

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Armed With A Purpose!

God's people were not powerless to meet suffering and persecution for the sake of righteousness. Peter gave them the needed weapon: **“arm yourselves also with the same purpose”** (1 Pet. 4:1), that is, the purpose of Christ – His “mind” (KJV), understanding, thought, or intention. Equip yourselves with the same kind of thoughts, purposes and intentions that Christ had, which caused Him to suffer and die rather than forsake the Father's will. There is nothing better available for strengthening man for inevitable opposition in his commitment to righteousness in himself and as many as will listen to the gospel than having the same mind as Christ. “Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind!” (KJV).

Accordingly, it is inevitable that those choosing to live in the “way” that

is “narrow,” that “leads to life” and that “few ... find” (Matt. 7:14), “will be persecuted” (2 Tim. 3:12). It is the way of a disciple to follow in the steps of his Master. Jesus said, “A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;” (John 15:20). The Christian expects such opposition from the world, but he is encouraged, knowing that God’s people are “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*.” (Rom. 8:17).

Having the mind of Christ, Paul saw his “affliction” as “momentary, light” and “producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison” (2 Cor. 4:17). With such an understanding, persecution for the sake of Christ has blessedness about it, a bliss of contentment that the persecutors do not know: “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:10-12).

The mind of Christ looks beyond the surface into the eternal realm and sees the real joy there. Desirous of that joy, the person who is armed with the mind of Christ “sets his sight” and keeps it there: “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Heb. 12:2-3).

Having His mind is powerful! It will allow us to see things from His divine perspective. What powerful insight to see things as they truly are, to have an understanding of what is real. Seeing the ugliness of sin, “I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:104); sin now causes grief and sorrow because it is a falling short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23), and it results in death (Rom. 6:23).

Having this mind, there is no light regard and minimizing regarding offences against God. Paul commanded: “consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). Sins cause a separation from God (Isa. 59:2), a condition that requires the urgency of immediate correction. With the mind of Christ, we exercise self-correction, but it does not stop there. We make ourselves available in helping others overcome their sins by restoring “in a spirit of gentleness” any brother who is “caught in any trespass” (Gal. 6:1) and by teaching those in the world that they might “hear the word of the gospel and believe” (Acts 15:7).

Having the mind of Christ, one sees himself as an “agent” or representative of Christ (1 Pet. 2:9; Phil. 2:15-16; Col. 1:10; 1 John 2:6; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Eph. 4:1, 23-24; 5:2, 8), Christ is in him (Col. 1:27) and he works for His cause (Eph. 2:10). Such a mind directs us to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Since our “old self was crucified with *Him*, ... we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:6-8). What a blessed life is available in Christ! Have this mind in you!

- GFS

CHILDREN OF DESTINY

I cannot identify the king called Lemuel in Proverbs 31:1. But his mother's counsel preserved in the first nine verses of Proverbs 31 contains valuable wisdom not only for a king, but, it strikes me, also for anyone who has important business in this world. The passage will be inspirational for any Christian who understands his position in the world.

What advice did this mother give her son? First, "give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings" (v. 3). Not a few kings and others in important positions have been destroyed by a lack of discipline--going after women and other lusts.

She continues: "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes to say, Where is strong drink?" (v. 4). And why not? Because kings and princes have important business to attend to---the administration of justice, the protection of the afflicted (v. 5). Wine and strong drink may cause a ruler to "forget the law" and pervert justice. Drink robs one of his powers, and one who has such important business must have his full senses and all his powers about him.

Drink is not for kings. "Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto the bitter in soul: Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more" (vv. 6-7).

When you first read these lines you may think drink is recommended for certain persons. But do not miss the point. Drink, says Lemuel's mother is for one about to perish, one who has nothing to live for, one in poverty and misery who simply wants to forget all his trouble. But it is not for you, O Lemuel. It is not for a king. You must open your mouth for those who cannot speak for themselves (v. 8). You must "judge righteously, and minister justice to the poor and needy" (v. 9).

You must not forget who you are. You are a king---not a beggar, not some hopeless wretch, but a king! Your life is important---and you must not throw all your powers away as if your life meant nothing.

I am not sure whether the passage about the "worthy woman" continues the advice from Lemuel's mother. Perhaps it does, and she would be pointing out the difficulty and yet the vital necessity of such a man finding "a worthy woman" who can be a help and not a hindrance to a man in fulfilling his destiny.

The ground of the lifestyle called for in this passage is not that one must not violate the rules, but that a person with a high calling must not let his destiny be frustrated with foolish and worthless activities or habits. But is not such an appeal just as appropriate to any Christian as to a king?

We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). We are God's elect with a mission to the world (1 Pet. 2:9). We are called to be "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:14-16).

We are challenged to walk worthily of our calling (Eph. 4:1), worthily of the gospel (Phil. 1:27), worthily of the Lord (Col. 1:10), worthily of God (1 Thess. 2:12). What a challenge for young Christians! No doubt most of the young people are going after drink if not also drugs. No doubt purity is in short supply in this promiscuous age. But young friend, you are not one of these hopeless ones, whose lives mean nothing, who have nothing to live for. You are a child of the king. You have a mission in this world. You are a person of destiny. And you must not throw it all away. You must not permit your mission and destiny to be frustrated by foolishness. That may be for one "ready to perish." That may be appropriate for the hopeless. But not for you. Not for a child of destiny like you.

- L. A. Mott, Jr.

Ten Steps Everyone Can Do to Reach Lost Friends

1. Prayerfully identify one to three people you know who are not Christians.
2. Pray for their salvation every day.
3. Be a blessing to your friends.
4. Invite each to a meal (no agenda), just to get better acquainted.
5. At an opportune time, ask each one for prayer requests. Check back.
6. Invite each one to outreach events, Bible class, or church.
7. Be there for them when they need help.
8. Continue praying, and seek opportunities to expose them to the gospel.
9. Tell them why you became a Christian.
10. When they come to Christ, help them grow and become more involved.

- Phil Sanders

➤ "One ship drives east, another drives west, while the selfsame breezes blow. It is not the gale, but the set of the sail that bids them where to go."

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Commitment and Joy!"* (text: Matt. 22:34-40); Sunday evening: *"Astonishing Things in the Book of Jonah!"*