books which have ever been printed. *Douglas McArthur* said, "Never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed."

The Psalmist summed up the influence of the Bible by saying that it makes the simple person wise and converts the soul. (Psalm 19:7.) The writer of the Book of Hebrews speaks of the Scriptures as a living, powerful weapon in the battle for truth. (Hebrews 4:12). But you should know that the power and influence of the Bible can be felt only when it is read and studied! The Bible must be used to have an influence.

What influence are you allowing the Bible to have in your life?

Don't Purchase A False Claim!

DILLARD THURMAN

FALLING FOR A GOLD-FILLED CASE

I glanced at the watch with no interest, but when the fly-by-night huckster sold me on the idea the watch was genuine, and well worth Rs. 2500.00, then I heard his great need for ready cash, and paid him Rs. 2500.00! It was when I checked with the jeweler that it was pointed out that the name was slightly changed, it was cheap gold-plating, the workmanship was shoddy—and that Con-man had been flooding the neighborhood with those watches for five days with the same pitiful tale of dire need! Many people had been taken in, and had bought worthless goods because they didn't properly investigate before investing! It takes more than glitter to make pure gold; and it takes more than mere claims to make a watch genuine! I should have examined it closely.

DON'T JUDGE BY OUTWARD APPEARANCE!

You can no more judge a church by outward appearances than you can a watch! You have to look within. A church can hang a sign on the building holding forth a scriptural name or term of identity. But that alone will not make it the church you read about in your Bible! There are religious bodies wearing the name "*Church of God*," "*Church of the Lord*," "*Church of the Firstborn*," and "*Church of Christ*." All of these terms of reference are found in the Scriptures; but using the proper designation does not make it the church of the Bible! Along the Texas border, you can find many boys answering to the name of "Jesus," but the name is pronounced *hay-sus*, and not one of them is the true Son of God! So, we must look beyond the sign on the building in searching for the true church of God!

TRUE CHURCH IS APPROVED OF GOD!

The stamp of Divine Approval rests upon the church you read about in the Bible; and it will be composed of the right kind of material! *"Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."* (1 Cor. 1:2). When you check within the church, and find that kind of membership, you can be assured you have the right marks of identification to stand the test! It is the church of God, for it stands *"according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Eph. 3:21). *"For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God."* (Heb. 3:4). That which is revealed in Scriptures is said to be *"the house of God, which is the church of the living God."* (1 Tim. 3:14). It alone stands with God's divine approval!

THE TRUE CHURCH WAS BUILT BY CHRIST!

According to His promise, the true church, was built by Jesus Christ, who openly stated, *"Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."* (Mt. 16:18). He promised to build it, and that He did! Not only did He build the church, but it was centered in Him! *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* (1 Cor. 3:11). Thus Paul further stated that saints *"are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."* (Eph. 2:20). Jesus said that gates of hell (death) would not prevent His building that church; and He arose triumphant from the tomb, empowered His apostles, and established this church! All churches built by weak and feeble men are doomed to fall! Jesus warned: *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."* (Mt. 15:13). The test of judgment will reveal all faulty buildings.

THE LORD ADDED TO THE TRUE CHURCH

The church you read about in your Bible had members which the Lord added to it! After relating how the gospel was first preached to lost men, the writer explains, *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* (Acts 2:47). This took it out of the realm of political

chicanery, for the members were not "voted in"! There was no "joining the church" as the practice was later taught; and none told wild and weird "experiences of grace" to be accepted! We must conclude that any church whose membership is composed of those "voted in," or of those who "joined," surely cannot be that church revealed in Holy Writ!

THE TRUE CHURCH WAS BLOOD BOUGHT!

The genuine church of Christ was purchased with the Saviour's own blood! Paul told the elders in Ephesus *"to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* (Acts 20:28). Later, writing the church there, he said, *"Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."* (Eph. 5:25). There is no other in all the world purchased with so dear a price! How much did Christ love the church? You have only to see what He paid for it! Verily, every member has been redeemed by blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). This blood was reached as each member was baptized into Christ's death, where His blood was shed (Rom. 6:3-4). It is the blood of Christ applied that sets His church apart from all the spurious, counterfeit churches spawned by man! All of Christ's Blood is in His spiritual body, the church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

GOD GLORIFIED IN ONE CHURCH!

Even as God gave Christ *"to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body"* (Eph. 1:22-23), so God gave Him authority to rule over it; and Jesus could say: *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."* (Mt. 28:18). God is to be glorified in that church! *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."* (Eph. 3:21). All honour and praise is ascribed to God in and through the church you read about in your Bible! He has designated none other! That rules out synods, conferences, councils, and all other human institutions! The church, which is His body, looks only to Christ, which is its head for full and complete directions! Human dogmas, creeds and manuals cannot usurp His authority in all spiritual matters! Since God gave Him authority, God is glorified when that authority is respected and obeyed!

HE SAVES THE ONE TRUE CHURCH!

The reason it is so vitally important to find that church of the Bible is: that is the only one Christ promises to save! "*Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.*" (Eph. 5:23). Those who have been brought into the church have been brought into His body; for you can't get anything into me without getting it into my body, and you can't get anything into my body without getting it into me! So, all who are in Christ are in His body, and all in His body are in Christ! Notice that which is found in Christ: All spiritual blessings—Eph. 1:3; Redemption and remission of sins—Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; new creature—2 Cor. 5:17; Made alive—1 Cor. 15:22; Reconciled—Eph. 2:11-16; Salvation—2 Tim. 2:10. Complete—Col. 2:10. And friends, we can go on from there!

WHY NOT INVESTIGATE THIS MATTER?

These are not the only marks of identification for the true church of the Lord. But these can serve as a base for you to begin your study. Why not carefully and prayerfully examine the church in which you are now a member, and see if it is portrayed in the Bible? If your examination shows it is the true church, then your hope is even more secure. But if not, you have time and opportunity to make things right with God! Please don't "join" anything that can separate you from the church for which Jesus died! And don't jeopardize your soul by allowing men to "vote" you in to a church not found in the Bible! It is far better to examine your spiritual deed, abstract and title now than to find a flaw at the judgment bar of God!