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"I HAD RATHER. . ."

BY THE LATE: C. D. Cole

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psalm 84:10).

I am using this text to pinpoint one word—the word "rather". This word "rather" is found in the Bible a good many times and is used with much significance. Our rathers are a true revelation of what we are—they are a revelation of our judgment and affection. Our rathers tell of our preferences and choices. And the things we prefer and choose show the condition of our hearts.

We all have our rathers—we are continually showing our preferences and making choices. Our rathers reveal our desires and our desires cannot be counterfeited. In Psalm 27:4, David says, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

And in our text David says that he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. The margin reads, "I would rather sit at the threshold of the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." This rather shows David's love for God and hatred of evil. We have here a comparison of places: God's house and tents of wickedness. God's house was permanent; tents of wickedness were soon to be destroyed.

Here was a comparison of persons. David had rather be the person who sits on the threshold of God's house than to be the person who dwells on the inside of the tents of wickedness.

Here was a comparison of position. David had rather occupy the humble position in God's service than to be great in the eyes of the world. We are reminded of the last words of the late Alben Barkley when he said, "I would rather be a servant in the house of God than to sit in the seats of the mighty."

MOSES HAD HIS RATHERS

In Hebrews 11:24,25 we read, "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." There came a time when Moses had to make a choice. He had to take sides. He had to positionize himself with reference to the issues of his day. He had to show where his heart was. During his infancy and childhood, he could not choose for himself; he had to stay where he was put. His childhood and youth had been spent in the house of Pharaoh, the enemy of his people, and the enemy of God.

He had no choice during those days. But there came a time when he had to choose. Moses was in line for the throne of Egypt. He could choose that throne or he could choose a cross. He could choose ease and pleasure or he could choose

suffering. He could choose plenty or poverty. Yes, Moses had his rather—he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Moses took the long look by faith and saw that to bear reproach and suffering for the sake of Christ, the coming Messiah, was greater wealth than all the treasures of Egypt.

PAUL HAD HIS RATHERS

Now let us consider some of Paul's rathers. In the early church at Corinth the gift of tongues—the Spirit given ability to speak in a language without having to learn it by study—was preferred by many. With this gift, they could appear to be great and important. Those who sought this gift were selfish—they were putting self before the good of others. But Paul said, "Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (I Cor. 14:19). This raises the question for each of us: What kind of place do I want in my church? a position of honor or a place of service?

The truth as it is in Christ was precious to Paul. He had spent so many years in darkness and when the light of truth did finally shine in his heart, he wanted others to know it. Paul was a great teacher. He had rather be a teacher of God's word than to be an orator. He couldn't speak fluently, but he could speak plainly and truthfully the gospel of Christ. He would have been a flop as a 20th Century after-dinner speaker, but he was tops in instructing men in the once delivered faith. And he exhorted Timothy to preach the word in season and out of season. He could say at the end of his eventful life, that he had fought a good fight, and he had guarded the faith, and was ready for his departure.

Paul had another rather. He had a thorn in the flesh, whatever that was, and he wanted it removed. It might have been cataracts on his eyes; nobody knows for certain. He prayed three times for God to remove it. But God refused to do so and told him of something better: the sufficiency of His grace, and that His strength and power would be made perfect in Paul's weakness. Then Paul became beautifully reconciled to God's will, and said, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ might rest upon me." And he continues by saying, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." It is only when we consciously are weak in ourselves, that we can be strong in Christ. In a letter to Timothy, Paul said, "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."

Paul was not a whiner and grumbler. He did not feel sorry for himself. He was glad to be weak and despised if only the power of Christ could work through him.

Paul had still another rather. In writing to Timothy, he says that he is hard pressed between two choices. For his own sake he'd rather depart and be with Christ, but for the sake of others, he was willing to remain on earth. And writing about the glorious portion of believers in the presence of Christ, he says, "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8). A certain poet has put it like this:

"When all my labours and trials are o'er,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,
Will thru the ages be glory for me."

"When by the gift of His infinite grace
I am accorded in heaven a place,
Just to be there and look on His face
Will thru the ages be glory for me."

"Friends will be there I have loved long ago;
Joy like a river around me will flow;
Yet just a smile from my Saviour, I know,
Will thru the ages be glory for me."

Now the unregenerate of Christ's day had their rathers. When Pilate gave the people the opportunity to choose between the sinless Christ and the wicked Barabbas, the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them, and crucify Jesus. Their rather revealed their ignorance. Had they known who Jesus was, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And their rather also revealed their hatred. How great was their hatred of Jesus to have chosen Barabbas for release rather than Jesus!

And the unregenerate of our day have their rathers. They'd rather reject Jesus than accept Him. They'd rather have their own way of salvation than God's way of salvation through faith in His Son. They'd rather have their own filthy rags of self-righteousness than the spotless robe of Christ's imputed righteousness. They'd rather have their own way of life than God's way. And many had rather ignore God than confess their sins and trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

All of us have our rathers. And these rathers show us up; they are a true revelation of our true selves. These rathers are like the index to a book. Just as the index shows what is in the book, so do our rathers show what is in our hearts. What had we rather do on the Lord's Day? Obey Him in seeking and finding fellowship with His people in His house, or substitute our own plan and way for His command?

What had we rather do on prayer meeting night? Come to prayer meeting to pray with and for one another, or take it easy at home, or find fellowship with the world—with those who hate God? If I had rather be with the world than with God's people, then I must belong to the world, for the world loves its own. My friends, there is a vast difference between God's born again people and the world. And this difference has its seat in the desires. God's people hunger and thirst after practical and personal righteousness and long to be perfectly whole.

And now I shall close with some verses of song I learned in Canada—a hymn I have never heard sung in America:

“I am not skilled to understand what God hath willed, what God hath planned;
I only know at His right hand is One Who is my Saviour!”

“I take Him at His word indeed: “Christ died for sinners”—this I read;
For in my heart I find a need of Him to be my Saviour!”

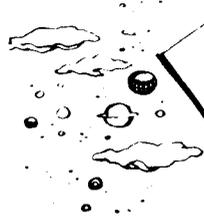
“That He should leave His place on high,
And come for sinful men to die,
You count it strange?—so once did I,
Before I knew my Saviour!”

“And oh, that He fulfilled may see
The travail of His soul in me,
And with His work contented be,
As I with my dear Saviour!”

“Yea, living, dying, let me bring my strength,
my solace from this spring—
That He Who lives to be my King once died
to be my Saviour!”



WHERE
WILL
YOU
SPEND
ETERNITY ?



PRINTING MINISTRY . . .

The Bryan Station Baptist Church began its printing ministry around 1968. Brother C. D. Cole, Morton's Gap, Kentucky, who was a great writer and preacher of God's Word, gave our church permission to print his books and any of his great materials at that time. We also began our church paper, the "Pioneer Baptist" which contained a message by Brother Cole each month.

Since that time, the Lord has tremendously blessed our printing ministry. We have had a full-time printer for the last four years who is kept busy printing gospel literature and books which we feel have been and will continue to be a great help to God's people.

All of the tracts which we print are given away without charge. A great many of our books have been shipped overseas without cost to those who are not able to purchase them. We are presently printing the same message contained in our "Pioneer Baptist" for several other churches under their own church name. This is done for some of the smaller churches without charge; some of the other churches pay for the cost of materials only. Any church that would like to have this message printed under your own church name, please contact us. It will be printed at our cost. Again, the purpose of our printing ministry is to spread the truth throughout the world.

YOU CAN HELP!

May the Lord burden your hearts to help us carry on this ministry. Our printing ministry is growing. We started on a small scale, but we now need to expand. We need larger equipment. If you know of a larger offset press or an electric cutter, please let us know. Also, if you would like to send a contribution for the printing ministry, we will be eternally grateful. There is no limit to where we can go with this ministry with your help. **WE CERTAINLY NEED THE TRUTH PRINTED TODAY.** Any information or help will be used for the spread of the Gospel throughout the world.

May the Lord bless as we endeavor to go forth in this ministry for His sake.

Al Gormley, Pastor

