

## Opportunity - The Best Ever

The prospects for a great year of service and for church growth have never been better! Although the world changes very little from year to year, we Christians have been blessed to have finished another year of spiritual growth. We should have matured further in the word, we should better equipped to serve worthily in the vocation to which we have been called (Eph. 4: 1), and we should have become stronger and more patient in overcoming temptation (Jas. 1:2-4). The past year's assemblies should have edified the church, and we have certainly had adequate time to "count the cost," plan and prepare for the challenges that a new year brings. The *potential* for faithful, fruitful service has **never** been greater! Let us each determine not to allow that potential to lie unrealized, another year gone by no better than the previous, but to give the Lord our absolute best in 1999!

*"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest (Mat. 9:37-38)."* Are we His disciples? Will we endeavor to meet His challenge? We must, and we can, if we only will. His words must take on personal meaning to each of us, although we understand that no more will be required of us than we are able to perform (Mat. 25:15; 1 Pet. 4:1 1). So, let each disciple determine to contribute his fair share to the labor in our small portion of the great harvest field (Mat. 13:38). "Next door neighbor, or in a far off land, are you Jesus' field hand?"

We can begin by being faithful to attend every assembly of the church, for no stretch of the wildest, most worldly imagination could conclude that, after all Jesus has done for us, the church meets too often, or He requires us to assemble too much. Perhaps, if the ratio of those faithful to assemble were compared to those unfaithful, in view of Hebrews 10:23-27, we might find that some do not assemble enough to build the strength needed to be even shallowly involved in labor for the Lord. Faithfulness in assembly and in service are correlated. What a tragedy to count the great sacrifice of Jesus to be of such little value, the fellowship of the church, and the blessing of His presence (Mat. 18:20) as things not to be longed for and sought after.

We must never doubt that if we muster the love, courage and resolve to sow the blessed seed, that our heavenly Father will grant the increase (1 Cor. 3:6; Is. 55: 11). Confident in this, we understand that the more sowers in the field, the more abundantly the seed is sown. The more abundantly the seed is sown, the more will find its place in good and honest hearts (Lk. 8:18), and the more increase will be granted. Let's be positive and enthusiastic, not dour and doubtful, remembering that the condition of our own hearts will be counted among our successes or failures (2 Cor. 13:5). We will either fan the flames of zeal, or we will smother them. Faithful, fervent prayer on behalf of our congregation's efforts will also help. Nothing can relieve us of our responsibility. Let nothing rob us of our reward (Jn. 4:36; 2 Jn. 8)! Our gratitude for the past year of blessing can only be shown by our multiplied willingness to serve (1 Jn. 5:3) during what can be, and should be, our best year ever!

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