

THE

HARVESTER

"Therefore said he unto them, 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)

July 1990

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WASTING A GIFT

The king was very sick. In fact, he was at the point of death. Soon he would take his last breath, his eyes anticipating the long sleep. In resignation he turned his face to the wall and began to pray as he had never prayed before. *"I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight."* (2 Ki. 20:3) With those words, Hezekiah wept bitterly at the thought of dying. But on those same words, God spared Hezekiah his imminent death. He granted the king another fifteen years of life!

What joy must have filled Hezekiah's heart. Certainly, this was a gift of God -- an extra fifteen years to serve the Lord! So, how did

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the king use the time given to him? Apparently he wasted his gift. It is recorded that *"Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem."* (2 Chr. 32:25) How sad to find out that Hezekiah did not better himself when given the opportunity. He had a second chance on life, and he let it slip through his fingers. How many times have we let the same thing happen to us?

There is a poster in our house that has the following saying: "What you are is God's gift to you. What you make of yourself is your gift to God. -- Benjamin Franklin." Think about the type of person we are today. Is this the kind of gift we want to give to God? Certainly, Hezekiah could not be pleased with his gift at the end of his extra fifteen years. But that is exactly all he had to offer.

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (Jas. 1:17) Everything that we possess was given to us by our heavenly Father. He created us. He gave us the breath of life and a spirit to go with it. Everything about us, we received from him: our knowledge, our abilities, our talents, and our traits. This is the gift that God has given to you and to me.

Now, what shall we give in return? Something less or something more? Most people expect something more. When the bank lends me money, it expects the amount to be repaid with interest. Likewise, God desires a fruitful return on his investments. Recall the Parable of the Talents where it was said, *"Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the*

exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 25:27-30)

As the parable points out, the worst thing a man can do is to waste his ability. Nonetheless, many people today are content to sit on the bench, never trying to make something of themselves. Sure, not everyone has "five-talents" but even the "one-talent" man was expected to produce. He didn't even try, did he? Sadly enough, neither are people today.

It is so depressing to see how some athletes mess up their lives by not "living up to their potential". "He would have been a basketball star" or "She could have been the best", they say. More depressing is the disciple who fails to fulfill his potential as a Christian. Why do members of the church refuse to present their "*bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service*" (Rom. 12:1)? Is it so bad to live for God, to make something of ourselves, and to give him this one gift?

The Lord wants each one of us to be successful. He gave us the proper tools, each a different ability. It is only right then that we now dedicate our bodies to his service, FULL TIME! That is our duty -- nothing less, but certainly more. "*We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*" (Lk. 17:10)

Every person who has been successful in this world was a follower of God the Almighty. They

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used their God-given talents and their God-given blessings solely to obey the Lord's commands. It was their choice on how to use those blessings, whether for good or for evil. They made the decision to be a success in life. Thus, they made their life worthwhile. They presented the greatest gift they could ever give to God -- their very lives!

Successful people always put God first in their lives (Matt. 6:32-34). Successful people are never selfish, doing everything for Christ and nothing for themselves (Phil. 1:20-21). Successful people are also guided by God's Word (Josh. 1:8). And finally, successful people never, never give up (Gal. 6:9). Can we honestly say we have been successful?

Are we ashamed at what we have made out of our lives? Some have allowed themselves to become swallowed up by the wickedness of the world. Others have become addicted and enslaved to drugs. Some have their lives driven totally by the greed for more money, while others are engulfed in lustful sex. Like the prodigal son, these have wasted their "*substance with riotous living.*" In short, they have wasted their lives and will have nothing to show for the God-given abilities once possessed. How terrible to think of such squanderings.

However, our past does not have to become our future. As long as there is still life within

us, we can choose to change. We can turn over a new leaf, to repent and truly make something of ourselves. The secret is to begin by coming to Christ. *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*(Matt. 11:28-30)

Hezekiah lived an extra fifteen years but he wasted it. Who knows how long we will live after today, but can we afford to waste that time? I think not. So, the question remains: what am I making out of the Creator's creation? *"What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?"*(Psa. 116:12)

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES!

1. When the children of Israel first entered the Promised Land, how long were they to wait before eating the fruit of newly planted trees?
2. Jesus came for sinners, but for whom did He say He did not come to call?
3. Romans 6 says that if you were baptized into Christ Jesus you were baptized into what else?
4. What three books have this sentence in approximately the same words: "God will render to every man according to his deeds"?
5. What two jobs did David have when he came into Saul's service?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH ...

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was circumcised at the same time that Abraham was? ISHMAEL, AND ALL THE MALES IN ABRAHAM'S HOUSE (Gen. 17:26,27)
2. How many men did Samson kill as he was being handed over from the men of Judah to the Philistines? ONE THOUSAND (Judg. 15:15)
3. The disciples of the Pharisees joined what group in asking Jesus if taxes should be paid to Caesar? THE HERODIANS (Matt. 22:16)
4. Zedekiah told Jeremiah to lie if officials questioned him about their secret conversation. Did Jeremiah lie? YES (Jer 38:24-27)
5. The ministry of John the Baptist is found in three of the four accounts of the gospel. In which is it not found? JOHN

AS THE MANNER OF SOME IS

(A Series to Promote Church Attendance)

It took me quite a while to fully grasp the implication of Matthew 6:21. "*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" At first glance it seemed that the treasure would always follow wherever the heart went. If my heart was on heavenly things, then my treasure (or reward) would find its home in heaven. But if I cared for the things of the earth, then my treasure would be a material one.

However, another study of that verse reveals just the opposite in principle! Wherever my treasure is located, then that points and shows me where my heart really is! If I own a wealthy portion of land and I spend all my money in acquiring more, then obviously my heart is in real estate. If I watch sports all

the time, evidently I care enough about those kinds of things. A look at one's treasures does tell a lot about one's heart.

Where is my treasure? It is not that hard to find. Just ask yourself, what do I spend most of my time doing? What things do I cherish most or on what objects do I place a high value? The answers to these questions will show us exactly where our treasure is. And remember: *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

Nowadays it is very rare to find people whose treasure is "in the church." We do not attend services like faithful members should. We do not go to meetings like we used to when our "heart" was in it. Slowly the things of the world are replacing the love we should have for Jesus Christ. Our hearts are no longer with spiritual matters because we have found false treasures on earth. Thus, Jesus gives us the admonition in Matt. 6:19-20, *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ..."*

One way to start laying up treasures in heaven is to be more faithful in church attendance. Instead of wasting all our efforts on hobbies, let us increase our investment in the church. Let us try to be there every time the doors open. By transferring our treasure toward God and his kingdom, our hearts will no doubt be found heading toward the right place.

RAY

<p>When you flee temptation, be sure you don't leave a forwarding address.</p>
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place & Time</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
July 6-8 (F-Su)	West Gadsden Church Gadsden, AL 7:00pm Fri & Sat	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 8-13	Temple Hill, MS	Bruce Kessler (Forest Park, GA)
July 9-13 (M-F)	Sun Hill Road Church Birmingham, AL 7:30 each evening	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 9-13	Valley, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
July 15-20	Athens Church Liberty, KY	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 15-20 (Su-F)	Oak Grove Church Woodland, AL 7:00 weeknights	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 15-20	North Warren, TN	Lindeal Greer (Bogue Chitto, MS)
July 22-28	Red Hill Church Woodbury, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
July 22-27	Mt. Olive Church near Arab, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)
July 22-28	Marrowbone, KY 7:00pm	Harry Cobb (Wedowee, AL)
July 22-28 (Su-Sa)	Napolean Church Woodland, AL 7:00 weeknights	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
Aug. 3-5	Second Ave. Church Opelika, AL	Bill Prince (Oxford, AL)
Aug. 10-12	Hokes Bluff, AL	Ray McManus (Gadsden, AL)

Read ACTS, the book of Conversions!
 Believing (Acts 16:31), Repenting (Acts 3:19),
 Confessing (Acts 8:37), and being Baptized
 (Acts 2:38) turned people into Christians!