

Jesus says, "Amen I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

*By Kym Byrnes
Eldersburg Eagle*

It was these words that Sykesville resident and author Bill Hall said inspired him to write his most recent book, his first piece of fiction, "Remember Me in Paradise: The Story of the Thief."

"This phrase always toyed with me, I felt compelled to write a story about it," Hall said.

According to Gospel accounts, Christ was crucified between two thieves -- one who repents, another who does not.

In Hall's book, the local author creates a fictional life, based on historical information, for the repentant thief, detailing events from childhood until the moment he appears next to Christ on the cross.

Hall said he had an outline for the story when he started to write it, but something else -- perhaps a sort of divine intervention -- pointed him in different directions along the way.

"I kind of felt like a spirit was directing me as I wrote. It changed the momentum of the story," he said. "It's neat to me how everything fell into place."

A firefighter by trade, Hall said he has always had an interest in writing. His first book, "Turnout: A Firefighter's Story," documented his experiences as a Baltimore City firefighter and paramedic. Hall retired from the Baltimore City Fire Department after 31 years of service.

Although he is currently the Emergency Management Director for Carroll County, Hall admits his dream would be to work full-time writing and publishing.

He hopes that "Remember Me in Paradise: The Story of the Thief" offers people a nice introduction to the Lord.

"There is a message of salvation in this book. Anyone who wants to know

the Lord or learn about historical events, this is a good way to introduce them to it," Hall said.

Hall said he has no formal training or education in writing, but that he has been writing since he was a kid. He said he's learned to write on his own and by being an avid reader. In addition to the writing, he said he's gotten a whole different education by learning the tricks of the trade of the publishing industry.

"The hardest part of writing a book is the first page. Staring at that blank page is daunting. You need to make it interesting enough to catch the readers attention and make them want to read more," he said.

Another challenge Hall said he faces is promoting his books. Although he has a publisher, located in Frederick, he is responsible for doing much of his own promotion. He said it's not his strong suit yet.

Hall said the key to being successful in writing and publishing is being persistent; rejection, he said, is just part of the process. He said he has several other things in the works including a play, a children's story and perhaps even a sequel to the firefighter memoirs.

He does get out in the community for book signings and tours, including a date last month at the Eldersburg Library, and occasionally speaks at events to help other writers find success in the industry.

"The neatest thing about being a writer is when people come up to me and say, 'I read your book and I really liked it.' "

Sykesville resident Bill Hall's books can be found at most major book stores or by contacting Hall directly at turnout1@comcast.net.