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HAPPY NEW YOU!

by Ted J. Clarke

As we enter a new year, wouldn't it be wonderful to start off with a **new you**? A new you for a new year. That is often what we intend when we make resolutions for a new year which we hope will make us happier and more prosperous. Some of those resolutions we might keep for a while, but most seem to quickly fade in importance. Why? Because it takes concentration, hard work and sacrifice to make real changes in our lives, and often times it does not seem as though the goal is worth the price of getting there.

SET HEAVEN AS YOUR GOAL

However, there are some goals which are worth far more than anything we could do to reach them. Heaven, for example, is the goal of all the saved. First Peter 1:4 tells us that our salvation in Christ leads us "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." In Colossians 1:5 Paul speaks of "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of truth of the gospel." There is a real sense in which we cannot save ourselves. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is impossible for anyone to earn one's salvation, in the sense of deserving it or God owing it to one. These verses are clear on that. Yet, there is another sense, just as clear, in which it is impossible for one to be saved without works. In Acts 2:40, in his great Pentecost sermon, Peter preached, "Save yourselves from this untoward (crooked) generation." The apostle Paul, who emphasizes grace so much, also said, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling**" (Philippi-

ans 2:12). James 2:24 teaches, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The only logical conclusion which one can reach is this: while we cannot work so as to obligate God to save us, God will not save us unless we strive to please him by the way that we live.

ENJOY YOUR LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN

While heaven is a worthy goal in and of itself, worthy of any effort required to attain it, some will not even try being a Christian. They reason that the rewards are too far removed, that there is no advantage to being a Christian in this life. It is all "pie in the sky in the sweet by and by." Such a limited outlook only proves that the one espousing it has never really tried living the dedicated Christian life. The apostle Paul, speaking of things which have real value in our present lives, says, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, **having the promise of the life that now is**, and of that which is to come (1 Timothy 4:8). Consider the gymnast who has hopes of winning a gold medal in the Olympics. That individual will spend several hours each day in tortuous physical exercise, enduring the denial of many things, because the goal is so important. There are additional benefits of health and fitness which arise from such training, but the Olympic Gold Medal is the real goal. Now consider the individual who becomes a Christian and dedicates his/her entire life in desire of the heavenly goal. That person may spend hours each day in study, prayer and service to God and man. Is there benefit in so doing before the goal is reached? Can one justify denying oneself all that the world has to offer that is so pleasurable, just to live the Christian life? Indeed, Paul says that there is continuing profit in this

life for all who would live as Christians.

THE VALUE OF CHRISTIAN LIVING

What profit does a person gain from daily living the Christian life? First, one has the constant knowledge of knowing that one is heaven bound, where the inheritance and hope of eternal life will become a present possession. Such peace of mind can only belong to a Christian. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Second, Jesus promised that we would be blessed (made happy) in our lives as we develop the beatitudes of his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12). The addition of the Christian graces of 2 Peter 1:5-11 provide similar blessings in that "they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Such fruit bearing glorifies God and is proof of discipleship in the Lord (John 15:1-8). Third, the Bible becomes a guide to show us the very best way to live. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path... The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:105, 130). Christ promised that by abiding in his word we can know the truth and experience a freedom that can come in no other way (John 8:31-32). Fourth, we have the promise that God is always with us. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5-6). Because of his abiding presence, "...God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). As Christians, Satan has no power over us. "Submit yourselves therefore unto God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh unto God, and he will draw nigh unto you" (James 4:7-8). "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Fifth, Christians have the promise that they are never without family and friends to help them. This is

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HAPPY NEW YOU!

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one of the major reasons God gave us the church. We are to "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ... As we therefore have opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:2, 10). Even if our faith costs us everything, Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time... and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:28-30). Sixth, there is the joy of working in this life for the next. We will lose everything of a material nature we have worked for in this life. "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:7). But Jesus promised we can "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal" (Matthew 6:19-20). Knowing that these spiritual treasures await us brings happiness in this life and encourages us to labor for the Lord, "forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Seventh, when the time of your death is upon you, you can say with confidence, along with the apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge,

shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). Besides all of these things, one who lives a Christian life avoids all of the sorrow and heartache which often attends a life of sin. One does not fear trouble from the law by living as a Christian. The sober person does not fear becoming addicted to alcohol or other drugs or doing many stupid things that ruin one's life. The sexually pure do not fear contracted sexually transmitted diseases, becoming parents out of wedlock or ruining a marriage because of unfaithfulness. On and on we could go. **Who says that there is no profit in this present life in living as a Christian?** Such a person simply does not know what it is to live as a Christian!

CONCLUSION

The best resolution which you can make for 1992 is to become a faithful Christian. Note God's plan of salvation as listed on page four of this paper. If you need to study God's word further, please call us or contact the Church of Christ nearest you. If you are an unfaithful Christian, repent of your sins and be restored to God's grace. Return to regular worship and service to God. No one will be happier to help you than the elders or preacher where you once regularly worshiped. If you want to have a really happy new year in 1992, **let God make a happy new you!**

THE ARK AND THE CHURCH

by T. Pierce Brown

Many of us have preached many sermons on such subjects as "The Ark As a Type of the Church." We need to realize that although we can properly use the ark to *illustrate* many things about the church, the fact that Peter says in I Peter 3:21, "The like figure (antitupon-Gk.) whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" does not mean that we can properly say the Bible sets forth the ark as a type of the church, but only that their salvation by water was a type of our salvation by water. The denominational quibble that it could not be a type of salvation by baptism because they were saved *from* the water by the ark, not saved *by* the water, and that they were not even touched by the water has no relevance for two reasons. First, when the Bible says a thing is a type or antitype, it is, whether or not you can

reason or quibble yourself around it. Second, the water saved them from the ungodly world as it washed that sinful world away. That is the type and antitype, not that the ark saved them **from** the flood of water. So Peter is not talking about the ark as a type of the church, but their salvation by water as a type of our salvation by water. This is not a matter of guessing or trying to find some new hermeneutic principle by which to prove a preconceived doctrine. It is a matter of taking what the Bible plainly says. It says, "They were saved by water, the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." So there are three things absolutely certain. First, they were saved by water. Second, baptism is the antitype. Third, in some fashion, baptism saves us.

But our purpose today is to understand some principles about salvation from the ark, even though we many not be using it as a type of the church. If we were claiming that the Bible teaches that it is a type of the church, we might have difficulty explaining how people were in it before the water was applied, and various other problems. It can still be used to illustrate truths that the Bible teaches in other places.

First, when God said to Noah, "Make thee an ark of gopher wood" (Gen. 6:14), there are two things of vital importance. The thing specified was an ark. Noah might have said, "I have great faith, so I will build a barn, for anyone with any reasoning knows that animals can be cared for better in a barn than an ark." He might have reasoned, as some of those I thought were brethren, are reasoning today, "I know he said gopher wood, but that is generic, meaning any kind of soft wood, so he really does not care. I will use my sanctified common sense and use the best wood available, which is oak and hickory."

There is a principle here of which we constantly need to be aware. When God specifies a thing, no other thing is acceptable. He may in his grace overlook some things as "in the times of this ignorance" (Acts 17:30), but that is for him to decide, not for you and me.

When God specifies a method, that method is authorized. Some other we may devise is not. When God specifies a time, that time is authorized. Some other time we may imagine is not satisfactory. There may be some apparent exceptions to these principles in which

God specified some particular thing, time, place or method and yet by some act or word indicated that the thing specified was not significant, but I am not aware of any. If any reader is, I would appreciate hearing of it.

These principles or "rules" are not something that we devised or imagined. They are discovered by an examination of all the examples and revelation of God on such matters. When God specified to Naaman to dip in the river Jordan, the story plainly shows that no other river was authorized.

We cannot prove by the fact that the ark had only one door that there is only one way to be saved. But we may use it to illustrate what Jesus plainly teaches in John 10. And we can use any lesson in the Old Testament to find some principle on which God deals with man, for Paul points out specifically that these things were written for our example and admonition (I Cor. 10:11).

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It isn't the things that go in one ear and out the other that hurt as much as the things that go in one ear and get all mixed up before slipping out of the mouth.

Statistics show that 10,000 people are killed by liquor to every one killed by a mad dog. Yet, we shoot the dog, but license and advertise the product.

He who is worse than a quitter is he who finishes something he should have never started in the first place.

Pick your friends - but not to pieces.

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WHY DO PEOPLE FALL OUT OF BED?

by Ron Gilbert

For the past 18 years or so I have been working with the Fall Creek Falls Summer Bible Camp near Pikeville, Tn. Each cabin has three sets of bunk beds. Every year the boys in my cabin argue over who gets to sleep on the top bunk. Most of the cabins have concrete floors. Every year at camp a child falls from the top bunk. Last year in my cabin, a boy fell out of bed and bit his lip requiring a few stitches.

Have you ever wondered why people fall out of bed? Recently, during the county-wide lectureship, Brother Odel Kirby made a simple yet profound statement during his good lessons. He answered the question, "Why do people fall out of bed?" The answer, "They stay too close to where they got in." Now think about that statement. Do you know of anyone who ever fell out of bed, who stayed in the middle of the bed? Do you know of anyone who ever fell out of bed who stayed away from the edge of the bed?

Think about this principle from a spiritual standpoint. One runs a great risk of "falling spiritually" when he remains too close to the edge or tries to stay as near as he can to where he came into the Lord. The Bible admonishes us to grow (II Peter 1:5-10). Notice verse 10, "For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." This does not teach the impossibility of apostasy. On the contrary, it tells us how to avoid falling away. I Thessalonians 5:22 says to "abstain from all appearance of evil." Who do you know who has fallen away from the Lord who had a strong faith and was growing in the Lord, living the Christian life? James 1:14-15 says, "...man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Brethren, take care lest you fall out of bed! Stay away from the edge and you are safe! (Get into the middle of every good work. - Ed.)

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Worrying about the past is like trying to squeeze toothpaste back into the tube.

Self-portraits usually are colored.

SUICIDE - CAN WE TALK?

by Ted J. Clarke

It would not be overstating the case to say that suicide (self-murder) is one of the major social problems of our day. According to reliable statistics, some 25,000 Americans will kill themselves this year. Experts estimate that an additional 50,000 deaths will be the result of unprovable suicides. What are the causes of such self-destruction? How can we help these people before they end their lives?

One of the main causes of suicide is depression which is allowed to develop into despair. Suicide **appears** to be a way of escape from the troubles of life or the fear of impending problems. Unfortunately, what **seems** to be a way of escape is a mistake with eternal consequences. Some people commit suicide because of a desire to hurt others by making them feel responsible for the death. Those who desire to inflict such pain on others end up inflicting the greatest possible injury upon themselves. The suicide victim is dead and, while the living relatives and friends may feel guilty for a while, they usually realize that they are not to blame for the suicide and adjust their lives to deal with the tragedy. In view of these things, **suicide really is not an answer to anyone's problems!**

How can we help people who are inclined toward this act of self destruction? First, help them to develop a meaningful faith in God. We must believe that God is in control and that he really cares for us, even though we sometimes suffer. Have them read the book of Job and other Bible passages such as Matthew, chapters 5-7; Romans 8:28-39; 1 Corinthians 10:13; 1 Peter 5:6, 7. Second, try to convince them that there are solutions to their problems, even if they do not see them. Tell them to put some trust in others and ask for some help and insight. Often, others such as a spouse, a close friend, a minister or professional counselor, can see answers to problems which we cannot. It is no shame to need help. Keep on searching until you find reasonable solutions. God will help you (Matthew 7:7-12).

Becoming a God-fearing, Bible-believing Christian is the best suicide preventative possible. Make yourself a part of Christ's church, a loving and caring fellowship of other Christians who have concern for you and your problems. We care and would be happy to talk with you about how you can find

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true and lasting happiness in Christ. Visit the services of the Church of Christ nearest you, or write or call today if we can help.

SACRIFICING CHILDREN

by Phil Roberts

In Ezekiel 16:20, the Lord accused the Israelites of having sacrificed their children to idols. This is only one of the many references to this abominable practice recorded in the Old Testament. And almost without exception, whenever one of these references is read in a Bible class some mother will exclaim that she just cannot see how any mother could do such a thing to her children.

Surely, we all imagine to ourselves, they must have been the worst sort of barbarians to do such!

How blind we are. For all our pious lamentations I seriously doubt there has ever been a nation of people who sacrificed more children to their idols than the people of America today.

And, I do not speak just of "un-Christian" America. In the Lord's church I have seen mothers and fathers who recoil in horror at the mention of the human sacrifices practiced by the Israelites, while at the same time they allow their own children to run straight to every altar Satan has erected in our land. Some even push them down the road faster.

Parents who encourage their children to seek popularity through immodest dress and dancing; parents who by their examples teach their children to drink, lie, curse, and break the law; parents who fail to love and discipline their children; parents who give their children everything they want; parents who are too wrapped up in their own lives even to teach their children the Bible and take them to worship God – in what respect do they differ from the Israelite parents who sacrificed children to idols?

We sacrifice them to the gods of our jobs, television, materialism, and social popularity, and then have the gall to be appalled at the practice of the Israelites. Lord, forgive us, and help us to see our folly before it is too late – before judgment comes on us, too.

To much rest is rust.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

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