

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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A SECOND CHANCE

When things go bad, how many times have we wished we had a second chance? That is, another opportunity to do better than the first time around? I suppose that at some time each one of us have probably wanted a second chance to do some things differently in our lives.

Jesus once told a story about a man who also wished he had a second chance (Luke 16:19-31). In the parable Jesus referred to him as "a certain rich man". On the surface you would not think this particular man would have wanted to change anything in his life if he could. It seemed like he had everything a man

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could desire and that he was satisfied with his life.

During his time on earth this man became "filthy rich", as some would say. We know he had an elegant estate to live in because usually in those days the beggars gathered at the gates of such houses, hoping for some sort of 'handout'. That explains how the rich man was somewhat acquainted with poor Lazarus. We also know that the rich man wore some of the finest clothes around since "purple and fine linen" were affordable only to the wealthy. And we are also informed in verse 19 that the rich man feasted upon the best food available, every single day! What more could a man want to make him happy? Why would he even want to change that kind of lifestyle?

But as it will happen to every one of us, one day the rich man passed away from this life. He died and left behind all his earthly possessions: his money, his large estate, his fine clothes, and his favorite foods. After his body was buried in the ground, the rich man's soul was cast into hell (Hades). It was a tormenting condition that he now endured among the flames (v. 24). It was so terrible that he even dared to cry, "*Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue!*"

Then the rich man realized his condition was inescapable. He was going to suffer forever! Oh, if he had another chance! Would he really change his life? Would things truly be different if he could go back in time? Certainly! He would do ANYTHING to avoid the piercing flames of hell. He would not have wasted his time and talent on earthly riches. If he had a second opportunity, he would have shared his large estate with the homeless

people of his neighborhood. He would give the shirt off his back to those who were more needy. He would even give decent food to the hungry beggars instead of the crumbs which fell daily from his dinner table. Oh yes, he would be a totally different man, if he had a second chance. But it was too late!

If he had another chance, the rich man might even have preached of righteousness to others. He could warn his five brothers about the torment of hell. Although they might ridicule him, he would never stop admonishing them because he loved them. He could read to them from the books of Moses and the prophets (v. 29) and teach others about the one and only true Jehovah God. He could become a disciple of Jesus Christ, a fisher of men, and a helper to those who would spread the news of the coming kingdom of God . . . IF he had a second chance.

But there is no second chance, is there? Once we die, our eternal destiny is forever sealed. It will be too late then to change the things we did while living on earth. After death, God tells us, comes the judgment (Heb. 9:27). *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor. 5:10). Everybody will die someday. And what counts the most is what we say, what we think, what we believe, and what we do today.

That is why it is so important to live righteously RIGHT NOW! *"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation"* (2 Cor. 6:2). Nobody knows exactly what time they will pass away from this earth. It could be today or it could be tomorrow. *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It*

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is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jas. 4:14). The end can come as sudden as a quick flash of lightning. So, today is the time that we need to be using to prepare for the life hereafter because once we die, there is absolutely no second chance!

Today is also the day that we should be warning others about the dangers of hell (Ezek. 33:8,9). We must look around us and notice the ones who are honestly seeking for the Truth. *"Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together"* (John 4:35-36). We must put forth every effort NOW because there will not be another chance! Someone once said, "There is no time like the present!" How true that is, especially concerning spiritual matters.

Friends, how many of us are living with an attitude like the rich man? He concentrated on the riches of this life and neglected his spiritual life. If we were to die right now, would our souls be found in the outer darkness of hell? Would we be tortured in an eternal flame, wishing and begging for a second chance?

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. When Abram left Canaan and went to Egypt because of the famine, did Lot go with him?
2. In what form did God descend upon Mount Sinai?
3. What is it recorded that Onesiphorus did in Rome?
4. Moses took some of the blood from the ram offered at Aaron's consecration and touched what three parts of Aaron's body?
5. Who was Timothy's grandmother?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who suggested to Saul to consult a man of God about the whereabouts of the lost donkeys? HIS SERVANT (1 Sam. 9:5,6)
2. Where did the Israelites get the blueprint for the tabernacle? FROM GOD (Exo. 25:9)
3. When Jesus was hungry during His final days in Jerusalem, on what sort of tree did He search for food? FIG (Mark 11:13)
4. What is one to do with the sin which so easily besets him? LAY IT ASIDE (Heb. 12:1)
5. Was Proverbs written for attaining wisdom and discipline? YES (Prov. 1:2)

A NOTE OF THANKS

The editor would like to thank again the church of Christ at Sun Hill Road in Birmingham, AL and the church of Christ at Hokes Bluff in Gadsden, AL for their generous and continued financial support of this paper.

CRITICISM WHERE IT REALLY COUNTS

The Christian who is earnestly striving to serve God must exercise a great deal of patience. This often requires him to listen to the grumblings of those who have nothing constructive to offer but who can always be expected to criticize.

There are times, of course, when criticism is justified and really needed. Paul criticized the Corinthian church in his first letter to them, chapter 1 verses 10-11, by writing, *"Now I beseech you, brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you;"* In chapter 6 verse 5 he wrote, *"I speak to your shame"* and in verse 7, *"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you!"* The church at Laodicea was condemned because of its lukewarmness (Rev. 3:14-22) and Jude wrote in verse 4 of *"certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness"*

There is no question but that rebuke and correction are needed and that such when objectively considered can serve to perfect the Lord's people and enhance the effect of the Lord's work. But too often those who never lend a hand to pull, those who never put their shoulder to the wheel to push, those who never speak a word of praise for a job well done -- these are the ones who stand aside without soiling their lilly-white hands and make a lot of fuss about those who do sincerely try! If we are not in there trying, then we don't

really have much right, do we, to stand aside and criticize?

To be sure the church is not perfect, for it is composed of humans. It is sad that some who are members of the church will not gain heaven. Jesus alluded to this in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21-27 where He taught that redemption is determined by humble, dedicated obedience and not by empty words and deeds. One of the most evident principles of the Scriptures, however, is that in spite of the hypocrite, the weak and the unconcerned who are in the church, the Lord's church also consists of the saved. The Scriptures in fact teach that the church is the fellowship of the saved (Eph. 5:23,25 and Acts 20:28) and that those who are not in it are without promise (Acts 2:47). This approved relationship in Christ's spiritual body, His church, is gained through repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38).

If you are concerned enough to criticize, my friend, then don't waste your time and words and energy. Join us in our effort to expand the borders of God's kingdom and attain to a higher level of perfection. Come along with us and exert your criticism where it will really count! Show us what you mean by putting your words into action.

You can do just that next Sunday morning at your nearest church of Christ. We are just humans with our human limitations, but we truthfully believe that you will find among us a sincere effort to serve God acceptably and with reverence. You are warmly welcomed, and we assure you that this will be made evident, too.

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BIBLE PRINCIPLES OF SALVATION

I. ALL PEOPLE HAVE SINNED

1 Ki 8:46 Rom 3:23 Rom 5:12 1 Jn 1:8 1 Jn 5:19

II. A SINNER WILL FACE ETERNAL DEATH

Ezek 33:8-9 Rom 6:23 2 Thes 1:7-9 Jas 1:15 Rev 21:8

Unless he:

1. Hears the Word of God

Mat 13:23 Lk 10:39 Jn 10:16 Rom 10:17 Eph 1:13

2. Realizes Jesus Christ is the Only Way to Salvation

Jn 6:68 Jn 14:6 Acts 4:12 Eph 2:18 1 Thes 5:9 Heb 5:9

3. Believes Jesus is the Son of God

Mk 16:16 Jn 3:16 Jn 8:24 Jn 20:31 Acts 16:31 Heb 11:6

4. Is Convicted in his Heart of his Own Disobedience

Acts 2:37 Acts 16:29 Acts 24:25 2 Cor 7:8-11

5. Repents of his Sins

Lk 13:3 Acts 2:38 Acts 3:19 Acts 17:30 Acts 26:20

6. Confesses his Faith in the Lord Jesus

Mat 10:32 Acts 8:37 Acts 19:18 Rom 10:9-10 1 Jn 4:15

7. Is Baptized by Immersion for the Remission of Sins

in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Mat 28:19 Mk 16:16 Jn 3:5 Acts 2:38 Acts 8:36-39

Acts 10:47 Acts 16:33 Acts 22:16 Rom 6:3-6

Gal 3:27 Col 2:12 1 Pet 3:21

8. Lives a Faithful Life, Guided Only by the Authority of God's Word

Mat 25:21 Rom 1:16 Tit 2:11-12 Heb 4:12 Jas 1:21 Rev 2:10

9. Worships in Spirit and Truth, not Forsaking the Assembling, and Observing the Lord's Supper every first day of the week

Mat 4:10 Jn 4:23-24 Acts 2:42 Acts 20:7 Heb 10:25

10. Prays for Forgiveness, if he should Fall into Sin again

Acts 8:22 1 Cor 10:12-13 Eph 6:18 1 Thes 5:17

Jas 5:15-16 1 Jn 1:5-10

III. ONLY THOSE WHO DO THE WILL OF GOD SHALL BE SAVED

Mat 7:21 Mat 12:50 Lk 6:47-48 Rom 2:13 Jas 1:22

1 Jn 2:17 Rev 22:14