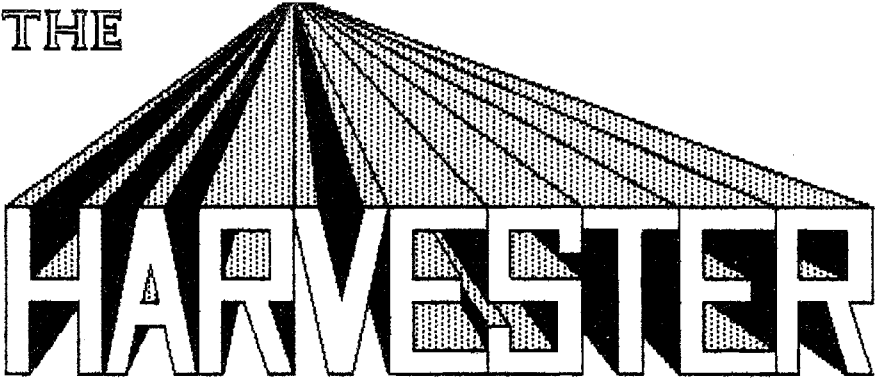


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

FEBRUARY 1997

No. 134

PILLARS OF BRASS

While building a house for God, King Solomon "cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece . . . And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple." (1 Kings 7:15,21) For just a moment, let us close our eyes and visualize that. Everyone who approached the Temple for the first time probably stood in awe of that beautiful image -- two giant columns glistening like icicles in the winter's sun. What could ever compare to such a sight?

Would you believe that Christians are comparable to those pillars of brass? Jesus stated to the church at Philadelphia: "Him

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that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name" (Rev. 3:12) Did you understand what He said? Those who overcome the world (1 John 5:4,5), those who overcome evil (Romans 12:21), those who overcome the wicked one (1 John 2:13,14), and those who overcome temptation (James 1:12) will be made a spiritual pillar of brass in the house of God! When you think about it, it is a lovely comparison indeed.

Recall in particular some of the properties of brass. Brass is an alloy, which means it is a mixture or combination of two different metals: copper and zinc. When copper and zinc are combined together, we get a compound called brass. Normally brass is not found in a natural state but has to be manufactured or produced. In this respect, Christians are like the brass that the pillars were made of.

A person is not born and then grows up to become a Christian by doing nothing, just as a piece of copper or zinc will never turn to brass if left on its own. A Christian is "produced" by combining two very important elements: God's Word and an honest, sincere heart. Only when the Word of God is faithfully and obediently mixed with a pure heart (1 Peter 1:22-23) will it bring forth a new creature called a Christian, much like a seed will produce a plant when it is sown in fertile ground (Matthew 13:23). So in this way the disciples of Christ are likened to the pillars of brass.

Another interesting point about brass is in the method or process of its direct production. The copper is melted with intense heat, then zinc is added in small quantities. Likewise, God uses "fiery trials" on his subjects, not to melt them down of course, but to test them and to hopefully make them stronger (1 Peter 1:6,7) When our faith is tried through various temptations, our patience is increased and we become more "perfect" or complete as Christians (James 1:2-4). Each temptation that we successfully overcome helps us to be stronger than the time before! So the next time our faith is being put to proof, let us remember that we are pillars of brass.

Brass also has some significant corrosion properties. Copper, by itself, does not rust very easily when it is left out in the rain and air (that is one reason why copper is a popular material for electrical wires). However, brass being an alloy of copper and zinc is even less corrosive! Brass resists the influence of the atmosphere better than copper alone. Similarly, a Christian must have a strong resistance to the influence of the world. John exhorted: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world!"* (1 John 2:15-16) As pillars of brass, all Christians must not be seeking after worldly things but instead, laying up *"treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also!"* (Matthew 6:19-21)

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God's harvest (Lk. 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, and all correspondence to:

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In the days of the Mosaical Law, pillars symbolized the presence of God. For example, when Moses entered the tabernacle and the cloudy pillar descended, it was understood that the Lord was present there and talking with Moses (see Exodus 33:9). Since pillars are figurative of God's presence, we must ask ourselves: Is God present in our lives? Does He exist in my words, my thoughts, my actions? As pillars of brass, we should recognize that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17). If we are not in the flesh, then the Spirit of God dwells in us (Romans 8:9). If we are the pillars that we are supposed to be, then God truly dwells in us (1 John 4:12).

The final point about the brass pillars concerns their appearance. They just stood in the front of the temple. Structurally speaking, these pillars did not really support any weight of significance. They were merely ornaments or decorations. When a person came to Solomon's temple, one of the first things he would see would be those magnificent columns. Likewise, when people look at the Lord's church today, the first thing they will see is US! As pillars, we are not needed by God to structurally hold up the church. Christ's church will still exist

whether we are in it or not. Nevertheless, as pillars of brass we do stand in the front where all can see us. This places a big responsibility on each one of us. Today most people will judge the church by our very actions (Matthew 5:14-16)!

Therefore, let us remember the similarities of ourselves with the pillars of brass that stood in the porch of the temple of Solomon. Just as brass is an alloy, a Christian is created when God's Word is mixed with an honest heart. Just as intense heat is used to produce brass, a Christian becomes stronger through trials and temptations. Just as brass resists corrosion, a Christian will resist the "world." Just as pillars are symbolic of God's presence, a Christian will have God dwelling in him. And just as the pillars stood in full view, a Christian must set the proper example for all to see.

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How many young men did David send to greet Nabal and ask for his favor?
2. Peter says to be clothed with what?
3. What does Job call his friends in his first reply to Zophar?
4. What book of the Bible records the story of Paul and Silas in the jail at Philippi?

5. What animal did Gideon use to destroy the idol of Baal?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. In what city did Simon the leper live?
BETHANY (Mark 14:3)

2. According to the second commandment, why does God not tolerate idols or graven images? BECAUSE HE IS A JEALOUS GOD (Exo. 20:4,5)

3. What happened to the people of Gennesaret when they touched the fringes of Jesus' cloak? THEY WERE HEALED (Matt. 14:36)

4. What spice was to season every meat offering? SALT (Lev. 2:13)

5. Why was David not allowed to build the temple of the Lord? HE HAD SHED TOO MUCH BLOOD (1 Chr. 22:8)

"THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH"

In Matthew 5:5 Jesus quotes what a thousand years earlier had been written in five verses of Psalms 37, "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth!*" As explained in another article (See The Harvester, Jan. 96), this statement does not imply that this

material earth will remain for the inhabitation of the saints. But what a beautiful meaning it does convey.

Being meek does not imply that one is weak or that he will submit to being continually abused. He is not hard-headed or hard-hearted. To the contrary it describes one who has the strength and patience inherent in self-control. His is the tendency to listen, to learn, to correct his ways, to be patient, to avoid conflicts which offer no advantage, to keep his "cool" when others lose theirs, and to seek a calm resolution. He is not inclined to lose his temper when others do. He can accept criticism and consider it to his advantage to learn of his faults. He will "weather the storm" rather than become its victim.

Fortified with these characteristics, the meek are assured of a victory in every conflict. He might not win in a material sense, but he will emerge with a determination to rise above his difficulty. He can see beyond those barriers which hinder his physical line of sight. He can endure with faith and hope when others will have fallen by the way-side in defeat.

In this sense the meek will receive and enjoy blessings far beyond those this present world has to offer. He will enjoy more fully the blessings he receives from the Lord and will recognize their Source. He cannot be bought and he cannot be influenced by flattery. But he receives insight, understanding, and a recognition of worth which the world does not value and does not begin to understand. They place their treasure in earthly, material, temporary things -- but he inherits every worthwhile quality that even the richest of this world cannot purchase or attain. In this

(continued from page 7)

sense he shall *"inherit the earth"* No man is richer or has greater promise than he, for his treasures can be enjoyed while yet here on the earth and then go on to be enjoyed in eternity.

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