

The great man is the man who is little enough to let God be great.

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"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."—Isaiah 8:20.

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The Importance Of Church Membership

By ROY MASON
Tampa, Florida

Some people place too great stress on church membership, and some others place too little. Some really depend on church membership for salvation, and others who claim to be Christians never take membership with any church. Both are wrong.

Second in importance to salvation is church membership. It is not only important that a Christian be a church member, but likewise that he be a member of a true, Scriptural church.

WHY SHOULD A SAVED PERSON BE A CHURCH MEMBER?

Because Christ Expects it. When He commanded (Matt. 28) that believers be baptized, that involved church membership, for when one is truly baptized, he is baptized into a local

church. This is made plain in Acts 2:41, 47.

Because of the example of New Testament Christians. Read the story of New Testament



ROY MASON

conversions, and you will find that they immediately followed Christ in baptism and church membership. It was so on Pentecost. It was so wherever Paul preached, for churches

sprang up everywhere. People of New Testament times did not turn to Christ, then refuse to be baptized and to have fellowship with a church.

Because the nurture and development of Christians depends largely upon church membership. When people do not associate themselves with a church, it is seldom that they learn much about the Scriptures or develop in the Christian life. It isn't enough to merely have spiritual life—there should be growth. (See 2 Peter 3:18).

Because churches have kept alive the gospel through the centuries. Had churches been entirely blotted out, the gospel would have ceased to be preached, and all of us would be lost in our sins. Jesus knew this, so he promised that the institution which he designated "my church" would never be (Continued on Page Three)

Christ for every crisis

COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. MATTHEW 11:28. CAST THY BURDENS UPON THE LORD AND HE SHALL SUSTAIN THEE. PSALM 55:22.

Is Anyone Hungry -- Where To Eat?

"And if any man hunger, let him eat at home."—I Cor 11:34.

Hunger is the normal daily experience of mankind. The Lord not only puts His stamp of approval upon it, but provides for its satisfaction in His children—and even in the lives of those who are not His children. However, He is also interested in having that eating done in the right PLACE.

It is obvious that the Corinthian Christians had turned

SAINTS ARE SECURE BECAUSE PRESERVED

"Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever." (Psa. 12:7). "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil and do good; and dwell forever more. For the Lord loveth judgment and forsake not His saints; they are preserved forever; but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off." (Ps. 37:23-28).

"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." (Psa. 97:10). "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that called you, who also will do it." (I Thes. 5:23, 24.)

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the Lord's Supper into an excuse for eating and drinking after the manner of the heathen. Against this practice the Holy Spirit lashes out in no uncertain terms. "If any man hunger, let him eat at home."

If this passage means what some people try to make us believe it means, then the Holy Spirit would have said, "If any man hunger, let him eat in church at some other time than at the Lord's Supper. The emphasis would have been upon the TIME rather than upon the PLACE.

Obviously the purpose of the Lord's Supper is not to satisfy the hunger but to commemorate the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people. In turning it into a feast they were contradicting its significance, making it minister to their flesh

instead of to their spiritual natures. It would have been very easy for the Holy Spirit to have pointed out the fine distinction between the two, could have indicated that, while there was nothing wrong in eating in church, that the Lord's Supper and eating for the satisfaction of the flesh should be kept separate and distinct, should be observed at different times. He did not do that.

Instead He indicated that hungry people should eat at home, not in the church. All of which has a special significance when we consider that a great many of their meetings for worship in those days were held in the homes of the worshippers. This raises a fine point as to when is a home a church and when is it just a home. Any born again believer

knows the distinction. A home is a church when people meet there in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and for the purpose of worshipping Him there. It ceases to be a church and is a home again when the meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus is over. In the case of people who had the meeting in their home, it would be a church while others met with them there in the name of the Lord Jesus. It would be a home after the meeting was over.

Suppose a case where a number of people have met in a home for a service in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have come from a goodly distance away. As a consequence the people in whose home the service is being held have made plans to serve them supper after the service. In those days

there were few restaurants in most places and probably not any in the small towns. It would be a case of taking care of their physical needs before they began the long journey back home. Where would we get our distinction at this point? The answer is that as long as they were meeting for worship of the Lord Jesus Christ their home would be a church. When the meeting was over, it would (Continued on Page Three)

OUR SECURITY BASED ON CHRIST'S WORD

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23). Christ will say to the lost, "I never knew you." Yet the Scriptures emphatically declare that He intimately knows each believer: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." (II Tim. 2:19). Since the believer is known of Christ, if one should be lost, Christ would be proven a liar (I speak reverently) at the judgment, as there He will say to the damned, "I never knew you." Either we have eternal life when saved, or else Christ will tell a falsehood at the judgment!

The First Baptist Pulpit

"An Exposition Of The Book Of Daniel"

(Read Daniel 6)

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth in thee."—Isaiah 26:3.

I am sure that the life of no individual who is mentioned in all the Scriptures illustrates this text quite as well as the life of Daniel. Surely if ever a man were tested with adverse circumstances without and problems within, and yet maintained the peace of God at all times, it was this man Daniel.

If you will note carefully the

chapters which we have studied thus far in Daniel, you will find in practically every one of those chapters, Daniel faced a problem. Yet, God kept him in the problem and God preserved him in the problem for God's own glory.

At the time of which I have read, Daniel was not an unknown man. He had served through the reigns of two preceding kings and with each of these kings Daniel had amply illustrated the truth of this text—"Thou wilt keep him in per-

fect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

By way of history, it might be interesting to notice that when Babylon, which had been a world-wide empire, fell, Media-Persia became the dominant empire of the world. Whereas Babylon had been controlling the world, now the world politically is controlled by Media-Persia. Darius was the king of the combined empire of the Medes and Persians, and Daniel, who had (Continued on Page Two)

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"An Exposition Of The Book Of Daniel"

(Continued from page one)

been blessed by being used by the two previous kings of Babylon, is now blessed again by being elevated to the position that would roughly correspond to the Secretary of State under Darius.

The Word of God tells us how that Daniel appointed 120 princes over his kingdom so that each of these 120 had a particular province or county to look after, and these 120 gave their reports to three presidents, and the top man of those three presidents was Daniel, so that Daniel actually controlled the entire affairs of the whole land over which Darius was king.

There just wasn't any opportunity for financial chicanery, there wasn't any opportunity for graft, there wasn't any opportunity for governmental corruption with Daniel as Secretary of State. All the reports were made by the princes unto the presidents, and the presidents, in turn, headed up by Daniel, so that Daniel had the opportunity of feeling the pulse of the nation in every particular. Accordingly, Daniel, as a man of God, saw to it that those rulers under him by way of presidents and princes, walked the chalk-line and did not allow corruption and dishonesty in the government.

You can naturally imagine that Daniel was not loved any too much by those presidents and princes. What's the use of a man having a governmental office if he can't get his hand in governmental pie? What's the use in an individual having an office if he doesn't get an opportunity to do a little graft on the side? What's the use in him becoming a political leader if he isn't going to be allowed this privilege of at least a small amount of graft? Therefore, when Daniel insisted that these presidents and princes do the right thing in the government, immediately these individuals began to seek a way they would be able to get rid of Daniel. They realized that he was the man who was standing between them and financial success. Accordingly, they began to see if they could find a way for the disposal of Daniel. The farther they looked, the more non-plussed they became, for as they observed Daniel, they found him nonchalant, they found him standing out with spotless morality and with an integrity that could not be shaken. They found Daniel doing the things that would please both God and king, and finally, these 122 princes and presidents agreed among themselves that the only way they could find anything contrary to Daniel was to find it in the way in which he served his God.

They went to the king, thinking they had the shrewdest, most subtle scheme in the world in order to get rid of Daniel. They said, "Oh, King Darius, we are asking you to make a law that if anybody prays or asks a request of any god or any individual for 30 days except you, that he be thrown into the lion's den." The king, not knowing that the law was aimed at his Secretary of State, passed the law, signed the law, and when it became the law of the Medes and Persians, it meant it was a law that could not be changed even by his royal veto.

Can you imagine that scene? All connection between a throne of grace and helpless, hungry, thirsty, dying men was shut off for 30 days time. What a spectacle! For a whole month, youth was helpless before temptation. For a whole month, widows and orphans were at the mercy of their oppressors without appeal. For a whole month, property was at the mercy of the thief. Worse than all else, for a whole month dying sinners in the land of the Medes and Persians must die in their sins, unable to call upon God for mercy. By royal edict it became a law that nobody could pray in the land of the Medes and Persians for thirty days.

But, beloved, there are some people who respect the laws of God more than they respect the laws of men. Daniel was one of those individuals. He knew that God had said to pray. He knew that God had told the Jews, when they were yet living in Palestine, if ever you are taken captive in a far away land, set your face toward Jerusalem and pray, looking toward Jerusalem, and God will hear your prayer. Knowing that, three times a day Daniel went on his knees before an open window that faced toward Jerusalem, and three times a day, with clasped hands, with upturned eyes and with uplifted heart, Daniel called upon God and asked God to take the Jews out of the land of the Medes and Persians back to Palestine.

When the plotters saw Daniel on his knees, they were sure then that they had succeeded. They knew they had won the day. But wait, beloved, sometimes God upsets even the plans of the plotters. They went to the king and demanded that Daniel be cast into the lion's den. Though the king labored all that day to find a loophole in the law, when sundown came, the law had to be put into effect, and the king personally took Daniel to the lion's den, and said to him, "Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will take care of you." I don't know whether he believed it or not, but it sounds as though old King Darius had observed enough of Daniel's religion that he had a conviction that Daniel's God could stand by him.

All that night Darius fasted and prayed. He didn't allow any music to be played softly while his meal was served. He didn't allow the usual festivities of the palace to be carried out that evening, but instead, he fasted and prayed. He looked to God, hoping that perhaps Daniel might survive the night in the lion's den.

When the morning came, Darius rushed out to the lion's den and looked in and said, "Oh, Daniel, is thy God whom thou servest continually — has that God taken care of you?" I expect the most gladsome note that ever fell upon the ears of that old king was the voice of Daniel when he answered back and said, "Oh, king, live forever." He said, "My God sent His angel who shut the mouths of the lions and I have spent a night as pleasantly here as if

I had slept in your palace."

The Word of God tells us they lifted Daniel out of that lion's den immediately and when he is brought out, the accusers—the 122 princes and presidents, are dropped down in the place where Daniel was, and those lions that walked harmlessly around Daniel the night before, broke the bones of those envious, corrupt politicians before they even got to the bottom of the pit.

From that simple Scripture story, let me give you a few lessons that are just as simple, but so precious to the believing child of God.

I

LET'S NOTICE THE CHARACTER OF THIS MAN DANIEL. He was a long way from home. There is an old adage, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," and the majority of people live accordingly. Lots of folk might shun to do wrong here that might think it perfectly permissible to do wrong 500 miles away, with far less compunction of conscience than here. Not so with Daniel. It didn't make any difference if Daniel were far removed from home, Daniel did what he knew God wanted him to do just the same as if he had been walking the streets of Jerusalem.

Here's a man who is nearly 90 years old. He isn't a boy now. He was a boy in the first chapter of Daniel when they put him in the king's college and he pushed away from the wine and pork and said, "I will not eat this pork and I'll not drink this wine for it is contrary to the teachings of my God." He was just a boy then, but he learned how to say "no" then to temptation. Thus, it was easier to say "no" to temptation when it came later on. Now he is 90 years old, and you would more or less expect a man when he gets 90 years old, not to be as strong as when he was young. Most individuals, when they get into elderly years, come to the place they will compromise just a little and they will swerve from their former position. Many times I have noticed that even on the part of preachers.

Look at Daniel who is now 90 years of age. He has been honored by three kings. He served under Nebuchadnezzar, he served under Belshazzar, and now he is serving under Darius. You just naturally would not expect a man who has served as Secretary of State under three kings, to go against his own government and defy the edicts of the king. You wouldn't expect that of the ordinary man—but remember, Daniel was not an ordinary being. Look at him: The Word of God says they couldn't find any fault in him except in the way in which he served his God. Here are 122 men who have their eyes riveted on Daniel every day, looking at him, trying to find some flaw, hoping to find some fault, endeavoring to find something whereby they can accuse him. After they have watched him for days and weeks and, doubtlessly, for months, they come together, and it is the concensus of their united opinion that there is nothing they can find wrong with Daniel, and if they are going to get anything on him, it will have to be in the way in which he serves his God.

Beloved, wouldn't it be a glorious thing if you and I and every member of this church might so live that the world could not say anything against us except the way in which we serve God? Wouldn't it be a glorious thing if all the Baptists in the world were to live, from this hour on, in such a way that the world could not find anything wrong with us except the way in which we serve God? I tell you, beloved, you would have the human foundation for the most glorious revival that would be far-reaching and far-sweeping in its effects, if Baptist people, or even the people of this town could look upon us and say concerning us that there is nothing wrong with us except the way whereby we serve God.

Look at this man Daniel and observe his character. Here's a man who loved the Bible. How do I know he loved it? It doesn't say, one word in this passage of Scripture about Daniel reading the Bible, but it tells us that he prayed with his face toward

Jerusalem three times a day looking toward Jerusalem. How did Daniel come to do that? Listen:

"Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness: And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee, toward the land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they have compassion on them."—I Kings 8:47-50.

What does it say? Solomon built the temple, and he was praying the dedicatory prayer, he uttered the words which I have just read to you, whenever the time might come that they were carried captive into some foreign land, let the people of God turn their face toward that city and toward the temple and pray, looking in that direction, "Oh, God, hear their prayer and give them compassion, give them favor in the land of their enemies and cause their enemies to be compassionate toward them." Daniel knew that was in the Word of God and he went on his knees to pray. Why? Because he loved God's Word. Here's a man who loved the Word of God more than he feared the word of the king. He loved God's Word to such an extent it made no difference what the king said—he prayed.

Daniel was a man of backbone. I tell you, he is the kind of preacher I like. He is a kind of layman I like, I have often tried to imagine what they put him down into the lion's den, that the first mangy lion came out and looked him over, walked all around him, sized him up from every angle and every direction, and I think that old lion must have shook his head and walked back and said to the rest of the lions, "No use boys, not a sandwich on him, he is all backbone." Listen, beloved, Daniel was a man of backbone.

He didn't care for the king, he didn't care for the president, he didn't care for the prince. It didn't make a bit of difference to him what any of the crowd said or did, his concern was the Word of God. It takes a man of backbone and courage to stand up for the things of God.

II

NOTICE, DANIEL PUT DOWN INTO THAT LION'S DEN. You have seen his character, now look as they put him down into the lion's den. God took care of him.

I am contending tonight, beloved, there are many lions that stalk your path and mine today just like the actual lions Daniel had to face. God took care of Daniel. What a blessing it is to read this story, and what a wonderful blessing it is to see Daniel walking around the lion's den, how God did take care of him!

Let me say to you tonight (Continued on Page Three)

OUR HOPE

A shout!
A trumpet note!
A Glorious Presence in the azure sky!
A gasp,
A thrill of joy
And we are with Him in the twinkling of an eye!

A glance,
An upward look,
Caught up to be with Christ forevermore!
The dead alive!
The living glorified!
Fulfilled are all His promises that came before!

His face!
His joy supreme!
Our souls find rapture only at His feet!
Blameless!
Without a spot!
We enter into heaven's joy complete!

Strike harp,
Oh, sound His praise...
We know Him as we never knew before!
God's love!
God's matchless grace!
'Twill take eternity to tell while we adore!

"An Ex Book (Continued beloved, woman wh God will t Individual ju He took c it down to been som be some leave thi lions of i and lions confront day. Daniel v midist of th God took the words sing— There's n never Never a t moan; Never a c Never a d Moment b of H Don't tel keep His e lion's den! Look care God who is the sam upon me take care o NOTICE EIGHTY Sc r i p are isn' that exalts to be a s than this I that shut ions? Da hath shut ions." I what Dan slept in pe tion for a foot-war harm Dan God had s want to te sovereign t That san a prophet k out to a br was going Every day et in a tim held back caused the and give it is a sover Go back and you v of those eighty of C I can't h ture him h I tell you God we s reign, H lions, He c and below the waters could separ Jordan Riv thing our God is sove ent in His NOTICE PAID DAN He didn't comfort th the compa next morn letter and everybody especially If Daniel l the Lord t stood up f that letter gone out. way of m day than H years per king wrote body to r God of Da all other g I tell yo be true to for you to

"An Exposition Of The Book Of Daniel"

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beloved, concerning the man or woman who is God's servant, God will take care of that individual just exactly the way He took care of Daniel. Mark it down tonight, if there hasn't been some lions cross your path thus far in life, there will be some cross it before you leave this world. There are lions of jealousy, lions of envy, and lions of compromise that confront God's people every day.

Daniel walked around in the midst of those lions unhurt, for God took care of him. I like the words of that song we sing—

"There's never a heartache and never a groan,
Never a teardrop and never a moan;

Never a danger, but there on His throne,
Moment by moment He thinks of His own."

Don't tell me that God didn't keep His eye on Daniel in that lion's den! God saw him and took care of him. The same God who took care of Daniel, is the same God looking down upon me tonight, and He can take care of us.

III

NOTICE, THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD. Of all the Scriptures in the Bible, there isn't any Scripture that exalts God and shows Him to be a sovereign Being more than this passage. Who was it that shut the mouths of those lions? Daniel said, "My God hath shut the mouths of those lions." I have no doubt but what Daniel lay down and slept in perfect peace, using one pillow for a pillow and one for a foot-warmer, and they didn't harm Daniel. Why? Because God had shut their mouths. I want to tell you that He is a sovereign God.

That same God one day sent a prophet by the name of Elijah out to a brook and told him he was going to take care of him. Every day God sent the ravens to him in a time of dearth, and instead of eating the food, God held back their appetite and caused them to bring the food and give it to Elijah. Our God is a sovereign God.

Go back to the land of Egypt and you will find in the time of those plagues, the sovereignty of God.

I can't hold Him up, nor picture him high enough, and yet I tell you tonight, beloved, the God we serve is absolutely sovereign. He can control the lions, He can control the ravens, and beloved, he can separate the waters of the Red Sea; He could separate the waters of the Jordan River. There isn't anything our God can't do because God is sovereign and omnipotent in His power.

IV

NOTICE AGAIN — HOW IT PAID DANIEL TO BE TRUE. He didn't have a bit of discomfort the night he spent in the company of the lions. The next morning the king wrote a letter and in that letter he told everybody about Daniel, and especially about Daniel's God. If Daniel had not been true to the Lord that day and had not stood up for the things of God, that letter never would have gone out. Daniel did more by way of missionary work that day than he could have done in years personally, because the king wrote a letter urging every body to respect and honor the God of Daniel as greater than all other gods.

I tell you, it paid Daniel to be true to God, and it will pay for you to be true to Him.

NOTICE WHAT ENVY BROUGHT THOSE PRINCES AND PRESIDENTS. It was envy, greed, graft and crookedness that caused them to desire the death of Daniel in the lion's den, but the next day, they themselves received the same thing they had thought they would bring upon Daniel.

Oh, beloved, I have lived long enough in this world to see God do that same thing lots of times. I read it here in the Word of God. Pharaoh killed the boy babies back in the land of Egypt, and later Pharaoh himself was drowned in the Red Sea. He reaped just what he sowed. I read of Jacob, who, by goat skins upon the backs of his hands and the small of his neck, was able to deceive his old, nearly blind father. I read later how his boys deceived him with goat's blood.

The Italians have an adage which says, "There is nothing that goes over the devil's back but what it comes under his belly." You can mark it down tonight, beloved, that is another way of saying, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." They desired the destruction of Daniel in the lion's den, and they themselves were destroyed thereby.

I believe it, beloved, because it is here in God's Word, and I believe it because I have seen it come true time and time again. It is rather interesting to me today to take an hour or so off once in a while and take a walk in the cemetery. I can tell you of some individuals, beloved, who have plotted the destruction of the life and the ministerial experience of this preacher. It is interesting to go out in the cemetery and look at their tombstones and count them one by one.

Listen, beloved, I am glad tonight that I serve a God like Daniel served. I am glad I serve a God who can take care of His own just like He took care of Daniel.

VI

NOTICE ONE THING ELSE. The old king, when they came to him and asked him to pass the law that nobody was to pray to any god except to him for thirty days, he passed the law and then took his signet ring and sealed it and said by that seal, "It can't be broken. This is the law of the Medes and Persians and it can't be altered, even by my royal veto. I seal it and that makes it final."

The day the Lord Jesus Christ saved you and saved me, He not only saved us, but He sealed us. Do you want to know how it is that I know when a man is saved once, he is saved forever? I'll tell you why: Because the law of God is just as unalterable as the Medes and Persians, and a thousand times more so. Listen to it:

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are SEALED unto the day of redemption."—Eph. 4:30.

When the law of the Medes and Persians was passed and sealed, it was unalterable. When the Holy Spirit saves you, He seals you. For how long are you sealed? Until the day of redemption. I am glad that the Lord Jesus Christ didn't save me and turn me loose and say, "All right, it is up to you to get home." If He had, I never would get there. If He had saved me and said, "All right, old boy, it is your business from now on in. I have done for you what I could, and now it is up to you,"—I never would have made it. I thank God tonight that when God saves a man, He seals him and that seal



of God is even more unalterable and unchangeable than the law of the Medes and Persians.

Let me ask you a question: Have you been saved and sealed? If you are a saved man tonight, you are a sealed man. Have you been saved? If so, thank God for the fact that you are not only saved, but sealed and safe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you are not saved, there is just one way of salvation. Long ago the Philippian jailer said, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." There aren't a dozen ways, there aren't two ways—there is just one way of salvation and that is by faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. May it please God to save you and add you to this body tonight.

Church Membership

(Continued from page one)
put out of business during this age. (See Matt. 16:18).

Because the church (considered as an institution) is precious to Christ. (See Ephes. 5:25) If Christ loved and gave Himself for the church, can any true believer be indifferent concerning it?

Because Christ left his affairs in the hands of the church that he begun. The Great Commission stated in Matt. 28 makes clear that Jesus addressed those disciples—not as individuals—but in "corporate capacity" as constituting an organized group that would be perpetuated unto the end of the age. He promised "I am with you always . . ." He could not be with something

that ceased to exist. Jesus never committed his work to any institution save the one that He started. No club, lodge, or organization of any kind, save the church, has any commission from Christ. And remember—no so-called church that was started by men this side of Jesus, has any divine commission.

Because nearly all conversions are brought about through the influence and work of churches. Question almost any one you please, and you will find that they were saved through the activity of some church. If in connection with a revival meeting—that meeting was sponsored by some church. If under the ministry of some preacher—that preacher was ordained by some church. With all their imperfections, churches are directly or indirectly responsible for the conversion of perhaps 99 per cent of those who are saved.

Because every Christian needs the fellowship and encouragement furnished by a good church. Association with those who have a like faith, like ambitions, similar outlook, and same hopes, cannot fail to help and encourage in the Christian life.

TOO MUCH MEAN CRITICISM

Churches are often bemoaned and criticized. Some of the criticism is merited, but much of it is unjust. To be sure there are counterfeit churches. To be sure there are glaring imperfections. Is it not to be expected that Satan would counterfeit and hinder? Some of the biggest critics of churches are persons who know little about

them through personal experience.

Say what you please, it remains true that every Christian should seek membership in a good, Scriptural church, then should seek to serve in a way that will make that church to function as Christ purposes that it should do.

Is Anyone Hungry

(Continued from Page One)
cease to be a church and would become a home again, a home that extended to the same people the hospitality that is commanded in the Bible. That is the only interpretation possible in the light of our text. Suppose we apply the same interpretation to the suppering that is going on in most churches. While the people are met together for worship it is a church. When they meet together for suppering they have changed it into a home for the entertainment of guests.

Let's look at the thing from this angle for a moment. Is there any necessity for feeding the people in the church building? Are there any circumstances that would make such a practice necessary? We can think of only one and that is community calamity that might make people homeless and in need of a large place to stay and eat such as might be provided by the church buildings. More, if a church was not equipped for cooking and feeding—(Continued on Page Four)

Preserved

(Continued from page one)
Thess. 5:23-34). "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." (II Tim. 4:18).

The saints are God's believing children. These He promises never to forsake. Since God is continually present with the believer, the believer is eternally secure with God.



Is Anyone Hungry?

(Continued from page three)
ing it is not likely that the community would ever look to them for such a thing.

In these days in which we live most worshipping is done, not in homes, but in buildings especially built for that purpose. In addition to the church building which is owned by the people of that church, these people all have homes of their own. If there is any kind of a necessity for feeding the people it can be well and scripturally done in the homes of the people of the church. There is not a word against that in the Bible and a great many in favor of it. "Given to hospitality." It strikes us that this verse was given to us especially for this day in which we live.

Someone will surely say, "While we are worshipping in our church it is a church, but when we have a supper there we turn it into our homes." Ah, no, you don't. We have seen all of the invitations that are given out at such times. "The First Baptist Church will have a fellowship supper", or "The Gleaners Class of the Trinity Presbyterian Church will have a chicken pie supper."

Mark you this; the people of the churches put on feeds and then **THEY USE THE NAME OF THE CHURCH** to attract people to it. We are not speaking of commercial suppers, but of suppers put on solely for a social time. We are not sanctioning commercial eating either, as far as that is concerned. When a church meets for worship it is a church, but when it meets for food it ceases to become such and is turned into a restaurant. "If any man hunger, let him eat at home."

There are those who will argue that the Lord Jesus ate with the people on various occasions, and that we are therefore justified in doing the same in the church. It is true that the Lord ate with the publican, with Mary and Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany, and in many other places. It is also true that He Himself fed the multitude that came to Him to hear and see the things that He did for the people. Note in every case that there was always a fine distinction between the worship and eating in which they engaged. He ate in the homes of the people. He did not try to make it into a worship service. When He fed the five thousand and the four thousand it was only because they were far from a place where they could find food. Note also that He fed them only after they had concluded the worship service. He did not give them a "snack supper" in order to get them there. On one occasion He rebuked the multitudes who had followed Him because they followed Him because they did "Eat the loaves and fishes and were filled, "which prompted a multitude to

leave Him. He did not want the food and His teaching to become confused in the minds of the people. Even if we should by some devious construction make this an argument for eating in church we would still have the plain statement to the church as handed down through the Apostle Paul, "If any man hunger, let him eat at home."

We pause to ask; Where did all this eating in the church come from anyway? Not from the Bible. We have instructions in the Bible for conducting prayer meetings and worship services, but nothing on table manners. If it was intended to be such a part of the church as it has been made, why did the Lord not give us some specific instructions. Preachers are told what to preach—the Word. Why is not the church told what to serve? There is an entire absence of any kind of instruction along this line. Why? "If any man hunger let him eat at home." We are called to "exhort" one another. Where are we called to feed one another in the church?

The plain truth about this whole thing is that the church has put on suppers and socials for the purpose of attracting people to their church meetings, and where is there anything more potent for that purpose? We know any number of people who could have been kept in given churches if they could only have been assured of a supper or social occasionally. The fact that some people may have been attracted to a given church and later saved as a consequence still does not argue that we should have such things. There is no evidence to prove that the individual in question might not have been saved anyway without the social. Also it is just possible that if the person in question had been saved without the social he might have been a far greater testimony for the Lord than he was. We are thinking just now of a baby who was born into the world. At the time of its birth the attending doctor made a mistake. The baby was crippled for life as a consequence. May it not be that we have a lot of spiritual cripples in the church, simply because of some of the means that we have used to get them into the church and into the kingdom?

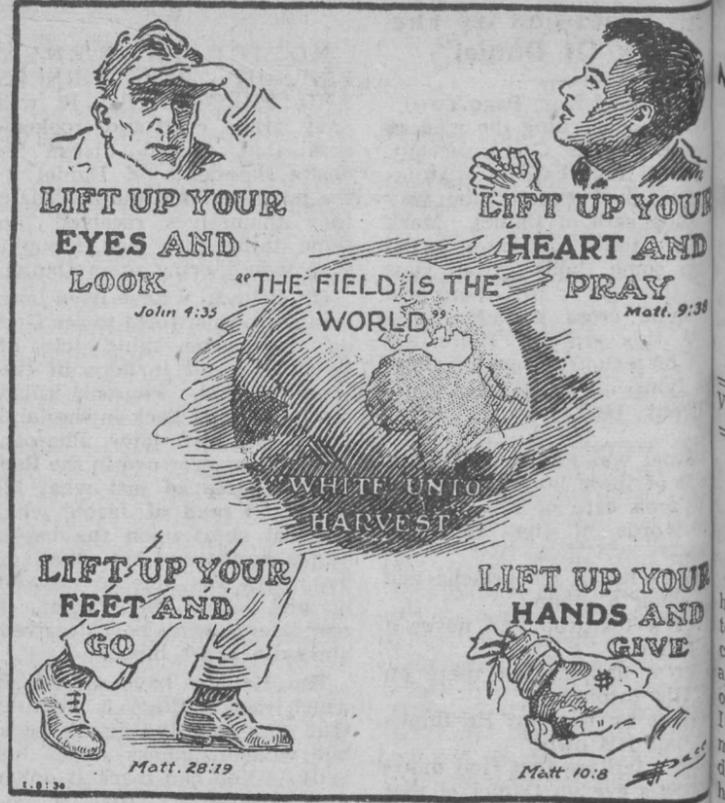
We know a farmer who, in the early days of his experience always planned to be on hand to aid in the birth of the young animals at the moment when they came into the world. Mysteriously and for no apparent reason he began to lose stock, and finally discovered that both parent and child were far more apt to survive and attain to maximum health if nature were permitted to take her unaided course. We believe the same thing is true of spiritual babies. We have held out so many inducements to sinners that when some of them have finally been saved they have been no credit to the cause of Christ for that reason.

Fundamentally this is in harmony with every tenet of the Bible. It is certainly true that we are saved, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Whether we like the idea or not some people are predestinated to be saved, and nothing can keep them from ultimately coming to the place where they will be born again. It is equally true that many others are destined to go to hell, no matter what happens. A

supper more or less is not going to win one more person to the Lord Jesus, but we believe that such measures as God does not smile upon are daily producing spiritual cripples who will never amount to anything for the Lord or for His church. Small wonder that so few of the converts of the present day church ever amount to anything for the church that gave them birth. Many of them are barely saved, yet "so as by fire."

Hardly anyone who knows anything about the Bible can deny but this is the truth—that no one will ever be saved because they were attracted to the church by a supper or social. We ask: Why have them then—if we are interested in serving the Lord Jesus Christ? We know the answer to that too, and it is one that most Fundamentalist ministers will not admit even though it is true. Actually they want to get in a lot of the devil's children in order to make up a crowd for themselves to preach to. They will not drop the suppering because it will drive so many people away.

Let's take it from there and point out how foolish it is even from such an angle. Is it true that it does attract people to the PREACHING services of the church? The answer is an emphatic "NO." It attracts them to the suppering services, but not the preaching services. In a previous pastorate our Men's Bible Class made it an annual practice to put on a "Father and Son Banquet." It was a huge affair, so big that it was necessary to limit the number of tickets sold to one hundred because our accommodations for that sort of thing were limited. We had one such meeting on a Thursday evening, and were assembling for the Sunday School hour. It was nearly time for the meeting to begin and we looked around at the pew where the Men's Class usually gathered. There were just three of us there, including the teacher (myself.) Present was one man who was a prime mover in the Father and Son arrangement. It was my moment. I leaned over and asked, "Where are all the men that were out to the banquet on Thursday?" He only smiled. There was no answer that he could make that would make sense. We might add that we usually had much more than three in that Bible class, but here we were on the Sunday following the banquet, at a time when the church had been forcibly imposed upon the minds of a good many men who never came into the church on other occasions. The church was



fresh in their minds if it ever was going to be—yet they were not there. "Is any man hungry, let him eat at home."

Our interest in this matter is not with the Modernists. They don't know any better than make suppering their mainstay. It's all they have to attract the people to the churches with. Having induced them to attend for such a purpose, they seem to feel that that is all that is necessary. No. We are thinking of the many who call themselves by the name of Fundamentalist, many of whom are contending earnestly for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints. A vast majority of them make suppering the main plank in their church platform. It is true that if they dropped this element from their church life they would lose a large share of their crowd. But are they following the Word or the world? They profess to follow the Word and they can quote verse and chapter against entangling alliances and we respect them for that. Why not start quoting some Scripture about imitating the people from whom they have withdrawn themselves. That would be consistent.

Admitting that some people can be attracted to a church program by the inclusion of the suppering program; what kind of people will they be? If a man only comes to church when he can get something into his stomach and is cold toward a meeting that concerns itself only with the Bible, what kind of a man is he? "Whose god is their belly, who mind earthly things." We pointed out a few words back that these things do not attract people to the worship services as a general thing. It is a good thing that they don't. If they get into the worship services and then into the membership of the church, we are in worse shape than as though they didn't. The truth is that these kind of men have gotten into positions in the church and it is for this reason that the church has been turned over to the world, the flesh and the devil.

What kind of people does the suppering program exalt in the church? Everyone knows the answer to that also. People who are bent on "working out their salvation, "who feel that even though they do not accept Christ as their Saviour and become born again they can still do something that will better their chances for getting into the kingdom. The lives of a good many people whom we have

seen intensively active in suppering program will bear the light of day, yet they are catered to because they are so willing to help out with their suppers. Thus the church gives them a cloak for their sin when they drop into hell because it has done so. "If any man hunger, let him eat at home."

Getting down to basic fact the suppering program does not actually help the church over a period of time. It may produce a flurry of interest for a moment. There may be a few who come into the church as a consequence, but some of the most faithful adherents to the supper program have admitted to us that they had no value and that the church would be better off without them. What have them then? Here it is folks. The suppering program is an imitation of the world. That is what the fraternal organizations do in order to get their crowd. If it was a scriptural part of the program of the church, God would have commanded us to serve them.

Now when we stop imitating the world, it begins persecuting us with renewed intensity. As long as we are going along with their program it leaves us alone. Only when we kick these imitations out do we begin to feel the full force of its animosity. This is the moment when the unsaved people who have been frequenting our church services begin to go elsewhere. It is for things for which we stand and for which we will not stand that is the heart of the whole matter. Most churches and preachers just cannot stand the stigma that comes from throwing the whole mess out, lock, stock and barrel. Well—"If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him we will also deny us." Are you going to listen to the world and to the Word? If the former suppose we look to the world for our eternal salvation and help in time of need. Get your pay where you do your work.

—The Tabernacle Trumpet

A child of God can see more on his knees than a philosopher on his tiptoes.

Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

He who does not pray when the sun shines, knows not how to pray when the clouds are

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