

What Might Have Been

How painful is the thought expressed by one of the great poets, John Greenleaf Whittier:

"For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"

Many a person has thrown away his life in drug addiction, (including alcohol). Numerous are those who have thrown away their marriages by becoming involved with others. Parents have often lost their children by neglecting them, or even granting them excessive freedom. Many are those who have thrown away a good name by some ungodly behavior. Do you not suppose that a vast majority of these later in life have shed tears of bitter remorse as they have thought of "what might have been"? It is too late, however, for all has been lost.

This bitter lament is found also in the Bible. It was expressed by the "weeping prophet," Jeremiah (8:20) as he sadly exclaimed, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." God had given His people ample time to repent and turn from their idolatrous, immoral ways. They had not shown any inclination to respond appropriately to His offers of mercy. When God was no longer willing to tolerate their wickedness, the Babylonian captivity became His means of teaching them a 70-year lesson. No doubt there were times in Babylon when they mourned and wept over "what might have been" if they had only listened to the voices of the prophets who had warned them.

Such lessons ought not to fall on deaf ears today. That individual who has stopped serving the Lord faithfully will one day realize what he has given up. It may be too late then to do anything about it. My dear wayward brother or sister, before the "harvest is past" and the "summer is ended," you ought to take advantage of a merciful God's offer of pardon by repentance, confession and prayer. Better that, by far, than to stand condemned in the judgment and have to think of "what might have been."

That individual, too, who has never obeyed the gospel should ponder seriously what hell is like (according to God's word) and submit himself to the rule of Christ in faith, repentance, confession and baptism before it is too late to do so. Far better this than to be separated eternally from God and think of "what might have been."

- by **Barney L. Keith**

Rocks in a Jar

One day an expert on the subject of time management was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration those students will likely never forget. As this man stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar.

When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes."

Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks.

He smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?"

"No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?"

One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!"

"No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

Time is precious. There never seems to be enough of it to go around to do everything we want to do, so we spend our lives making choices. It is crucial that we begin with the "big rocks",

those things of greatest importance. That's what Jesus meant when he said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

- by *Alan Smith*

Blind Faith, Indeed!

Those of us who believe in the Bible account of creation are often ridiculed for having made a 'blind leap of faith'. It is unreasonable, we are told, to believe in something that cannot be 'proved'.

The type of proof that our critics are asking for is empirical proof - - the kind obtained in a scientific laboratory where processes are repeated and observed, and where pertinent data can be recorded. Obviously, this sort of thing is unavailable when discussing creation.

But, we do have proof! Our evidence is of the same sort that is used to prove any historical event which cannot be repeated. How would you, for instance, prove that George Washington was the first president of the United States?

But, if we're really going to talk about 'blind leaps of faith', consider the folks who believe in the 'big bang' and the theory of evolution. They have no solid scientific proof, and those ideas don't even demonstrate common logic!

- by *Greg Gwin*

Visual Aids & Instrumental Music

A visitor to our services asked about our practice of using visual aids during the sermon. Specifically, it was asked why we oppose the use of instrumental music, but allow the use of a projector to display charts and graphics during the lesson.

The basic answer to this question involves distinguishing the difference between something which "aids" versus something that "adds." For example, in baking cookies the process is "aided" by use of a baking pan, a spatula and a hot pad. In fact, it will be hard to bake cookies without these "aids." But we will ruin the product if we "add" something to the list of ingredients. (Chocolate chips cookies don't taste right when pickles are in the mix!)

In the same way, we can properly use things which "aid" our worship, so long as we do not change the end result. For instance, the Lord's Supper is "aided" by the use a plate or tray on which the elements of the supper (bread and fruit of the vine) are distributed to each worshipper. This does not change the act of worship. It would be wrong, however, to add jelly to the bread, or to substitute a different drink instead of grape juice.

In the same way, we can use a "visual aid" during the preaching of a sermon. It has been repeatedly proven that people retain more of what they are taught when they both hear and see the main points of emphasis. Therefore, a printed outline or words written on a blackboard are helpful to the learning process. Similarly, a computer driven video projector is a significant "aid" in teaching God's Word. As long as the end result (teaching Biblical truth) is not changed, the use of appropriate "aids" is not wrong.

Now, what about music in worship? Some things will serve as valuable "aids." A pitch pipe or tuning fork can help the leader start the songs correctly. Song books (or the projection of the songs on a screen) definitely improve our worship by keeping us all on the same verse, singing the same words. These are simply "aids," and the end result is not altered - we sing (Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16). However, if we "add" an instrument to the mix we are doing something different. We are now "singing" and "playing," and the latter is not authorized in New Testament worship (Col. 3:17).

- by *Greg Gwin*