

SCARCELY SAVED

BY B. G. ECHOLS

From my earliest days as a Christian I have heard men quote 1 Pet. 4:18, and then tell brethren that we are barely going to make it to heaven. "If we get there by the skin of our teeth, where will the wicked be?" Is this what Peter means? This interpretation fits neither the context nor the other writings of the apostle. Peter tells us, "Thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom" (2 Pet. 1:11). While any Christian would rejoice to be in heaven even if he barely made it, our entrance is not so described.

"For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17-18). The judgment that Peter has in mind has already begun. It denotes a severe trial. It is the testing mentioned earlier. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial among you, which cometh upon you to prove you, as though a strange thing happened unto you" (1 Pet. 4:12).

The "house of God" is the church or family of God (2:5; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 3:6). Thus a severe trial was falling on the church. Jesus had foretold such as this (Mt. 24:8, 9, 13). For Christians it will not be judgment to condemnation, yet it is a fiery trial. Believers have no cause for terror. The church is the object of God's love and care. If it suffers trial, then what doom awaits those who do not obey the gospel? Christians have God as a comfort. Those without God have nothing on which to rely. It is in this context that Peter asks, "If the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?"

The righteous are those who are seeking to do God's will. The salvation refers back to the judgment and fiery trial. Therefore it is not talking about entering heaven or of being forgiven. "Scarcely" means with great difficulty or with toil and trouble. If the righteous endure affliction with great difficulties, what will happen to the unrighteous? Many feel the salvation here contemplated was from the

destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:22). The Christians did escape with difficulty, but the Jews were annihilated. If that is not what Peter had in mind, it is an illustration and example. If God's people suffer that much, what about those who are not His?

Christians are not exempt from trials which severely try them. God allows it. Therefore, what will happen to the ungodly and sinner? The ungodly is one who does not respect God. He is a scoffer and blasphemer. He is irreligious. The sinner is one whose life is devoted to sin. The two terms describe one individual.

Peter gives the logical conclusion to what he has said throughout this epistle. "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their souls in well-doing unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19). He returns to the earlier thought, "For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing" (3:17). By "also" he adds an additional thought. To suffer according to the will of God is to suffer for righteousness sake, and even if reviled, not to revile in return. We are to learn submission. His will is our sanctification and salvation. He may, therefore, permit suffering as a test to us.

"Commit" means to put on deposit or to entrust for safe keeping. We can rely on God to guard our souls when we do His will. If we trust some men, we can trust God even more. Peter had a consistent, strong, and undenyng faith in God. That alone is our security. His message is, "Trust and obey." Our faith must maintain the fruit of holy living. In the midst of trial and persecution, do not entertain any idea that God has abandoned us. He knows what is best, and if suffering comes, it is best for us. He sees in us the strength to prevail, if we will.

Our daily prayer should be the same as the Lord's in the garden. Then we must commit our souls to Him in life and death. We need the same absolute confidence and complete submission which He exhibited on the cross. Abandoning all self-reli-

CHURCH OF CHRIST

412 East King Street Shippensburg, PA 17257

SCARCELY SAVED

..... continued from page 1

ance, trust wholly in Him, we shall suffer no lasting harm. If we refuse the shelter of His arms, we shall perish. It is not "commit" in idleness, but in well-doing (Rom. 2:7). Sorrow is no reason to stop working. Our burdens seem less when we help others with theirs. God is faithful. No one can point out any assurance of God that has failed. He Who gave the soul is its loving Guardian.



Moments of Meditation...

The Truth About Baptism

1. **Baptism is a command of Christ - Mk 16:16.**
"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."
2. **Baptism is a condition for obtaining the remission of sins - Acts 2:38.** "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. . ."
3. **Baptism is a condition of salvation - Mk 16:16.**
"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . ."
4. **Baptism saves us - 1 Pet. 3:21.** "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . ."
5. **Baptism is a condition of entering Christ where God has placed all spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3) - Gal 3:27.** "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."
6. **Baptism is a condition which must be met in order to walk in newness of life - Rom 6:4.**
"Therefore we are BURIED with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

You may have heard someone ridicule the idea of being baptized . . . but you can see from these Scriptures the place which baptism occupies in God's scheme of redemption.

CONSIDER THIS:

Wings Like A Dove

by James W. Adams

David in despair over the oppression and hate of his enemies once prayed to God: "Oh that I had wings like a dove for then would I fly away, and be at rest." (Psalm 55:6)

Elijah made the same mistake when he fled from the wrath of Jezebel. Supposing that he and he alone stood against the evils of his day, he prayed; "O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." (2 Kings 19:4)

It is not too difficult to serve God when conditions about us are favorable to such services. The real test of our faith, loyalty and devotion comes when circumstances are inimical to such service. Too many of us in the day of trouble like David and Elijah desire to have "wings like a dove that we might fly away and be at rest." There has never been a day among churches of the Lord in the memories of those now living when the cause of Christ more desperately needed true soldiers of the cross of Christ than now! Our problems, many though they may be, cannot be solved if we pine for "wings like the dove that we might fly away and be at rest." So long as the cause of Truth has an enemy, the true soldier of the cross of Christ cannot REST. Taking refuge in discouragement, defeatism and isolationism will give no man of conscience rest. The Lord provided no piece of armor for the back of the Christian soldier. (See: Ephesians 6:13-20) He contemplated no situation in which it would be proper on in harmony with his will for his soldiers to turn their back and run. Our only hope for "rest" is to rise in the strength of Israel's God and "fight the good fight of faith."

(from the Gospel Visitor)