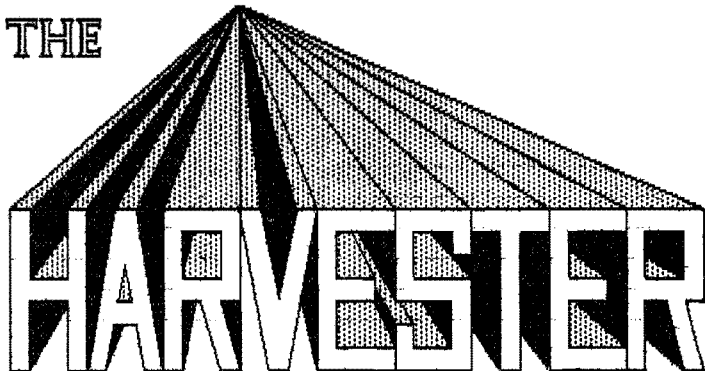


THE



"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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GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

In the world of computers there is a popular phrase that goes: Garbage in, garbage out. What it means is that you will get out of the computer exactly what you put into it. If you enter garbage data in, you can expect to receive garbage data out. The same could be said of the investment world of stocks and bonds. If you do not invest a lot, you should not expect to receive a lot in return.

I have found this principle of "garbage in, garbage out" to be true in religion, too. We get exactly out of it what we put into it! I have heard many people (including members of the Lord's church) say that their religion is "dull." They say their

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religious life is not doing them any good. Yet many of the people who say their religion is a waste of time are the same ones who put little effort into it.

Jesus commanded His disciples: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (Matt. 22:37) Today many of us fall short in this respect. We do not love God as we should because we do not even try! This can be seen in our worship services. People say, "I don't feel anything when I pray or sing to God." Why is this so? It is because we do not put forth our best effort into the praying or the singing. Garbage in, garbage out. When we pray or when we sing, does our mind wander? Is it easy to lose concentration? Do we easily forget the words that were just prayed or sung? Notice that we rarely have any trouble getting any enjoyment out of something we like (hobby or craft) because we get deeply involved with it. We put our very best into it and we feel satisfied with the end-result. If we would do likewise with our praying and singing, it would certainly be more meaningful to us.

The Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14-30) serves as a beautiful example of the principle, "Garbage in, garbage out." The first two men who received five talents and two talents respectively, were rewarded when their master returned. He saw that they had put forth the necessary effort to double their earnings. Obviously their hard work paid off. But the third man was severely punished simply because he put absolutely no effort into his "talent." He put "garbage in" and he got exactly what any of us expected -- "garbage out." In the same manner people make the statement: "I can't understand the Bible."

They pick a verse, read it, and then do not get much meaning out of it. So they throw up their hands and claim that the Word of God cannot be understood. Let me ask: what would we expect if all we did was just read a verse out of the Bible? Don't think about it ... don't study it ... just read it and do nothing else. Why we would expect very little comprehension, right? It's almost like not studying for a test in school. If we didn't study, how many times should we expect to make an A? Likewise, we should put some effort into our Bible study if we hope to succeed. We can meditate on the verse, we can research the definitions of words, we can study the verse in the proper context, etc. The degree to which we understand the Bible is proportional to the degree of effort we put into trying to understand it!

The writer James also gives us advice along these lines when he penned: *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."* (Jas. 1:22) He told us to not only listen to God's Word, but DO it! Anybody can be a hearer of the Word. That takes no effort at all. But to be a DOER of the Word is what separates Christians from the rest of the world. Only God's people will truly put forth effort into Christianity and serving their Lord. Yet often we hear people say, "Why should I go to church services? I don't get anything from it." Why is it that some people seem to get nothing out of the church services? Could it be that they put nothing into it? Is this another case of "Garbage in, garbage out?"

Too frequently when people come to church services, they just sit on the pews and look bored. They don't think about worshipping God. A few do not even put forth the effort to arrive on time. When the singing starts, they do not have their

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heart and mind and soul in the songs being sung to the Lord. Their mind is thinking of something else when the prayer is offered. Usually they do not hear any part of the sermon because they are either playing around or catching up on their sleep. During the Lord's Supper they are thinking about "getting out of church". And for contribution, they give their leftovers. If a person puts that much effort into the services, is it any wonder then that he does not get much out of it? Should we expect anything different? David said, *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."* (Psa. 122:1) Perhaps if we would put a little extra effort into it, we could also find the blessing that David obviously enjoyed when he worshipped God.

As a final example of the "garbage in, garbage out" principle, we look at the apostle Paul. Here was a man who put a lot into his religion and received a lot in return! We could talk all day about what he put into Christianity. He gave to the Lord his time, his money, his efforts, and all his heart, soul, and mind. He suffered imprisonments, whippings, beatings, a stoning, shipwrecks, near-death situations and countless perils all for the sake of Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-26). And in the end Paul acknowledged his reward for his efforts.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." (2 Tim. 4:7-8)

Like the "garbage in, garbage out" theory for computers, what we put into our spiritual life determines exactly what we get out of it! This applies to our Christian life, our Bible study, our worship service, etc. If we feel that we are getting nothing out of Christianity, maybe it is because that is exactly what we are putting into it!

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. The sending of what prophet is promised at the end of Malachi?
2. When Ezekiel laid on his right side for 40 days to bear the iniquity of the house of Judah, each day represented how many years?
3. God is not slack (or slow) concerning what?
4. What book of the Bible records Paul's voyage to Rome as a prisoner?
5. Kish, Saul's father, sent him in search of some lost animals. What were they?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who fell down at the feet of Paul and Silas in the Philippian prison? THE JAILER (Acts 16:27-29)
2. God said He would save Sodom if there were as few as how many righteous people in the city? TEN (Gen. 18:32)
3. What gives Christians a "*lively hope*", according to 1 Peter? THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST (1 Pet. 1:3)
4. What did the psalmist want God to restore unto him, after confessing his sins? THE JOY OF HIS SALVATION (Psa. 51:12)
5. In which Old Testament book do the following characters appear: Jezreel, Loruhamah, and Loammi? HOSEA (Hos. 1)

THE PLOT AGAINST NARCISSUS

They relate also many other matters worthy of note respecting the life of this man (referring to Narcissus, bishop of the church in Jerusalem, circa 200 A.D.). Among these, such as the following.

Certain fellows not being able to endure the firm and constant character of his life, fearing also lest they should be taken and punished for the numerous crimes of which they were conscious, endeavoured to anticipate him, by plotting an artifice against him. (The meaning is, that Narcissus was so rigid in his discipline, that these slanderers could not bear his uniform and exemplary life, whilst they were also afraid of detection and punishment for their own crimes.) They gave currency therefore to a foul slander against him. Then, in order to make the hearers

believe, they confirmed their accusations with oaths; and one of them swore that he might perish with fire; another that his body might be wasted with a miserable and foul disease; a third that he should be deprived of his eyes; but notwithstanding their oaths, none of the faithful heeded them, on account of the well known continent and virtuous life which Narcissus had always led. Unable, however, to endure the wickedness of these men, and having besides already long before embraced a life of contemplation, he ran away from the body of the church, and continued many years concealed in deserts and trackless wilds.

But the omnipotent eye of justice did not remain inactive in the midst of these things; but soon descended with his judgments upon the impious wretches, and bound them with the curses they had invoked. The first indeed, in consequence of a light spark falling upon his habitation without any apparent cause, was burnt with his whole family. The next was forthwith covered with the disease which he had imprecated upon himself, from the extremity of his feet to the top of his head. But the third, perceiving the events of the former two, and dreading the inevitable judgment of the all-seeing God, confessed indeed to all the slander which had been concocted in common among them. But he was so wasted with excessive grieving, and so incessantly diffused with tears, that at last both his eyes were destroyed. And these suffered the punishment due to their calumnies.

(Taken from Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History)

Don't pray for what's coming to you
-- you might get it.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
July 1 - 5	Chiricahua Wilderness Area gathering Pine Canyon, AZ	Various speakers
July 5 - 7 (F - Su)	Lake City Church Lake City, GA 7:30pm E.S.T.	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 8 - 12	Owens Road Church Prattville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 12 - 14 (F - Su)	Sun Hill Road Church Birmingham, AL 7:00 evenings	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 15 - 19	Winchester, OH (tent meeting)	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 21 - 26 (Su - F)	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL 7:00pm	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 28 - 31	Rincon, GA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 28 - Aug. 2 (Su - F)	Napolean Church Woodland, AL 7:00 each evening	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)



LAWS OF PARDON TO THE UNSAVED

- Hearing (Rom. 10:13-19)
- Believing (Heb. 11:6; Acts 16:31)
- Repenting (Luke 24:47; Acts 17:30)
- Confession (Luke 12:8; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)
- Baptism (Matt. 28:19-20; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:1-8;
Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)