

Bryan Station Baptist Church

INDEPENDENT ESTABLISHED 1786 MISSIONARY

THE PIONEER BAPTIST

"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

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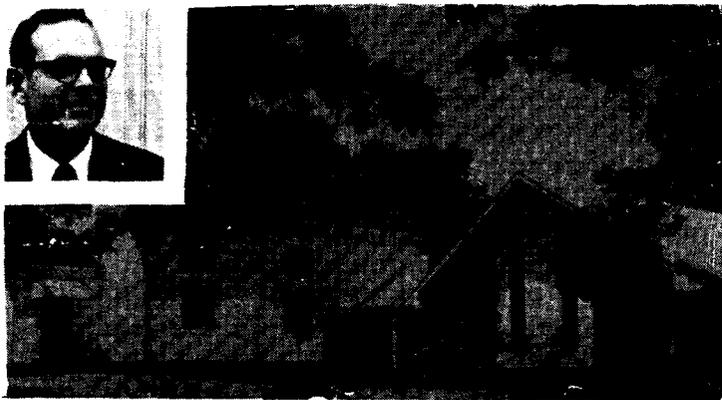
PREPARATION FOR HEAVEN

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (II Cor. 5:5).

In the context Paul is contemplating death and the grave and the hereafter. He has no fear of death and the future, but anticipates the day when he and all other saints shall receive their glorified bodies. He is happy in the knowledge of a preparation for heaven. He is conscious of a willingness to move out of this body and to be present with the Lord.

Most men dislike any reference to death and the grave, because they are not prepared for such an event. But Paul was ready for it because he was prepared. And he knew by whom the work of preparation had been performed. Listen to him as he says: "Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us

the earnest of the Spirit." So our subject is preparation for heaven, and we will divide it into three portions--The work of preparation; the author of preparation; and the earnest or firstfruits of the heavenly inheritance.



THE WORK OF PREPARATION

1. The necessity of preparation. The sinner needs something done for him before he is ready for heaven. Men are naturally unfit for heaven. They have no right to a place there. When a man dies, it is often we hear people say, "I hope he was prepared." Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. People cannot move from earth to heaven as they would move from one state

Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned

Nursery Provided

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Lexington, Ky. 40505

to another. There are certain terms of entrance into heaven, and these terms must be met.

2. The nature of preparation. This is twofold: something must be done for us and something must be done in us. Something must be done for us because we are debtors to God's law, and the debt must be liquidated. God will have nobody in heaven who is in debt to His justice. Justice would have to build a fire under him in heaven. He could have no fellowship with the saint. He could not learn their song, for they sing of redemption wrought by the blood of Christ. Man by nature is a condemned criminal, and God will have no condemned criminals in heaven. Now Christ did the work for us that entitles us to a home in glory. He paid our sin debt, and in heaven justice will be our friend.

Something must also be done in us before we are prepared for heaven. We are not only guilty by nature and practice, we are also defiled and soiled by sin. Our natures are ruined. We are spiritual corpses and smell bad to the holiness of God. The holy angels would shun us for fear of becoming defiled. Moreover, we are all worldly by nature. We mind earthly things. There would be nothing in heaven to satisfy our sordid earthly desires.

3. The time of preparation. It must be on this side of death. Paul speaks of a preparation already made for him, and he was still alive. There is not the slightest intimation in the Word of God that any soul dying in unbelief will afterwards be converted. The Holy Spirit is not in the unseen world of hades converting departed spirits to God; He is in the world, convicting and regenerating sinners who are in the body. Preparation for heaven must be made before we die. This is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time.

How strange that men put off all thoughts of being prepared to die. They make preparation for other things and forget the preparation for the one thing that is vitally important. Men prepare for their meetings with one another but forget to prepare to meet God. There is the story of Archaeus, the Grecian despot, who was going to a feast, and on the way a messenger brought him a letter, and urged him to read it. It contained news of a conspiracy to murder him at the feast. As the messenger warned him that it contained serious matters, Archaeus thrust the letter into his pocket, saying, "Serious matters tomorrow; feasting tonight." That night the dagger reached his heart while he had in his pocket the warning which if he had heeded would have saved him from the peril. Alas! Too many men say, "Serious things tomorrow."

THE AUTHOR OF PREPARATION

"He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God." It is God who fits men for heaven. Does someone reply that if God fits men for heaven, then it is no concern of mine. But wait! God does not fit men for heaven as a sculptor fits a piece of marble for a place in the museum or art gallery. In fitting a sinner for

heaven, God is dealing with self-conscious life and, therefore, the sinner does feel concerned. In this work of preparation, the sinner receives a new heart and a sound mind. He is filled with grief over his sinful life and turns his eyes to Christ as Saviour and Lord.

God must be the author of preparation for heaven:

1. Because the kind of place heaven is. It is a holy place where the citizens never get tired of the worship and service of God. The Bible throws no light on our activity in heaven other than that we will praise and worship and serve God. It is a place where God's will is voluntarily and gladly and continually done. Christ taught His disciples to pray that God's will might be done on earth as in heaven. The lost man never does anything that pleases God. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and the lost man has no faith. Men by nature are not prepared for the work and activity of heaven. God must make men holy for such a holy place and for such holy activity.

2. Because the kind of people that go to heaven. To go to heaven a man must have a new heart--a heart that can love God. Can man make himself a new heart? Spurgeon says if a man thinks he can make a new heart, let him go first and make a fly. The impossibility of self-preparation for heaven is emphasized by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 13:23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The skin of the Negro and the spots of the leopard belong to their nature--they are bred in them. Sin is something that is bred in us; it is as much the property of the natural man as the spot is the leopard's.

Man has the nature of sheep. A sheep can get lost but it can't find itself. It can stray away from the fold but it never wanders back. It has to be found by the shepherd. Jesus is represented as the good Shepherd who seeks His sheep until He finds it.

"Jesus sought me when a stranger
Wandering from the fold of God."

3. Because of the work that has to be done in fitting us for heaven. It is a creation. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). Whatever man may do, he cannot create. Creation is the alone prerogative of God.

THE EARNEST OF THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE

"Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." The word "earnest" means the firstfruits of the inheritance. Employers sometimes give during the week a part of the wages which will be due on Saturday. This is the earnest or firstfruits of what the laborer will get on pay day. The Holy Spirit is given us at the time of our conversion as a part of the blessings of heaven. He is

the firstfruits. When God prepared us for heaven, He gave us a little bit of heaven in the experience wrought in our souls by the Holy Spirit. The love of God is shed in our hearts. If you are prepared for heaven you have the Holy Spirit. And if you have the Holy Spirit, you will have certain graces in your souls.

1. The grace of repentance. You will have a hatred and a sorrow for sin; sick of sin; sick of sinful self.

2. The grace of faith. You will be satisfied with Christ; you will enjoy Christ. The love of God in Christ is shed abroad in our hearts.

3. The grace of hope. Hope is the enjoyment of heaven by anticipation. Hope is the expectation and anticipation of something that we do not yet have. I do not possess sinlessness now, but I am happy in the expectation that I will be sinless. I am not in glory now--this is my day of humiliation and shame--but I can rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

By the late C. D. Cole