

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

OCTOBER, 2001

***CHANNELS
OF
BLESSING***

Important Announcement from the Editor

A few months ago it came to my attention that the company which prints *Word and Work* has not increased our monthly costs for the past eleven years. During that time their costs (materials, labor, etc.) have increased a great deal, but they have absorbed them and not passed them on to us.

Obviously this is not right, and I regret my overlooking it.

So, guess what we must do to make up the difference? Right -- increase our subscription prices. You, our dear readers, have been getting *W&W* at bargain prices. And you will continue to do so. For though our subscription price is now raised to **\$11 yearly**, compared with almost all other magazines of similar size, frequency and contents, *W&W* is very inexpensive.

And we still offer a **discount for bundles**. If 10 or more magazines are sent to the same address, the yearly price-per-subscription will be only \$10. So we urge churches to encourage all their members to subscribe, but to have us send a bundle to one address rather than send single magazines to ten or more addresses.

We are thankful for our whole family of readers, and especially for some who sometimes send in donations for this ministry. Most of all we desire your prayers, that the Lord will make every article and every issue a blessing, and that He will raise up other co-workers in the office and in editing and writing.

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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CHANNELS OF BLESSING

Dennis L. Allen

If you are like me you receive many appeals to assist in the Lord's work--many suggesting dire consequences if the needed funds do not come in. We feel pressured to respond--especially if it is an appeal by phone. Some throw up their hands and say they can't give to everything and end up doing little or nothing. How should we respond? The Lord has told us to be ready unto every good work. But which appeals are legitimate? We sometimes have a tendency in America to consider people needy if they don't have as much as we do. (I personally don't feel compelled to give funds so that every child can start the school year with a new pair of shoes. That is probably because during the Great Depression I sometimes went to school barefoot and wore patched clothes.) We have all seen relief aid that has been given in such a way that it encourages and perpetuates dependency. The Lord wants us to be compassionate and responsive to the needs of those around us yet "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."

In Africa, China, and many other mission fields you can find church buildings built with foreign funds--most in the architectural styles found in the Western world. Paul on his missionary journeys brought no money for buildings. Yet Paul was a wise master builder of churches. (I Cor. 3:10.) Paul recognized the needs in the believers, but he expected those in the local church to work hard and give generously to meet those needs. Thus each local church could sustain itself. It is true that the church in Antioch took up an offering for the Jerusalem church during a time of famine. (Acts 11:27-30.) It is interesting that this was the mission church sending to help the mother church--quite a reversal of what is common practice today! Almost a century ago Roland Allen effectively pointed out the principles Paul followed, but we have not been very quick to follow them. (See Missionary Methods--St. Paul's or Ours.)

In II Cor. 8 & 9, we have the most complete teaching on giving to be found in the New Testament. Paul presents giving as a grace, and in these two chapters refers to it 8 times by that term. The disposition to give is implanted in our hearts by the Spirit of God. God wants to bestow on us good things. He wants to make us beautiful like His Son. The grace of God is His passion to share His goodness with man. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9.) God doesn't want us to give because He is poor and needs our gifts. He doesn't. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Hag. 2:8.) "If I were hungry, I would

not tell thee; For the world is mine and the fulness thereof." (Ps. 50:12.) Giving is rather God's way of blessing us.

"He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." (2 Cor. 9:6.) Liberal giving reaps a liberal reward. A wealthy man was asked, "How in the world did you become so rich when you give so much away?" "Well," he answered, "The Lord shovels it in and I shovel it out and God has the bigger shovel." Which brings us to the Lord's measure of amounts. When the widow cast two mites into the treasury, the Lord immediately took note and said she had given "more than they all" (Lk. 21:3, 4.) She had given all she had, but the rich had given of their superfluity.

The disciples saw a need in the hungry multitude out in that desert place without food. They saw no way to meet it, so they brought the problem to Jesus. Instead of throwing up His hands and saying, "What do you expect me to do?" He said to the disciples, "Give ye them to eat." They brought the five loaves and two fishes. That was the extent of their resources, but they gave it to Him. We know the rest of the story. Little is much when God blesses it. The same was true of the widow's oil.

A retired Canadian couple we have come to know and esteem are a living example of this principle. Several years ago they made their first visit to Cuba to encourage and minister to the believers there. Since that time they have made 12 trips to Cuba. Each time the Lord seems to open the doors still wider. They have been able to minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the Christians far beyond their own resources but they have made no efforts to raise money. All kinds of special needs have been met as the Lord has in most unusual ways let them be a channel to bring blessing to the believers there. For example, they were given a large supply of Coleman lantern mantles that were a great blessing to rural churches. On another trip they were able to bring in a whole container of Bible study books in Spanish. (They have permission now to bring in two containers of Spanish Bibles. Each container will hold 50,000 Bibles. This is completely beyond their ability as it would cost \$100,000 to \$150,000 per container to purchase that many Bibles. They are not uptight about it, but are trusting God to bring it about in His own way and timing.) Isn't this His promise? "And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work." "And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness:" (2 Cor. 9:8, 10.)

My own observation of the reason for this attitude on their part is their close relationship to the Lord, their willingness to be a channel of blessing to the Cuban church and their desire that God should get the glory. There are no frantic efforts to raise funds but a calm assurance that God will open doors and bring it about if they remain trusting, willing instruments.

WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS...

Russell G. Shubin

Believers are called to give of their resources. Most evangelicals would accept that statement as truth, whatever else they might say or feel about how well they've done in their personal practice of giving. Indeed, the principle is based squarely on a multitude of Bible passages--in both the Old and New Testaments. The widow's mite provides ample illustration of the type of giving that is glorifying to God.

North American Christians, for their part, have a long and established pattern of giving. The swelling number of options--very specific options--for giving, as well as breaches of trust and salesmanship from the pulpit, can make us reticent to stretch ourselves to give sacrificially. The number of needs--as well as the number of established institutions--have increased and are contending, if not competing, for our contributions.

In light of the Scriptural mandate for giving and this vast array of choices facing the giver today, we carry a burden to find ways to give with wisdom, giving special attention to causes that advance Christ's central mandate in the Great Commission.

Kingdoms in Conflict.

We see in Scripture a battle between two opposing Kingdoms, Satan's dominion of darkness and the Kingdom of God. Colossians 1:13 states plainly that it is Christ who rescues one from "the dominion of darkness" and brings him "into the Kingdom of the Son he loves." In light of this battle between two opposing kingdoms, it seems that one of the clearest ways to recognize the advance of the Kingdom of God over the dominion of Satan is the establishment of a viable Christian witness among peoples who previously had no opportunity to yield themselves to Christ's benevolent Lordship. Stated more simply, mission to unreached peoples is a strategic thing to invest in--with one's life, learning and resources. Other causes *may* very well be strategic; wise giving towards creating a Christian witness among the unreached is *always* strategic. Any donor should have work that advances the Gospel among the unreached on his or her short list of strategic causes.

Less Generous

If giving towards frontier mission were viewed as a strategic, high priority, one would expect measurements of our monetary giving to reflect it. But, as it is, giving to frontier mission is really quite dismal. When looked at worldwide, those who did give to Christian work saw 82.6 percent of their donations go to home pastoral salaries, and, according to the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, only .02 percent of Christian ministry expenditures went to un-evangelized peoples.

Even so, as a nation, the U. S. continues to lead the way in charitable contributions and in giving to religious institutions. And, according to Barna Research, those whose beliefs were classified as evangelical were the most likely to share their wealth.

While the accumulated charitable giving of all sorts last year surpassed \$200 billion in the U. S. for the first time, religious giving as a portion of one's income has shown a marked decrease over the last 30 years. In 1968, for example, the average portion of one's income given to the church was 3.10 percent. By 1998, that figure was 2.52 percent--nearly a 20 percent drop. And the practice of tithing is really quite low as well. In the year 2000, Barna Research reported that less than 8 percent of those who were classified as born again gave at least 10 percent to the church. According to the research group Empty Tomb, Inc., if Americans simply tithed their income, giving would increase \$131 billion annually.

A Biblical Attitude

Beyond the Biblical call to give, Scripture provides additional principles pertinent to the subject of strategic giving. The guidelines provided below are not intended to be exhaustive principles, but helpful ones.

Give joyfully. We should give as God has given to us. II Corinthians 8 and 9 illustrates that the abundant joy we have in Christ, the overflow of which results in our generosity--is the wellspring of our giving. The act of giving may increase our joy--but the *source* of that joy is Christ alone. When the Church gives less than 4 percent of its income to all charitable causes, we need to ask ourselves why we invest so little in His kingdom from those resources He has entrusted to us. Do we give grudgingly or cheerfully.

Use a consistent measurement. We are evaluated or judged in the same way we evaluate or judge how we give (Mt. 7:1,2). Do we dismiss a missionary need for a sturdy, off-road vehicle used to transport community development supplies over rough, unpaved roads

while we casually purchase an SUV to ferry the kids to school or soccer practice?

Give and live strategically. While American charity at large is increasingly financed by large-scale donations and charitable foundations, the mission enterprise today is still largely funded by relatively small donations of individuals, families and churches. We should be keen in scrutinizing our own lifestyles and be willing to amend--perhaps streamline--our lifestyle in order to increase our contribution to the Kingdom. A strategic view of all of life gives attention to how we spend our time and talents, as well as our resources.

Recent studies by both Barna and Gallup point out that those who are involved are more likely to give of their resources. That fact may seem obvious, but we often advocate people increasing their commitment largely through giving their resources. But the notion of a non-active giver may, in fact, be an increasingly rare one. Behavior patterns indicate that, if our desire is for people to give to mission, they need to be increasingly involved in mission. When they can see and understand the central, strategic and God-glorifying role that mission plays, they will be willing to commit to it long-term--whether that means serving on a mission committee or a foreign field, supporting a missionary or committing to daily, disciplined prayer.

We should give more of ourselves as well as our resources. Beyond the giving of ourselves to mission, are we willing to yield up our children to be God's servants, advocating, even fueling their mission inclinations?

Give sacrificially. Paul's admonition in Romans to offer up our bodies as living sacrifices emphasizes the active dimension of our life before Christ. Our offering to Christ is not static, dead or distant from us. What we do with our lives (including our resources) does not earn us salvation or merit, but does bring pleasure to our God. Though our culture of affluence might bristle at embracing, even choosing limitations or hardships, God exhorts us to "spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and night will become like the noonday." Isa. 58:10 NIV

Recognizing the layers of complexity involved in missions, we ought to commit ourselves to being lifelong learners, increasingly wise in our giving. But any response that fails to give as God has given the ability falls short of faithfulness to the central place Christ has given the Great Commission.

--From Sept. 2001 *Mission Frontiers*

The Case for Long-Term Missionaries

David Filbeck

A MISSIONARY recently told me that he is directing a significant portion of his time to hosting and arranging short-term mission tours and work projects for people from America. "Short-term missionaries are definitely a major trend in missions today," he explained. "Since many church members want to personally feel a part of ongoing mission work, I schedule my time to give them the experience. And when they return home they often become our best fund raisers for the mission."

What a pity, I thought. This amounts to turning a missionary on the field into a part-time tour guide!

On the Rise

Of course the missionary was right in one respect. The number of short-term missionaries--people who travel to a mission field to work only for a short period of time (lasting from two weeks to two years in a few cases) and then return home--is on the rise.

One need not look very far to see how extensive this practice has become. Leading evangelical magazines, for instance, carry classified advertisements seeking volunteers to teach English in China and Japan, or to teach economics and entrepreneurship in the former communist block nations of eastern Europe.

International Christian relief agencies continually recruit specialists in medicine and agriculture to replace other short-term workers in clinics and on farms in Africa and the Caribbean. Radio and television preachers regularly offer to lead listeners and viewers into Russia and surrounding nations to do street evangelism, distribute Bibles, and to hold crusades to bring in the harvest of souls. Church newsletters boast of sending construction teams to build church buildings, wings to hospitals, and dormitories for orphanages in Latin America and the South Pacific. Bible and seminary professors raise travel funds to lecture on foreign mission fields during term breaks when they are not teaching.

Evaluation

It is obvious that short-term mission work is popular and that it offers several benefits. In addition to full-time missionaries already sent, short-term work gives opportunity for many others to become involved in missions. Many with specialized skills, and those with no particular skill but with a love for missions, can offer their services on a mission field. And once their service is completed, the participants

can return home with a sense of having made an important contribution in the missionary outreach of Christ's church.

On the other hand, the popularity of short-term mission work is more a carryover from American ethos than from biblical principle. The dominant value in American culture is no longer commitment but "keeping one's options open" whether in occupation, marriage, or church membership.

America is often described as a "throwaway society," where cars and appliances are manufactured to be exchanged in a few years for newer models, and where PIT (part-time, intermittent, temporary) jobs form one of the faster growing sectors in American employment. Unfortunately, there is a downside to this cultural ethos for the church in America. It communicates that we can bypass long-term commitment in the task of establishing and strengthening the church abroad by brief mission forays into other nations.

Consequently crucial mission work that requires long-term commitment may not be financially supported and performed. Or, if started it will not be completed.

Bible Translation

Take for example Bible translation. I have recently finished translating the New Testament into Mal, a minority hill tribe language spoken in northern Thailand. It is now in the hands of Mal Christians. This project took longer than expected. In fact, it consumed more than thirty-five years of my life. First, there was preparation in Bible, biblical languages, and linguistics. Next, because Mal was an unwritten language, I had to create an alphabet. Then a dictionary was compiled and the tribal culture analyzed to discover relevant terms for communicating the important concepts of the Scriptures.

These were the easy steps. What followed next was the hard part. Indeed, the whole time reads like the apostle Paul:

I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers (2 Corinthians 11:26).

To finish the Mal translation I have moved my family nearly thirty times, sometimes walking miles over mountains and through jungles. I have swum flooded rivers and streams. I was put on trial twice for preaching the gospel in tribal villages. (I won one trial but lost the second and was expelled from the village.) Three times stones were thrown at me, but fortunately none struck me.

Once when living in the city, my family and I escaped death by only minutes when a truck bomb exploded destroying our house and all of our belongings. (God miraculously saved my linguistic and translation material in the Mal language.)

The biggest obstacle was the Vietnam War that spread through Laos into our area of Thailand. The war forced us out of the mountains where the Mal lived. It was not until fifteen years later that I was able to return and resume working with Mal language helpers in translating the New Testament into their language.

Even then it took ten more years to complete the translation.

Sweat and Tears

Mission work is more than a quick entry and a faster exit to tell stories of strange-looking foods, unsafe drinking water, late arrivals of trains and planes, and how hard life must be for the natives.

The basic tasks of the Great Commission--making disciples, baptizing and teaching them to observe everything Jesus has commanded (Matthew 28:19, 20)--all demand the sweat and tears of long, hard work for their successful completion.

Consider the apostle Paul in Acts 20 as he made his way through Greece, Macedonia, and Asia (the western part of modern Turkey) to Jerusalem. He had been a traveling evangelist for ten years or more and was now finishing his third missionary journey. At the seacoast town of Miletus Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus, some thirty-six miles away, to come for a final meeting. When the elders arrived, Paul reminded them that night and day and from house to house for two years (Acts 19:10) he had withheld nothing in teaching the whole counsel of God. He warned them with tears about false teachers who would distort the truth and lead many astray.

When Paul finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with the elders. They all wept. The elders kissed and embraced Paul, realizing they would never see him again.

Why such emotion? It was because they had been through a lot together for the sake of the gospel. There were the twelve disciples of John the Baptizer who were baptized in the name of Jesus and spoke in tongues; extraordinary miracles; a dramatic confrontation with a demon; a huge bonfire where scores of books on magic and sorcery were destroyed; and finally a riot over a perceived threat to the goddess Artemis that engulfed the whole city and threatened the lives of the disciples including Paul's.

Results

More importantly, these were the experiences that caused the Word to spread widely and grow in power (Acts 19:20), to where all of Asia heard the Word of the Lord (Acts 19:10). It resulted in people as far as forty miles away in the cities of Colosse and Laodicea believing in the Lord (Colossians 1:4; 4:16).

There is no better case for long-term missionaries than Paul's work in Ephesus. Paul's work was holistic, resulting in the Word's spreading throughout a whole region, conversions, and the body of believers becoming "mature...joined and held together by every supporting ligament, (growing and building) itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:13,16).

These results grow out of long-term commitment. They are also results that should be expected from every missionary sent out by the church today. They can still be achieved when there is long-term commitment to preaching God's Word. It is time once again, I believe, to get back to the basics of how the Great Commission is really fulfilled.

-- Reprinted from *Christian Standard* by Permission

Voices of Experience

I am convinced that in certain countries some people are gathering up workers—who have no call from God—by paying them a small salary to do Christian work. They simply need a job; there is massive unemployment, and so they line up to get involved. If you have the money, you can sign them up.

We also need to understand that if we think supporting nationals is some kind of miracle shortcut toward getting the job done, we may be making a serious mistake. There is no simple, cheap discount shortcut to world missions, although there are ways in which we can economize and be more diligent.

Not everything can be judged on the basis of money. The Great Commission calls us to not only send [money] but [also] ourselves. --George Verwer. Excerpts from his recent book, Out of the Comfort Zone.

Good Intentions Are Not Enough

The English intellect C.P. Snow asked the now-famous question, "Can we do 'good' when the foreseeable consequences are evil?"

No, but what if the evil consequences are not easily "foreseeable?"

During and after the Korean war American agencies raised money for Korean "orphans." This was a major opportunity for Americans to support cute-looking orphans for \$20 a month. Genuine concern in the form of powerful maternal and paternal instincts also supported this kind of cause.

Those orphans were so well treated that many Korean families decided to "orphan" one or more of their own children in order to assure them of enough food and clothing and relieve the financial burden of another hungry mouth. American money was not helping orphans so much as splitting families-not the donor's intentions!

Some newer missions even "buy" whole churches, promising a monthly subsidy if the existing church will put up a new sign over the door of the church. Donors may be pleased with such quick results.

In one area of India, 400 churches (out of 4,000) planted by a standard mission were offered financial "help" from the money-channeling agency. The pastors direly needed whatever help they could get. After a few years, these churches were no longer planting new congregations since the subsidy per church could not automatically stretch.

One U. S. church took pity on a pastor from East Africa. Realizing that he did not have a car to get around his parish, they took up an offering for that purpose. They did not stop to think that in his economy he would be unable to buy gas for it. Nor did they realize the position it put him in relation to the other 600 pastors who had no car.

If the challenge of cross-cultural pioneer missions is inherently complex, that is not the fault of the missionary. We must almost expect that, for some, the real challenge of missions will be puzzling, baffling, infuriating, and finally rejected. This is one reason so little is given to missions and so few actually give their lives over to this holy cause.

The reality is that nothing can be as safe and as strategic as using our funds to send out patient, resourceful, godly, loving, incorruptible people who stay on the field long enough to figure things out beyond first impressions and initial ideas. --Ralph D. Winter, Editor of *Mission Frontiers*.

So We Promote Little Faith?

Dependency typically refers to a debilitating state of mind where we assume that we cannot accomplish what God has called us to do without foreign assistance. This results in the belief that our impover-

ished lot in life is fixed, and therefore appeals to outsiders are entirely justified. Until we overcome this syndrom of dependency through the Holy Spirit, no amount of foreign funding...will solve the problem. - Christopher R. Little

A Word of Caution from the Third World

I think North Americans are among the most generous people in the world. As a student in the United States, I experienced the full measure of this generosity. But I think that North Americans have a difficult time thinking cross-culturally. Despite all the talk about cross-cultural relationships today, they process information they receive from other cultures through their own cultural grid and end up making some very wrong judgments.

Westerners often take words at face value, come to conclusions and get down to action rapidly without going through the process of relationship building. The result is that they often end up supporting people who are not very honest. Given the widespread lack of integrity in the world today, you find many such people in the church too! I am amazed sometimes how people in the church can be so impressed by people about whom many Third World Christians have so many questions!

Let me suggest some ways to overcome this cultural blind spot. First, Westerners should be aware that they have this problem and therefore be suspicious about their initial conclusions about people and projects. Then they can ask trustworthy people from within the culture for help. Of course, people are very reluctant to be critical about a fellow countryman and may give just a small hint about reservations. The Westerners, who are already enthusiastic about this person, often do not catch the hint. They latch on to the positive things that were said (usually out of cultural politeness). They go ahead and back the person and often end up being taken for a ride.

Therefore, it is vital to take time to cultivate deep friendship and spiritual accountability with individuals you desire to help. One of the keys to overcoming the lack of integrity in our cultures is Christian community that truly practices spiritual accountability. I have seen dishonest people change in these environments. Those who do not want to change usually leave because they find the demand for openness too difficult to handle.--Ajith Fernando, a Sri Lankan church leader. --From *Mission Frontiers*

Are We Trifling with Missions?

Arthur T. Pierson , 1891

I am a little afraid that the seeds of a great apostasy are in the church of God today, that in the midst of this century and its closing decade it should even be questioned whether we could evangelize the world in our generation, when the luxuries alone that crowd our homes, that cover our persons, that are hung upon our walls and stuffed into our library cases, the gold and silver, the jewelry and ornamentation, the costly furniture in our homes, would of themselves suffice to make the Gospel speed its way around the earth inside of a decade of years.

It is a pretty solemn question whether we ourselves are saved if we allow this state of things to go on much longer. I used to think I was in earnest about missions. I made up my mind that I had been trifling with the whole subject, and I could not get over the conviction that I was trifling with it until I came with my wife and my seven children and said to God and to His church, "If we can be of more service in foreign lands than here in spreading the Gospel, we will go and take our places in the foreign field."

My friends, begin at your garret and go down to your cellar, and make an estimate of the useless things that are lying in the drawers of your bureaus, in the cabinets of your curios, on your walls, and on your library shelves, and wherever the secret treasures of your house are lodged, and consider how far toward the evangelization of the world in this generation the simple sacrifice of your superfluities might go.

Then go down through your conveniences and comforts until you come to the necessities of life, and consider what a marvelous awakening there would be in the Church, and in the world, too, if we came to the point of dividing the last crust of bread for the sake of giving bread to starving men, and consented to go without two coats where there was another man that had none. That is the only way to deal with the question of mission, and any other way of dealing with it is, in a sense, hypocrisy, or at least disingenuous and insincere treatment of our God and of lost souls.

It seems to me that the Church of God is trifling with the whole subject of missions. Why should we not show a spirit of enterprise in the Church such as the world shows in all business schemes? What is the matter with the church, that in this nineteenth century she has scarcely one of those great master agencies which men use to carry their inventions to the ends of the earth? Why should we not have a

"great church exploration society" and go forward and pioneer the way into destitute fields, on the basis of inter-denominational comity and courtesy, and put into every field some working force, so that no absolutely destitute place should remain in the world? Why should we not have a pioneer information bureau, to guide missionaries into new districts?

Why should not the church agree and covenant that it is as much a matter of necessity to give to the support of missionaries as to come to the Lord's table or to the prayer meeting, or to make a decently punctual attendance at church? Why should not we have great world agencies to carry on this work for God?

What is the matter with the Church, that she has not learned even from the men of this generation the wisdom that guides them in matters of this world?...When Francis Xavier stood and looked from the island on which he died, upon the colossal empire of China, he cried out "O rock, rock! When wilt thou open to my Master?" If Francis Xavier could come back today and look on a world wide open before that Master and on a Church lying in sluggish idleness in her hammock of ease, one end fastened to mammon and the other end nominally to the Cross, and see that Church supinely looking on the destitution of a thousand millions of the human race that she might reach in 25 years if she had the energy of mind and the consecration of heart to do it, he would turn from the colossal empire of China and face the Church and say, "O thou rock, thou rock! When wilt thou open to my Master?"

Book Review

Magnify Your Vision for the Small Church

John Rowell

This book is a refreshing and convincing answer to those who feel that only professionals sent out through recognized missionary societies are qualified to tackle the job of world evangelization. The author was the leader of a team from Northside Community Church of Atlanta that in 1992 went into war-torn Bosnia, not without fear and trembling. They often felt overwhelmed by the ethnic hatreds they encountered. Yet through willingness to be involved and to commit they found doors opening wider and wider. This one small church became such a channel of blessing that one local church leader stated that "this church has done more to reach Bosnians with the gospel of Jesus Christ than the rest of American churches all together."

As you read this book you will be amazed at the way the Lord opened doors and provided funds far beyond what they could have

asked or thought. It is also enlightening to see how more and more of the congregation were brought into active participation in this outreach.

We tend to think of Muslim areas as an almost closed door, but they found war-weary, destitute refugees very responsive to their unselfish love and compassion. They realized that God was using the horrors of war to break the fallow ground of these Muslim hearts. By actually living in the camp with the refugees, they showed they were willing to share the hardships, danger and suffering of the people in order to help them. The rapid growth of the work can be seen in the fact that in 1987 their missions budget allocation total was \$12,000; in 1997 it was \$126,728. Much of this came from faith promise pledges.

The Church in Turkmenistan Growing Despite Strong Pressure

Last April, a young Russian Christian living in eastern Turkmenistan was arrested by local officers of the Committee on National Security (KNB) and expelled, allegedly because he had never obtained a visa to enter the country.

Four Turkmen Christians from Ashgabad, all converts from Islam, were arrested, tortured and evicted from their homes by the KNB late last year. They have now fled the country with their families. The four had been implicated in the use of contraband Christian videos in the Turkmen language. All foreign Christians known to be involved in religious work have been expelled during the past two years.

What's Going On?

Turkmenistan was once a Soviet Republic, and its leader, President Saparmurat Niyazov, built a strong personality cult around himself after instituting one-party rule in 1991. Self-declared president for life, he has his picture on every public building, with a giant golden statue of himself rotating on the hill overlooking the capital.

Heralding himself as Father of the Turkmens, Niyazov is currently writing a "spiritual constitution," billed as second only to the Qur'an in importance for the nation. Children must pay homage to him at the beginning of each school day.

Niyazov's government is the most repressive of the former Soviet Republics, banning every religious faith except Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy. Enforcement efforts include expelling scores of for-

eigners accused of religious activities; closing down, confiscating and even leveling houses of worship; arresting and torturing Christian converts; and forcing citizens from banned religious communities into internal exile.

Taking Great Risks

Despite the hostile atmosphere, however, the local church--which saw its first convert barely a decade ago--is growing. Quite a few of the first believers found the Lord outside of Turkmenistan. They were studying in Russia or the Ukraine and came in contact with believers there. After returning home, they would share the Gospel with their relatives, and often whole families would come to the Lord. Turkmen Christians face many cultural, religious and spiritual obstacles. To affirm an individual choice that is not approved by your relatives is something that is unheard of in Turkmen society. Worse, Christianity is viewed as a foreign religion. Christ is a Russian god, and Turkmen are supposed to be Muslims.

Still, Turkmen believers quietly reach out to their own people. The dramatic growth of the church is mainly due to the fact that people simply share the Gospel with one another. Says one believer, "I have not been able to count the number of people I have talked to about the Gospel."

The indigenous church has no official buildings, but even meeting unofficially is extremely risky. When people come together in small groups, they are beyond the control of the government and potentially are a danger to the authority of the president who demands more than loyalty from the Turkmen people; he expects their worship. If the authorities discover that a person is a believer, house arrest may follow. Identification papers are confiscated, so travel is impossible, even inside the country. Heavy punishment in the form of fines, loss of a job or years of imprisonment is meted out to those who are caught attending a meeting, sharing the Gospel or possessing Scriptures.

One believer commented, however, "I know that I take a great risk sharing the Gospel. I have been arrested and kept overnight in prison. I have been fined more than a month's wages. Next time it will be a year and a half's wages. But no punishment will ever stop me."

A Vital Church

Yet the church is standing up well to the pressures. One visiting teacher wrote after having taught there for a number of weeks, "The theological situation of the young church can best be described as the situation of the early church in the book of Acts. The believers who came out of Islam here are different from those I have seen in other parts of the world. In other regions, Muslim converts are usually sur-

rounded by well-established believers, Christian teachers and the availability of helpful books."

Although it may seem as if the Turkmen church has been left on its own, believers are eager to take on added responsibilities. And there is cooperation and trust among them that is quite exceptional. Church leaders confer and agree on strategy and are eager to reach out to their own nation and to surrounding countries, such as Iran and Afghanistan. In the beginning, many of the local Christians thought they were completely isolated and that nobody knew about them. Now they are very happy to know that so many people in the world pray for them and understand their situation.

--From *World Watch*, August 2001

House Church Grow Among the Shanty Towns of China

At least 150 million people in China are living illegally. They are the mangliu, or "floaters," so called because they are not living where their papers say they are supposed to be. Forsaking the countryside, they are mainly peasants who have come to the cities looking for work. Despite the lack of welcome from the locals, they settle in shanty towns plagued with gang violence, drugs, prostitution rackets and dreadful sanitation. Many are lonely, having left their families in their home provinces, sending back whatever they make each month. They are a forgotten and neglected group.

But China's house church Christians are beginning to work with this huge population, which is very responsive to the Gospel. And Open Doors Bibles are going into these dark and dangerous suburbs, providing rays of light for the broken lives. Here are excerpts from the diary of a pastor in Beijing ministering to these people.

August 2000

We had 30 people huddled together in the dirty unheated room tonight. Ten more than last month. We need to do something about the lighting, though. The two bare bulbs strung along the ceiling do not provide enough light to let us read our Bibles. Church feels so different among these people. Normally, my house church starts at 7:00 in the evening, but here it starts at 10:00. Everyone's working day last from 5:00 in the morning until 9:00 at night, and they are often exhausted when they arrive.

One of the visitors, called Deng, was quick to blurt out his problem. We listened sadly. It was a common story. A gang had robbed him two days earlier. The timing could not have been worse. He had just received his monthly pay from a builder, where he earned 1000 yuan (\$120). Most of this he sends home to his sick mother, who is suffering from a kidney disease and needs the money to pay for her medicine.

"She might die now, and I cannot go and see her," he wailed.

We gathered around and prayed for his mother's healing, and we also had a collection for him. We were able to give him 30 yuan, and he seemed touched. He said afterwards, "That's the first time anyone has ever given me anything since I arrived from southern Henan 10 months ago."

September 2000

We are up to 50 now. Deng received a letter from his mother saying she felt so much better. She pinpointed the evening this began, and we praised God aloud as we realized it was the very night we began to pray for her. Deng has committed himself to following Jesus.

But the evening was a heavy one nevertheless. One of our original members, Sister Rachel, was the victim of a gang rape on the way home from her job as a domestic helper. Worse, she was being held in a house against her will and forced to work as a prostitute. I had a word with a local policeman, who promised to do something about it. But I later found out he had gone to the vice den and charged them 100 yuan for his silence. Three of the brothers from our house church and I went and demanded her release. We found ourselves in a bad fight with four men; my jaw was broken. But through claiming the blood of Jesus we were able to rescue her.

October 2000

Eighty crammed in tonight, and I had no sooner arranged for us to split into two than the police crashed in. As they made their way toward me, they kicked and slapped members of the congregation, saying, "Henan scum! Go home to your pigs."

I asked them in my best Beijing accent, "What do you want with us?" That stopped all five of them in their tracks. Not in their wildest dreams did they think they were encountering a local. They hissed at me, "Why are you consorting with these criminal classes that foul up our town?" "I have the love of Jesus, who is Lord of all," I replied, "and He loves every person on this earth, including you." I would have preached on, but one of the policemen smashed my knee with his club. I collapsed onto the floor, but amazingly the pain quickly subsided and

I said to the group, "Let's sing, I Know the Redeemer." We sang out and the policemen looked very confused. Because of my knee, they knew they could not take me to jail but would have to go to the hospital. So they left.

November 2000

A few weeks later, after knee surgery, I returned to church. The membership now stands at 300, and we meet every night to cram everybody in. Regarding the growth I was told, "The way you were able to keep the love of Jesus in you even when they beat you in front of us all was wonderful." Jesus gave me that strength, and I thank that policeman every morning for his vicious action. But with the growth is also sadness. Unable to endure the humiliation of rape and the subsequent abuse, Sister Rachel committed suicide. She was just 18, a simple girl from Zhejiang.

December 2000

I am ill from preaching every night. I beg the Lord for co-workers, and hopefully I should have some soon. We now have 700 attending at a new location that holds only 100, so we have a service each night.

The big crisis this month is another common one in these murky shanty towns--a kidnaping. One of our couples had their baby stolen by a gang, and they are demanding 5,000 yuan for the boy's return. The couple has no means of paying. I pray earnestly the gang has not already sold the boy to a rich family on the black market.

I am frightened of the year ahead. I know I cannot cope in myself. The problems are such severe ones--kidnaping, rapes, robbery, extortion--and they will get worse. The authorities will never help. We are an illegal gathering in any case. But I must have faith that God will continue to strengthen what He has started. That is the faith that transforms my fear into hope.

--From *World Watch*, June 2001

VOICES From The FIELDS

Candy Garrett

mark.garrett@sim.org

[The next 2 letters were written to the ladies at the Louisville-area Retreat in late September.]

Dear ladies, How tremendous that you can meet together like this annually for refreshment and encouragement. There's something so refreshing about a reunion of ladies who love the Lord and desire with all their hearts to serve Him. Thank you for the privilege to share a little about our lives here.

Mark and I are just finishing up our second term in Senegal, West Africa. While there is freedom of religion and much religious tolerance, plowing and sowing in this land is a challenge which presses us to God. "Not by might, nor power but by My Spirit, says the Lord."

In our 7 years here, we have not personally led one person to Christ, though we've been encouraged to see the small group of believers here grow in their faith. God is at work among other "people groups" (and we rejoice to see THAT because it is the fruit of 30+ years of other missionary endeavors!), but the Wolof people are a fairly resistant "cookie dough." In this term we are seeing God uniting His people (missionaries from various organizations and vastly different cultural backgrounds, and national believers) to pray for an outpouring of His Spirit on this country.

In that environment, we each blossom and grow differently. Mark has been involved in language and culture learning, together with a variety of administrative and treasury responsibilities. My role, almost from the beginning has primarily been to teach our children. Our second child, Bryan, was born 3 months after our arrival here in '94. I hardly had time to "get my feet wet" before I needed to begin homeschooling Kathryn--a brand new and challenging responsibility! Both Mark and I invested much time and energy in language and culture learning during our first term. In this second term, Mark has been able to press on in language and culture learning. With 3 children (2 of whom are homeschooled), and now having the added blessing of a 4th child, my hands have been full as a wife, homeschooling mom and homemaker.

Besides my family, the Lord has granted me contact with two lovely ladies who help out for a few hours each week in our home. I see God at work in both of their lives, though neither has yet accepted the Lord Jesus as Savior. I might add that both of them (Fah-tou and

N-day) and their families are going through real valleys right now. For Fatou, it's health struggles related to an unplanned pregnancy (she already has 7 children). For Ndey, there have been more than a dozen deaths in her family and close friends during the last 9 months. These situations would be difficult even for a Christian who knows the comfort and hope found in Jesus. But Ndey has not yet put her faith in Jesus, though I see clear evidence of God's work in her life, and believe that soon, very soon she will take that huge step.

In this SEASON of LIFE I find I have significant choices to make which have a radical impact on my family and its effectiveness in this place to which God has called us. Most, if not all of these choices are ones that each of you face in your own homes and places of influence.... They're nothing particularly unique to life on the mission field, though they may have some interesting twists and settings! Here are 4 choices that the Lord repeatedly reminds me about.

The CHOICE to rejoice and to go forth with praise on my lips. Didn't David say something about bringing "a sacrifice of praise"? How often I don't feel, or honestly WANT to praise. Frequently, the choice to rejoice is indeed THAT, a sacrifice, a dying to myself. My personal tendency is to always see the pie as half eaten, the pitcher as half empty. But with the Holy Spirit in me, should I not see things in a positive light? Not a "power of positive thinking" attitude, but one of faith in our omnipotent God, one that "laughs at impossibilities and cries, 'it shall be done!'" A woman's heart attitude permeates her home and all who enter or to whom she speaks on the phone. Am I, through my words and countenance, a fragrance of life or death?

I also have the CHOICE and commitment to uphold my husband, children, colleagues and national contacts in prayer. My time for getting out to visit may be limited, but I can still pray. How grateful we are for those of you back Stateside who are faithfully praying for us, even if without current news. But on the actual battle front I've recently been convicted of my lack of FERVENT prayer on behalf of my family. Isn't it ironic how sometimes we'll pray for everybody else, but fail to pray regularly for and with our spouse (if we're married). Am I the only one who struggles there??! Honest confession is good for the soul they say! Prayer is foundational to God's work, wherever we are.

Third, I must CHOOSE to take up the shield of faith with which to squelch the darts of the Evil One. Where is my focus? on the circumstances, or on the Author and Finisher of our faith?" When it is on myself or the circumstances, discouragement quickly sets in. When my focus is on Jesus, I can rise above the trials of life, carried

on wings as an eagle. Taking up the shield of faith, I can run and not grow weary, walk and not faint.

Fourth, I must CHOOSE to commit my cares, trust Him to take of them, and then REST. I'm a worrywart by nature. I like to know what's happening. But then, God's gentle Spirit whispers, 'Can you trust Me? You see only an infinitesimal part of the plan. I hold the earth in the palm of My hand. Is there anything too hard for me?' And then I see so clearly how my worrying is really evidence of a lack of faith in the One who loves me beyond all measure. How utterly foolish and arrogant of me to think I could somehow change circumstances! Commit. Trust. And then REST.

In the choices we make, may we "let [our] light so shine among men that they may see [our] good works and glorify [our] Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). May our lives be a fragrance of life to those about us.

Whether in Senegal, or the United States, be encouraged that the same God who watches over us as we seek to be a light for Him in this Muslim setting, is the same God who watches over and LOVES each of you.

Dawn Yates

yatesfamily@hotmail.net.au

I was honored to be asked to write this letter to all of you. As an introduction to you all, my name is Dawn Yates. I am married to Tim Yates and have 3 beautiful daughters. Lauren, who is 6, Leah, 3, and Anna 20 months (the Aussie).

We began our missionary work in Malawi, Africa through a 3 month internship. After Tim and I both graduated from Johnson Bible College, we eventually moved and lived in Malawi for 2 years. We decided to look for other foreign third world opportunities while on furlough in 1997/1998. We had many opportunities presented to us, one of them being work in Australia. Neither Tim or I felt "called" to Australia, after all, it wasn't a third world country.

However, God had other plans. We became friends with some native Australians who were schooling in the States and came up with the idea of a "team" to work together to reach Australia for Christ. Less than 3 per cent of the population claim to go to church anywhere, and it was the first nation to proclaim itself "post-Christian". With many other facts, both Tim and I felt convicted and led to come to Australia.

We arrived here in New Castle in November of 1998. We had many plans for this "team" who would arrive in intervals of time, but

once again, God had other plans. The "team" ended up not coming together and Tim and I found ourselves here in Charlestown in a local congregation of only a few people, with not much hope in the hearts of those who still attended. At that point we had to look at the situation and seek God's guidance. After much prayer and seeking, we realized our ministry here would be to build up the people in this congregation and encourage them to go forward, until the Lord leads us elsewhere. We applied for permanent residency and put it in the Lord's hands.

I must admit I had a lot of guilt, living a "normal" life, knowing what it is like to serve in a third world country. However, through time, God has showed me that the mission field is wherever we are. We are responsible to share Christ with those around us, wherever that may be. It is sometimes more difficult sharing Christ with people on our own level or above, because, they don't see the need for Christ. Though physical poverty is not nearly as evident, the spiritual poverty is almost frightening.

I have found contentment and enjoy very much being the "preacher's wife" and fulltime "Mum". My roles have to change constantly I have found, and it keeps my life interesting! I have learned that God can do wonders if we let Him mold us into what He wants us to be, not necessarily what WE think He wants us to be. God is able to bring out talents in us we never knew we had. It is truly amazing.

Two and a half years after moving here we received our permanent residency. We have seen so many wonderful changes in the congregation here, and so much growth. God has been faithful and we are excited to see what God has in store for us and for His church here.

The Christian's 4 Judgments, especially Christ's Judgment-Seat

Part 2 (Conclusion)

Alex V. Wilson

It seems to me there are four different "judgments" so far as God's people are concerned. We saw last month that there is the judgment of our sins, two possible "judgments" or disciplinings of us as God's children, and a judgment of our service for the Lord. The first occurred in our past, the next two are ongoing in the present, and the fourth will be future. That last one is called "the judgment seat of Christ."

We clearly saw from Scripture that (A) God Will Judge the Work of His People; and (B) Christians Will be Rewarded. Now we continue.

C. Some Christians Will Suffer Loss of Their Rewards

We return to 1 Cor.3. Earlier we saw that Paul compared himself and Apollos to *farmers*: one planted, the other watered. Now he uses an analogy from *house-building*: "I laid a foundation [i.e. established the church], and someone else is building on it [i.e. their present leader was seeking to make it grow]. But each one should be careful how he builds.... If any man builds on this foundation [i.e., on Christ] using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day [of Christ's return] will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" (1 Cor.3:10-15).

Let's amplify this. Imagine that for years your friend has poured his time, thoughts, hopes and dreams, toil and sweat and money into building a wonderful mansion for himself and his family. It has every gadget and luxury money can buy. Finally it is finished and he moves his possessions and then his family into this fabulous home of his dreams. He is so happy. His every wish seems to have come true.

But the first night he spends there, he wakes up at 3 a.m. hearing the smoke-detector squealing! Opening his bedroom door he sees flames at the other end of the house, and hears the awful crackling of a raging fire! He screams to his wife and grabs the children from their beds. With extreme effort he finally gets everyone down the fire escape, as the fire roars inside. There's no time even to call 911, and by the time the fire department gets there it's too late -- though they do their best. Your friend stands back from the scorching inferno and watches the mansion and its contents -- the results of his life's dreams, work and

savings--go up in flames. It is consumed, and a few hours later there's hardly anything left to show for all his time and toil and money except a heap of smoking ashes!

Imagine how he would feel. Yes, there would be relief and gratitude that at least he and his family are alive, though they barely escaped through the blaze. But apart from that, an overwhelming feeling of loss and devastation, of gut-wrenching gloom and despair....

And ~~t-h-a-t~~, according to Paul's picture here, is how some Christians will feel at Christ's judgment-seat!! They will realize, perhaps with astonishment, that in God's sight their life and service amounted to hardly anything. Their work for Him was practically worthless, with little eternal value. Instead of making much lasting contribution to the kingdom of God, their lives from heaven's perspective will seem insignificant. They'll be glad to be in heaven at all (verses 12 & 15 show that Paul is speaking of saved people) -- but oh, what remorse! What regrets over wasted opportunities! What tears of shame before the Savior! No wonder *John urges believers to abide in Christ "so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming"* (1 Jn.2:28, RSV).

D. WHY Will Some Christians Lose Their Rewards?

(1)Some because of *laziness*, springing from *weak faith*. Christ will reward deeds done, not works undone. There are believers who don't commit sin but do omit good. They are careless and distracted -- filling their days with less-important activities which keep them from higher priorities. A woman asked Catherine Booth, "Why do you always work so hard? You are on the go all the time. *Why do you do so much?*" Mrs. Booth answered, "*Because, my friend, you do so little!*" There are people like that in every church I know.

(2)Other believers will lose their rewards for this reason: They do the right activities -- even the top priority ones -- but from *wrong motives*. *What they do is right; Why they do it is wrong*. And Christ will "expose the motives of men's hearts" (1 Cor.4:5).

It is said that the Scottish preacher and hymn-writer, Horatius Bonar, dreamed that angels took his zeal and weighed it. They told him it was excellent: it measured up to 100, all that could be asked. Bonar was very pleased at this. Then the angels wished to evaluate it. They put it in a test-tube and analyzed it in various ways, with these results: 14 parts were selfishness, 15 parts sectarianism, 22 parts ambition, 23 parts love to man and 26 parts love to God. Bonar woke up humbled at the thought, and dedicated himself anew. What if the angels analyzed my zeal? Yours?

"Does It Really Matter Very Much?"

That may be the reaction of some folks. "So long as I'll get to heaven, I'm not very concerned about how many rewards I get once I'm there. Ho hum, I find these matters very boring."

Theodore Epp, the radio preacher, responded very strongly to that attitude. Listen: "To a great many Christians the Judgment-Seat of Christ is something like the distribution of Christmas gifts, where a family is gathered around the Christmas tree and presents are given out. If the children were not very good, then they receive small presents. If they were extra good, then they receive large presents. That is all the Judgment-Seat of Christ means to some people. But that is not what God says it is." Was Epp correct? And also D. M. Panton, whose stringent words we quoted at the beginning of this study (last month)? Are there Scriptures which support views such as these?

Well, we've already seen 1 Cor.3 and 1 Jn.2:28. Consider some other sober warnings in John's writings. "*Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully*" (2 John 8). The context shows that this verse is a caution against false teaching, especially regarding Christ Himself. Be careful about your beliefs regarding Him and your attitudes toward Him, lest you receive a reward much smaller than otherwise. A similar verse is Rev.3:11, "*Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.*" (In this and some other verses, "crown" obviously stands for "reward"). The context of that statement stresses our need to keep God's commands and keep on keeping them! Endure with perseverance. For rewards may be taken or lost or diminished. So watch out, and hold on!

Paul is even more blunt. It's true that he wrote, "The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does" (Eph.6:8). That's the positive side. But he also said, writing to Christians, "**Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong**" (Col.3:25). We saw above that sin hinders service, and thus leads to lack of rewards due to work undone. But is that the only effect sin has? Col.3:25 sounds stronger than that. Some kind of *repayment* will be made for wrongdoing. Might we need to make restitution in heaven, somehow, in the presence of our Lord? Whatever it means, it is serious and sobering. Let's benefit from these Scriptural warnings, so we'll personally not need to learn on that Day what they mean!

Something more to consider: Any professing Christian who takes the casual view mentioned in the first paragraph of this section -- the "who cares?" approach -- had better wake up! For such a lackadaisical frame of mind reveals that he probably knows nothing of true conversion. If so, he is unsaved! He will lose not only rewards but heaven it-

self. Many church members know no more of denying self, bearing their cross and following Jesus than they do of walking on the moon. Yet our Lord classified these attitudes as requirements, not electives.

So, What About Our SINS?

Let's reflect some more on this question. Earlier we saw that the judgment of our sins is past. At Calvary Jesus paid for our guilt. Therefore sins we committed before our conversion are gone -- buried in the depths of the sea, to be remembered no more (Micah 7:19; Jer.31:34).

But what of wrongs we have done after our conversion, and *never repented of*? Erich Sauer makes three helpful observations from God's Word on this question. "What we have judged, God will not judge again (1 Cor.11:31); what we have uncovered, He will cover (1 John 1:9); what we have covered, He will uncover(Luke 12:2)." That is, the sins we uncover, by confessing them, God will cover by forgiving them. But those we keep covered and "hidden" -- unrepented and unconfessed -- God will uncover by exposing them at the judgment seat. Sauer's support for the third statement is Luke 12:2. There Jesus warned His disciples, "Be on your guard against... hypocrisy. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known." Sauer's conclusion could also be based on the reverse of 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins." But what if we refuse to confess our sins to Him here? Will we face them there, at His judgment-seat? That seems to be implied.

Let us therefore keep our consciences tender before the Lord, for He saves the contrite and broken-hearted. Let us confess our sins to Him; and, when necessary, to others also. Let us pray for His forgiveness, and then forgive those who wrong us. Let us set our hope fully on the grace--yes, *grace!*--that will be given us when Jesus Christ is revealed. We are saved by grace from first to last. Through our Savior "we have gained access by faith into this *grace in which we now stand.*" So let us thank Him with all our hearts that when "the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness....then *every [Christian] will receive his commendation from God.*" What fantastic love! (References for this paragraph are Psa.34:18 & 51:17; 1 John 1:9 & James 5:16; Matt.6:12; 1 Pet.1:13b & Rom.5:2; 1 Cor.4:5.)

Clarifications

Here are some closing clarifications: 1. **The basis of rewards will be our faithfulness, not our outward success.** "Those who have been given a trust must prove *faithful.*" "Well done, good and *faithful* servant; you have been *faithful* over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." (1 Cor.4:2; Matt.25:21 & 23.) Some seemingly successful workers for the Lord will be revealed as duds, their glowing statistics nullified by pride or hypocrisy. "Many who are first will be

last" (Matt.19:30). Others who had few outward results will be richly rewarded for their faithfulness. "Many who are last will be first." After all, it's harder to stick it out when results are few than when they are many. Jeremiah saw hardly any converts, but he was a great servant of the Lord. Also, what is success, anyway? Stephen was successful--as a martyr!

2. **We shall be judged and rewarded according to the opportunities available to us.** (Lk.12:47-48.) Some people have far more "light," abilities, health and energy, freedom and time, etc. than others do. God knows this, of course, and all He does will be right. In fact, He owes no one anything, and His people should not be competing against one another, but keeping their eyes on Him. Which leads to the next point.

3. **Seeking rewards from Christ is not selfish, for our gaining them does not deprive other believers of their rewards. All can be winners.** We are not competing with our brothers and sisters. The competition is only between what we *could* do and what we *actually* do.

There's another reason why seeking rewards is not selfish. We shall give our wonderful Lord the glory even for the good things we accomplish and are rewarded for. Ponder Paul's statement -- "I worked harder than all of them -- yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me" (1 Cor.15:10). Again, we mentioned that Scripture often uses "crowns" as symbols of our heavenly rewards (study it for yourself). No doubt we, like the 24 elders in glory, will lay [our] crowns before the throne and say: "*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power...*" (Rev.4:10-11). We'll give Him the credit and praise for the good that *we* did--for *He* worked in us to do it (Phil.2:13; Heb.13:21; John 15:5). But how sad that day will be for believers who will have *no crowns to lay before the Lord!*

May we be those who will hear the Master's "Well done!" May we be those of whom John writes, "...We will have *confidence* on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him" (1 Jn.4:17).

A Thought-Question:

Matt. 7:24-27 and 1 Cor. 3:10-15 hint that there are 2 main categories of people in this world, each divided into 2 sub-groups: (1)Of those who build on the One Foundation, some folks build flammable houses while others build durable, inflammable ones. Paul clearly teaches those facts.

So, though he does not say so specifically, it seems safe to speculate that in the same way, (2) **Of those who build on No Foundation**, some may build impressive looking mansions while others build flimsy shacks.

What do those symbols represent? Who are the 4 kinds of people?

Thoughts on the Preceding Question: In Paul's picture of Christ's judgment-seat, the reward-losers "built" with flammable materials, and thus will suffer loss. That probably means their faith and repentance were weak, their commitment unsteady, their service wishy-washy, their motives badly mingled. But they did build their lives on the right "foundation," as Paul explained in 1 Cor.3:11-12a. "No one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is *Jesus Christ*. If any man *builds on this foundation* using... wood, hay or straw," it will burn up at the testing-time and he will lose his reward. That passage shows that the people he describes were trusting in the Lord. Though weak, their faith was real. Though unsteady, their commitment to Christ was actual. Though their growth was stunted, they had life -- through their relationship to Him. Let us examine the foundation we are relying on, and also what kind of "materials" we are building with.

Compare the "spiritual" and "fleshly" Christians Paul mentions at the start of this same chapter, 3:1-4. Brothers and sisters, which are we?

Counselor's Column

Since I Made My Bed, Must I Lie In It?

Dennis Kaufman

Question: I have been a Christian for two years now, but my life before Christ was filled with bad choices. As a result, I have lost my marriage, my relationship with my kids, my job, and I see no end in sight to the pain. Since I made my bed, do I have to lie in it, or should I pray and expect God to bring relief?

Answer: Let me begin by expressing my joy that you have come to know the Lord. Who knows what pain has been avoided because of good choices you have made since your conversion?

You pose a fascinating question because two eternal truths collide as we consider the answer.

1) God does help those who call upon His name. (Matt 7:7-11)

2) We do reap what we sow. (Galatians 6:7-9)

Obviously, I do not know how God will choose to work in your individual situation, but I can share what I have witnessed as a general rule in circumstances like yours. This might best be accomplished with the following word picture.

If we picture our lives as buckets of water, it would be safe to say that life is best lived when we are overflowing. The accumulating impact of walking with Christ and making good decisions is a filling of our lives with good things, which leads to an overflow of blessings to others.

The person who rejects or ignores the principles of God and selfishly follows his own desires is like a bucket with a hole in the bottom. The consequences of his behavior may be delayed because others are drained, but eventually life runs dry, and misery begins to set in.

The acceptance of Christ's grace, as one realizes the need for a Savior, in essence plugs the hole. The accumulation of good choices and relational blessing can now begin. But, this filling process takes time when the bucket has been depleted. As one begins to sow good seed, there will be a better harvest, but this will require a season of patient waiting.

The other aspect of your situation that God addresses is the ability to sustain you during the painful process of rebuilding. When life collapses on us, and the temporary sources of filling our bucket are no longer available, we are forced to trust God for our spiritual and emotional survival. This is when people are most tempted to turn to the quick fixes of life - the addictive sources like alcohol, drugs, gambling, pornography, overeating, spending, etc.

However, if by faith we are determined to follow God's way of filling us, He takes us through His disciplinary track. We learn how to make friends with our loneliness and to not resent the rigorous training He may lead us through. This spiritual boot camp can prepare us for a wonderful second chance at real life.

The consequences of our free will are very real and I suspect there will be more dues to pay regarding your past. However, the good news is that God can sustain you as you heal, and the future is hopeful with the deep repairs God can provide. May the hope of a different future give you strength for today's pain.

PROFITS For THIS LIFE, PROFITS For the NEXT

JOYce Broyles

This week, my annual doctor's appointment arrived. I do not look forward to these visits. In the past, sometimes I would forget or skip them altogether. My mind asked, "If it ain't broke, why fix it?" Thus it has been, for many years. Fortunately, I was blessed with good health.

Things change with time, however, including the human body. Mine has, and I do not especially like the changes. They are inevitable, nonetheless.

My doctor said to relieve the aches and pains that I complained about, I must exercise more. Again, my mind asked, "Why? Don't I run around enough?" At my obvious reluctance, the doctor explained that exercise meant moving fast enough to get my heart pumping at an accelerated rate. Okay, so I do not run around that fast!

The Bible has things to say about keeping our bodies fit. Paul wrote that "bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (I Tim. 4:8.)

Godliness means being like God. It means living so that our lives reflect our Maker.

My friend Margie sent me a note which made that thought especially clear. She said that after reading "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver," in Malachi 3:3, one lady did some research. The woman watched a silversmith hold a piece of silver over the fire while it was heating. He explained that when refining, the smith must hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames are the hottest so the impurities will burn away.

The woman asked if the smith had to sit in front of the fire while the silver was being refined. He told her that not only did he have to sit there holding the silver, but he also had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If left even a moment too long in the flames, the silver would be destroyed. After thinking about how God holds us in hot spots to get us pure, the woman realized that He never takes His eyes off us during that time. He does not leave us nor forsake us.

Again, the woman asked a question. "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?" The silversmith smiled at her and said, "That's

easy. When I see my image in it!" Exercising for me will be a trial, an ordeal, though nothing so serious as some. If we can remember that these hot spots are really refining processes, we can look forward to the day when He sees His image in us! Now I understand why Carolina, our exchange student from Brazil, chose "refining" as her E-mail address. What a wonderful goal to set for ourselves!

So, whatever it takes -- more devotion time in the mornings or more exercise time in the evenings. I will begin my workouts with refining in mind, both spiritual and physical. Hopefully, that will lead to a healthier life with healthier personal expressions.

"Brotherly Love" Among Church Colleges

That was the title of an editorial in *Christian Standard* for Oct. 14. Sam Stone commends two "beautiful examples of Christian brotherhood among Restoration Movement schools" which he had experienced in a recent week. Here's part of what he wrote:

"I spoke at a dinner in Louisville for faculty and administrators participating in the Kentuckiana Consortium of Restoration Colleges. This represents a unique partnership among Louisville Bible College and College of the Scriptures (both supported by Christian churches/churches of Christ) and the Portland Christian School of Biblical Studies (associated with the a cappella churches of Christ).

"This consortium has been in place for 10 years. In addition to offering students the opportunity to take classes at (and transfer credits from) the other schools, it provides opportunity for faculty and staff members to share in helpful interchange. Moreover, it demonstrates that fraternal bond each school has with the others in Christ.

"Dr. Tom Mobley, president of Louisville Bible College, observed,

'KCRC has accomplished several things, not the least being that we (the colleges) now see ourselves as colleagues rather than rivals. We realize that we can attain more working together than any of us could separately. It has benefited our students in many ways including joint chapels, cross-registration, and greater library access. But more, it has enabled the leaders of the three institutions to become good friends, and not just peers, as we meet together for our monthly luncheons.'

I too am glad that brother Mobley instituted this consortium 10 years ago. It is good for the Lord's family to "dwell together in unity" and cooperation, without sacrificing conscience.

--Alex V. Wilson

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Fisherville, Kentucky...The church is still in need of a full-time minister. It has a nice parsonage and a well maintained building. Bro. Earl C. Mullins Jr. recently held a great revival in September. He preached some stirring messages that built everyone up. Great crowds!

Lilly Dale Church of Christ in Gatchel, Indiana reports a new web page:

members.truepath.com/LDCC.html

Buddy Davis (from Answers in Genesis) spoke at Lilly Dale on October 14th. Past news: Thanks to God the 23rd of Sept. we were able to beat the record attendance of this year with 147. Praise the Lord!!! (Elmer Pacheco.)

Philippine Mission Update...from the Iroquois Church of Christ. Many churches and individuals here "at home" have decided to help a very important work in Mindanao, and Cebu where there are now over 100 congregations and new "extensions" are being started almost monthly. To be put on the mailing list and receive the Philippine Mission Update regularly you may contact Bro. T.Y. Clark at P.O. Box 18542, Louisville, KY. 40261

Community Church of Christ in Louisville, Kentucky reports that Bro. Elmer Whetley has been with the congregation for 6 months preaching and teaching. There have been 3 baptisms and Bro. Whetley has been working real hard in the community. He is very energetic and working in the neighborhood on a regular basis. Prayerfully the Lord will get everyone else involved. (Ron Flora)

Announcing the Annual Thanksgiving Day Service for Thursday,

November 22nd at the Atherton High School Auditorium at 11:00 a.m. The Portland Christian High School Chorus will be singing. David Tapp will speak.

Pleasant Grove Church of Christ...(Indiana) recently hosted the 5th Sunday singspiration for their area. Churches represented included: Dugger, Summerville, Linton, & Shiloh. Word was received that Bro. Max Abram was called home to be with the Lord on Oct. 3rd. Bro. Jerry Carmichael takes part in a community Thanksgiving service.

Amite Louisiana (Don McGee) reports the cell groups are in their 3rd month and doing quite well. Leaders include husband/wife teams who are being used for exhortation and building up the church family. Once this phase has taken root - the groups will be used as a tool in evangelism and discipling. The church recently surprised Don & Valerie with a "pastor appreciation day." His mother and other family members were present. One of his deacons gave him the day off by preaching and along with other gifts, they were given a weekend away. Have you told your pastor lately how much you appreciate him and his wife?

Buechel Church of Christ (Louisville, KY) had a humble beginning under a tent in 1913 to a modern brick building in 1959. Bud Ridgeway serves as minister and Rex Prather associate minister. They are announcing **Homecoming** for Sunday, November 4, 2001 and all former members are invited to attend and to join them in this 88th year celebration with morning worship service followed by a fellowship dinner.

Gallatin Church of Christ (Tennessee) was established in 1914 and is announcing their **Homecoming** for Sunday October 21, 2001. Bro. J. Richard (Dick) Lewis from Johnson City, Tennessee will be the keynote speaker. All former members are invited to attend this special day of festivities. This will commemorate their 87th year of service to the Lord!

Ralph Ave. (Louisville, Ky) Revival meeting with Earl C. Mullins Jr. is scheduled for October 21-25, 2001. (Sun.-Thurs) Fellowship / birthday dinner following Sunday services.

From Belmont in Winchester, Ky. Cecil Garrett is working on a slide presentation of his recent Russian trip. Anyone interested in hearing more about this can contact Cecil at 399 College St. Winchester, KY 40391 or call at (859) 744-5233. He recently presented the trip to the Salem Church of Christ.

Parksville, Ky. Revival... was held the last week of September with evangelist Nathan Burks. His messages were "very timely" in light of the recent terroristic attacks in New York & Washington. He is also "filling in" with the Fisherville Church.

The School of Biblical Studies (Louisville): The class in Christian Ethics had to move to the Buechel Church because of the larger student body at Portland Christian School. Isn't that good news and an answer to prayer!!! The Lord is blessing PCS,

and a somewhat quieter environment surely is nice for the Ethics class too. Special thanks to the Buechel church for providing the space. --Bennie Hill

Antioch Church (near Frankfort, Ky.) has a new preacher. He is **Jason Lindsay** (son-in-law of Derrell Cone) and will be assuming full-time responsibilities with the church. He is married and will be moving to Frankfort and serving in his 1st church. **Danny Rogers**, his wife, and two children will be moving into the **Antioch Camp** log house and will take over responsibilities of running & maintaining the camp. Much thanksgiving to the Lord!

Sellersburg, Ind. (Dennis Royse) It has been our goal of late to stress the importance of having a reverence for God. We feel that how we dress at those times that we worship and learn about God is a part of the proper reverence to be shown.

Bohon, Ky. 5th Sunday Singspiration was well attended and everyone enjoyed a time of worship & praise to the Lord. Bro. Kenneth Preston began the service with thanksgiving for all the Lord had done in his life and a call for everyone to worship the Lord "in Spirit and in Truth." Several men came forward to lead songs followed by some specials. Everyone departed saying: "It was good being in the house of the Lord." Next 5th Sunday Singspiration for Central Kentucky will be December 30th at the Mackville Church at 6:30 p.m.