

*To Reach
The
Heavenly Goal*



PHILIPPIANS 3:14

*I press on toward the goal
to win the prize for which God
has called me heavenward in*

Christ, Jesus

Letter and Article

Recently I received an article in the mail that my late father, Ralph D. Gage, had given to Tom Bennett. Daddy wrote a cover letter and Tom also wrote a short note to me when he sent the article. I am reproducing the two letters here. (Note: my father died in July 2005)

Tom Bennett's Note

Scott,

I thought you might want a copy of this. Your dad gave it to me about 3-4 years before his passing. I always considered it special and wondered if deep down he wanted some of the ideas in his funeral. I did use some of this material. Might make a good issue of BC.

Tom

Ralph D. Gage's Letter To Tom Bennett

This article was written in Nov. of 1968. It was written for GOSPEL TIDINGS; however, I changed my mind and wrote on another subject and never sent it in. No one went over my work in those days to correct the mistakes. I did it all myself.

When I get to feeling good about myself, that even at my age I have not lost anything, all I have to do is read this article and it humbles me and shows me exactly where I am today.

I'm sure that my days as a preacher of the gospel are numbered. It has been a wonderful, full life; however, I have made many mistakes.

be destroyed.

The woman was silent for a moment. Then she asked the silversmith, "How do you know when the silver is fully refined?"

He smiled at her and answered, "Oh, that's easy -- when I see my image in it."

If today you are feeling the heat of the fire, remember that God has His eye on you and will keep watching you until He sees His image in you. Pass this on right now. This very moment someone needs to know that God is watching over them. And whatever they're going through, they'll be a better person in the end.

"A friend is one who strengthens you with prayers, blesses you with love and encourages you with hope."

...From an email 5/6/2011



“Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Phil. 3:13-14



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Christian. DO IT IMMEDIATELY! We may find that we need to rededicate our lives to the Lord. DO IT IMMEDIATELY!

May our spiritual self-evaluation lead us to

understand more fully our needs and to do something about them while there is time and opportunity.

...Ralph D. Gage
(July 23, 1915 – July 16, 2005)

Malachi 3:3

Malachi 3:3 says: "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver."

This verse puzzled some women in a Bible Study and they wondered what this statement meant about the character and nature of God. One of the women offered to find out the process of refining silver and get back to the group at their next Bible Study.

That week the woman called a silversmith and made an appointment to watch him at work. She didn't mention anything about the reason for her interest beyond her curiosity about the process of refining silver.

As she watched the silversmith, he held a piece of silver over the fire and let it heat

up. He explained that in refining silver, one needed to hold the silver in the middle of the fire where the flames were hottest in order to burn away all the impurities.

The woman thought about God holding us in such a hot spot; then she thought again about the verse that says: "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver."

She asked the silversmith if it was true that he had to sit there in front of the fire the whole time the silver was being refined. The man answered that yes, he not only had to sit there holding the silver, but he had to keep his eyes on the silver the entire time it was in the fire. If the silver was left a moment too long in the flames, it would

The person who first said "To error is human" was right on target.

I made no mistake in choosing a wife. Reva has taken her part of the responsibility of teaching our children discipline and the word of God, both by her life and by her words. She is due at least half and possible more credit for the work we have done together in the Lord for 59 years. She has been a true yoke fellow.

As you can see by reading this letter, I have lost quite a bit when it comes to typing. I'm sure that I have lost fully as much and maybe more in all other departments.

Don't think that I'm complaining; I'm rejoicing in the Lord, and will continue to tell the GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL as long as the church will put up with my feeble efforts.

My advice to all is what I have been telling all young preachers that I have had a small part in training: USE YOUR TALENT FOR OTHERS AND YOU WILL LIVE

A FULL HAPPY LIFE. USE THEM FOR YOUR SELF AND IF ALL TURNS OUT THE VERY BEST THAT IT POSSIBLY CAN FOR YOU, YOU WILL DIE A RICH, LONELY, SELFISH OLD MAN!

Ralph

This is the background for this issue of BC. My dad started BC back in 1982, the year that my wife LaDonna and I moved from Oklahoma City to El Dorado, Arkansas. I soon assumed most of the editing duties. My dad was correct when he said his typing had lost a little of its edge. He was very fond of white out for a while, and then he just resorted to typing X's over any mistakes...that is the mistakes that he caught! I pray that you, the reader, will derive a blessing from this article recovered from the past.

...lsg

To Reach the Heavenly Goal

Regardless of the number of goals one may have in life, the one that stands out above all others is the heavenly goal. Failure to reach this goal will make all others, though successfully attained, of no lasting value.

As one reads the scriptures, he becomes aware that God intends for him to turn his attention inwardly and carefully evaluate himself from time to time. Only by doing this can

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we attain the heavenly goal. Inward inspection must be performed if we would keep a careful check upon ourselves. Paul admonished: "Examine yourselves, whether ye be

in the faith; prove your own selves..." (2 Cor. 13:5). The Lord's Supper was also given as a weekly reminder for us to keep our eyes upon Jesus. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." (1Cor.11:28).

As we make this examination, let us give a great deal of consideration to the fact that most people recognize nothing bad within themselves. People are honestly blind to their own faults. We can honestly receive a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (2 Thess. 2:10-12). When we lose our love for the truth, we are deceived into actually believing the error we hold which is contrary to the truth. It is so easy for us to see the faults of others and so hard for us to see our own faults. One of the

prayerfully examine some key scriptures. Reading the key scriptures and comparing our lives with them is the best way to really evaluate ourselves spiritually. Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness? Are we charitable in dealing with the

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weaknesses of our brother? (Matt. 5:6-7). "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (Matt. 7:1-5). A little boy, speaking of his grandmother, revealed her desires when he said, "Grandma will read anything she can get her hands on. When she can't find anything else, she will even read the Bible!" Are you careful about the needs of others? "Pure religion... is to visit the

widows and orphans in their afflictions and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (Jas. 1:27). In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus shows the great judgment scene. By the way you are living now, will the ghost of neglected opportunities haunt you on that great day?

"Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness..." (Matt. 6:33). This passage, if properly applied to our lives, speaks volumes. What comes first in your life? The church? Your job? Your family? Your pleasure?

To reach the heavenly goal we must live in a constant attitude of self-evaluation. When we discover that change is needed, we must alter what needs to be changed. Upon learning what we need to do, we must do it immediately. Perhaps we check up and find we need to become a

that we may spend in any way we like. What kind of movies, TV and reading do you enjoy? When we buy a ticket to a movie or a play, we tell a great deal about ourselves. We indicate that we like the particular thing shown. There was a time when the good guys usually won, but it is not so today.

There are windows that are wide open to your heart and to mine. When we can think about anything that we

What excites you most?

want to think about, of what do we think? In terms of interests and enthusiasms, what are you most involved in? What excites you most? Spiritual matters? Clubs? Sports? Travel? Do we show greater zeal and enthusiasm for any of these than we do for spiritual matters? These

questions will give us a progress report on how far along the road we are to our heavenly goal.

Step Five: Let us prayerfully examine the way we spend our money. This is a concrete indication of what we think is most important. Luxurious types of living and emphasis upon physical things give clues to our real interest in life. Jesus said to Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen the good part that shall not be taken from her." (Lk. 10:41-42). All physical things perish with the using. This is the message that Jesus is trying to get Martha to see. "The word of God endureth forever." Mary hath chosen "that good part" that endureth.

Step Six: Let us

easiest ways for us to be convinced that we are quite good is set forth by Paul: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Cor. 10:12). The truth is, we are only good by comparison with those about us who are worse than we are. Such comparisons will give us unwarranted confidence in our own goodness.

In a religious poll that was taken a few years ago, 88% of the people who said that they believed in heaven thought they would go to heaven when they died. Jesus said: "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it... Not everyone 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 unto 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. 7:14, 21-22). This passage certainly shows the truth of the old Negro Spiritual which says, "Everybody talkin' 'bout heaven ain' gwine there." One of the very first steps in self-examination is to realize that we may have blind spots that will make it hard for us to see ourselves as we really are.

May I propose a series of tests which will help us to see ourselves more objectively and

which will help us in the tremendously important task of spiritual self-examination?

Step One: Let us prayerfully examine our companions. Are they the kind of people that we want to be? Are they the kind of people we want our

...let us seek out Christian association.

children to grow up to be? Are they the kind of people that will build a nation, a community, a home, a family??? "Do not be deceived: bad company ruins good morals, Come to your right mind and sin no more. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame." (1 Cor. 15:33-34; RSV). In order to be sure of the heavenly goal, let us seek out Christian association.

Step Two: Let us

prayerfully examine our humor. Solomon said: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." The right kind of humor is good for us both spiritually and physically. In our promiscuous society many of the comedy writers think we can feed upon filth without any ill effect. Do we enjoy this type of humor? With the heavenly goal in mind, it would be well for us to check up on our particular brand of humor. It will tell us something about ourselves if we will deal with it honestly.

Step Three: Let us prayerfully examine our music. We can learn a great deal about ourselves in this area. It is not a matter of whether the music is classical, popular, country, etc.; but whether it is sensual and erotic. Much that is called music is base and impure. This has been true in all ages,

but it is especially true in our age. Do you enjoy this kind of music? Many of the lyrics today are suggestive and immoral. Are you allowing your children to feed upon

The songs that people hear and sing influence markedly their attitudes and behavior.

such lyrics by not introducing them to the songs of the faith and other good moral lyrics? Remember, the pattern for our taste in music is formed early in life. The songs that people hear and sing influence markedly their attitudes and behavior. Someone said: "The songs of a people are more important than their laws." The songs that are fed to our young people today by the modern disc-jockey provide a very thin diet for Christians. The contri-

bution they have made to the juvenile delinquency of our day is staggering, and only the Lord can know its full extent. They could be a great hindrance to our attaining the heavenly goal. Paul gives us some admonition that will prove a great help in reaching the heavenly goal if we will only heed it: "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." (Eph. 5:15-19).

Step Four: Let us prayerfully examine the way we spend our free time. This is time