

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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AS THE DEER ... DESPAIRS?

Do you ever find yourself in deep despair? The author of Psalms 42-43 did. Three times in these two short psalms he asked himself, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?" (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5).

The psalmist was a refugee. For reasons beyond his control, he'd been forced to leave Jerusalem and dwell among people who didn't know the true and living God. "My tears have been my food day and night, while *they* say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" (Psalm 42:3). The longer he sojourned, the worse things got. "As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, 'Where is your God?'" (Psalm 42:10).

Before his exile, the psalmist treasured worshipping at the house of God. "These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. I used to go along with the throng *and* lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival" (Psalm 42:4). Exiled, he was cut off from the house of God and soon in deep despair.

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:1-2). “O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling places. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy” (Psalms 43:3-4).

The psalmist, however, didn't remain in deep despair. He came to himself. He began pushing his thoughts around instead of letting them push him around and he quickly regained the heights of joy and peace. Here's the good news —we can do the same! Here's how he did it.

First, he realized he needed to talk to God about what he was thinking and feeling. “A prayer to the God of my life. I will say to God my rock, ‘Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?’” (Psalm 42:8-9). “You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? (Psalm 43:2). Be careful how you read these passages. The psalmist wasn't bitterly venting against God. He was simply expressing how he honestly felt and seeking straight answers to fair questions. When we're in deep despair, God wants us to do the same. He cares, has the answers we need, and desperately wants to lift our spirits.

Second, he realized he needed God's help. “Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man!” (Psalm 43:1). In a world where we control so little, we need the God who controls it all.

Third, he realized God was going to help. The psalmist told himself three times, “Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him” (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5). Why could he say this? He knew God was present and would help him (Psalm 42:5). Why did he *keep* saying this? Because when doubts and fears penetrate our thoughts, we must repeatedly resist them with truth until they’re banished from our brains.

Fourth, he realized God meant this for good. “Deep calls to deep at the sound of Your waterfalls; all Your breakers and Your waves have rolled over me” (Psalm 42:7). Though in deep despair, the psalmist saw God’s purpose for the turbulence in his life. Yes, Satan was using it to crush him, but God was using it to make him stronger. “The LORD will command His loving-kindness in the daytime; and His song will be with me in the night” (Psalm 42:8). Not everything that happens in life is good, but if we truly love God, good can come from anything that happens in life (Romans 8:28).

Fifth, he realized things weren’t as bad as he’d imagined. No, he couldn’t worship as he preferred, but he could still worship. “O my God, my soul is in despair within me; therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan and the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar” (Psalm 42:6). We despair because we think our glass is half empty. It’s not half-empty or even half-full. If we look at it properly, it’s overflowing. How’s this for perspective. I have a friend whose fifteen-year-old daughter is dying from a brain tumor. Do I *really* have any problems? Do you? Neither did the psalmist. He realized it. So should we.

Sixth, he realized he was responsible for his own despair. Three times the psalmist asked himself, “Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me?” (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5). In other words, “Why am I doing this to myself?” The psalmist knew his inner joy and peace didn’t depend on outward circumstances, but on his attitude towards them. Yes, it’s humbling to admit we make ourselves miserable. But, it’s liberating to know we can just as easily choose happiness. Emotionally we are not victims of things beyond our control! The psalmist twice described God as “the help of my countenance” (Psalm 42:11; 43:5). The psalmist learned the following. So must we. “Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, ‘It is well with my soul.’”

As the deer ... despairs? No, as the deer pants for the water brooks so our souls should pant for God. If we’ll drink deeply, everything else will fall into place.

- Tim Norman

Dressing For God

A drawing depicted a girl looking in the mirror and asking, “*Dear God, What do You think?*” I thought it was cute but more importantly it sets out a principle that I think is important for us to receive. For whom do we dress?

I. Many dress for self. Perhaps in some ways we all do this. We like to be comfortable in our dress. We hopefully dress

appropriately one way to sweat working in the yard and another way to go to our place of employment and perhaps even another to go to worship God. I remember Joseph being called to come before Pharaoh to interpret his dream. Joseph dressed one way in the prison dungeon but before going in to Pharaoh he shaved himself and changed his raiment, Gen 41:14. We might seek to show more respect to God in worship than we would to Pharaoh. This might be seen in the way we dress.

II. Many dress for showing off to others. The scribes and Pharisees in the first century did this. Jesus talked of their dress saying, “all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments”, Matt 23:5. Jesus was not complimenting them but condemning them. Nine-tenths of our problems with dress are attitudes. If we can decide for whom we are dressing our dress will be fitting to that one.

III. Many dress to attract the opposite sex. This can be fine if you are dressing for your husband or wife in the privacy of your home. Many couples might do well to dress more attractively for their mate. 1 Cor. 7 talks of the physical closeness that married couples are to have and this might be enhanced if we did not take our mate for granted and dressing for them might be a good thing and help them to love us even more. But often we dress as evidently Herodias’ daughter dressed to attract the men, Matthew 14:6. Herod and his men were certainly attracted. Dancing and dressing like this both go hand in hand. Vashti refused to dress provocatively in the first chapter of Esther and we praise her for her modesty. The Bible speaks of the attire of a harlot, Gen. 38:24

and Prov. 7:10. Shorts, halters, short skirts, tight and low cut clothing should give you the picture. The world loves it but is this the way you want to dress? Hollywood is filled with this type dress. We see far too much of this on TV and it rubs off in what the stores sell. Do you seek to appeal to the baser nature of men by the clothing you put on?

IV. Let us make sure we dress for God. 1 Tim 2:9-10 instructs us, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." This sums up this article. Who are you seeking to please in life? When you look in your mirror after dressing ask yourself, what does God think?

- Stan L. Caldwell

THE LORD HATH NEED

We would have you consider a scripture portion of Matthew 21:3: The portion is "The Lord hath need of it." The Lord has no need in His overall supremacy of the universe but, in his plans for mankind, there are certain things needed. At the time of the verse we read, he had need of a place in which to eat the Passover feast. It was supplied. But in his plans for the salvation of mankind he also has some needs.

He needed volunteer laborers. He said, "...The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2). He chose the apostles (just men) for the primary task. But he needs people such as we read of in Acts 8:4: "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word." That is, literally, "every where they went they preached the word." They were busy making known the good news of the gospel everywhere they went. The Lord needs good moral people to show people the reality of serving in the kingdom. These good people would be "the light of the world" which is surrounded with the nefarious works of the prince of darkness, Satan. And light dispels darkness. There is much darkness round about: there is the darkness of ignorance. Most people have no idea what the New Testament teaches; There is also the darkness of evil. Jesus said, "Men love darkness because their deeds are evil." There is the darkness of depression, despair and pessimism. The Lord has need of people who hate darkness and are determined to do all that they can to turn on the light of divine truth.

--Bob Craig

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Resurrection of Jesus: Did It Really Happen?"* (text: 1 Cor. 15:12-19); Sunday evening: *"He Has Done All Things Well!"* (text: Mark 7:31-37).

OUR GOSPEL MEETING: July 27 – Aug. 1, Sunday through Friday, with Jeremy Paschall preaching. Sunday at our regularly scheduled times, and Monday through Friday at 7:00 p.m.