

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Best Is Yet To Be!

I don't know of how you, the readers, look at life, but I always try to look at things with the attitude that THE BEST IS YET TO BE. Being optimistic about the future is certainly better than looking back at the way things were. This view gives me a reason for being happy in a sin-sick world, but not in the way this world thinks of being happy.

Our nation's founding fathers proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence that the pursuit of happiness is an "unalienable right" of mankind. Since then it seems that people have taken it for granted that being happy is their God-given right, regardless of how it is gained. They want to be happy but most never attain true happiness for they don't know where to find it. They think it is found in the things of this world. But John tells us we are not to "love the world or the things in the world ...the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it" (1 John 2:15-17). The world "lust" means desire, and is generally condemned as "inordinate affections." Even if the things some desire in this world are not sinful, they are at best still temporary. So, in the end those who seek happiness in the things of this world will have to say, like Solomon, "all is vanity, and a striving after wind" (Eccl. 1:14). Those who seek happiness in serving God and doing His will are the truly happy ones. They know there will be a better world to come.

A man, lying on his death bed, was surrounded by his family. They were grieving over his impending departure from this life. While waiting for the inevitable, he says to them, "Don't worry about me, the best is yet to be." Why could he say this? Because he was a Christian with "a living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3-5; Phil 3:20-21). He understood how and why he had lived his life. Like Paul, he had committed his soul to God for safe keeping (2 Tim. 1:12). He knew his experiences in life, good and bad, were only temporary, so he had used his time to prepare for the better life to come (2 Cor. 4:16-18). He knew the best was yet to come and was looking forward to it with optimism.

One with this view is truly a “blessed man” (Jas. 1:12). Many simply translate the word “blessed” (Gk.- makarios) as happy. They view the word with human understanding. They think to be blessed means power, wealth, sensual pleasure, etc. Others see the word “blessed” with a sanctimonious flavor, as a technical word of theology, i.e. such as being blessed by some religious ritual performed by a reverend, rabbi, priest, or maybe the Pope. Such thinking obscures its deeper meaning. As used in the NT, one that is blessed has gained the highest happiness a human being can enjoy in this world. It is the state of spiritual and moral prosperity that people share only in Christ.

Jesus used the word nine times in what is referred to as the beatitudes of Matt. 5:3-12, where He describes the truly “blessed” (happy) man. John, in his Revelation letter also records seven beatitudes of the blessed ones, Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14. The ones who possess spiritual happiness do not depend on the ever-changing conditions in the world. The blessings can only be lost if one chooses to change his mind toward God. The blessed man, knowing the best is yet to be is an eternal optimist.

So, how does the optimist know the best is yet to be? Because he places his trust in God, who is always faithful 1 Cor. 1:9; Heb. 6:18; 10:23; 1 Pet. 4:19. This faithful God will sustain those who trust Him Ps. 37:23-40; Phil. 4:11-12. This belief allows one to be content and satisfied, not in life’s circumstances but in his attitude – that regardless of life’s outcome it will be better later. To such people peace of mind and joy in life is not dependent on material things. They trust God to make things right in His time. They know the best is yet to be because God said so.

Such optimism will make your life richer. Why? Because the Christian knows things the world do not.

1. The optimistic Christian knows that when this physical body returns to the dust after death, we will be clothed with a better one (Read 2 Cor. 5:1-ff). “For we KNOW that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens...” So, the best is yet to be.

2. The optimistic Christian knows that by trusting God things will work out for good, even though it seems impossible at the time Rom. 8:28. “And we KNOW that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” So, the best is yet to be.

3. The optimistic Christian has no doubt about the security of his soul (2 Tim. 1:12). “...I am not ashamed, for I KNOW whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day.” Yes, the best is yet to be because

the one who has been saved in faithful obedience has this promised salvation, promised by God: "...kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Without an optimistic attitude you will be content with mediocrity, just drifting along with no goal in life. Your life will be one of fear, insecurity and hopelessness. But by being optimistic, thinking the best is yet to be, you will have much better outlook on life. You will have something to believe in. You will have a sense of direction in life providing you with a goal (reason) to live. You will have a spirit of expectancy that it will be better later. This is your anchor for life (Rom 8:24-25; Heb. 6:19).

- Tommy Thornhill

Sins of Ignorance: Do They Matter?

So often people develop the attitude that if one doesn't know about his sins, he is OK; or if we sin in ignorance, we are OK. This subtle doctrine seeks to destroy the importance of sin, and causes us to become careless in teaching others the importance of sin.

First and foremost, if one could be saved in ignorance, then the worst thing we could do would be to teach them the truth! They might learn and reject it, and then they would be lost. This makes the gospel a means of condemnation and not the "good news" of salvation. The message of the gospel is what we can do to be saved from our sins, not to condemn us (John 3:17). But there are conditions attached to the gospel that we are to obey (Heb. 5:9).

In Leviticus chapters 4 and 5, God shows His attitude toward sin, including sins done in ignorance. He points out if a person, or even a priest, sins in ignorance or unintentionally, he is still guilty of sin, regardless of his sincerity, and when he learns of his sin, he must offer up the proper sacrifice for that sin (Lev. 4:2,3). If the whole congregation sins unintentionally, they still have sinned, and must offer up a sacrifice for that when it becomes known to them (4:13,14). If a ruler sins unintentionally, and learns of the sin he committed, he too must offer up the appropriate sacrifice (4:22,23), as well as any of the common people (4:27,28). In (5:1,2), he points out if a vow is taken which causes one to sin, he is guilty of sin; or if one unknowingly touched the carcass of a dead animal. If he utters something unaware it is a sin, he is guilty of that sin, and upon learning of it, he must make the appropriate sacrifice (5:4-6). In 5:17, God sums it all up by saying, "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity." Thus, he must make the proper sacrifice of that sin when he learns of his

sins. Certainly, this is in full harmony with what we read about in the New Testament in such passages as Rom. 10:2; Acts 3:17; Eph. 4:18 and Heb. 9:7 (to mention just a few).

Since our sins can separate us from God (Isa. 59:1,2), then they are indeed important. Does God allow some time in there for us to learn (assuming we are desirous of learning)? Apparently so from the reading of Rev. 2:5, etc. But that is not a “resource” to be counted upon, as (1) we do not know how long we may have — or when death might claim us before we are ready. (2) The wages of sin is still death (Rom. 6:23), and we do not want to take that chance. If you speed through a town at 80 mph, unaware of a sign that may have gotten knocked down that said “45 mph,” the policeman is not going to excuse your ignorance just because “you didn’t see the sign.”

So what must we do about the matter? We must study the Word of God, that we might learn what our sins are, and then obey His Word to get rid of them (John 8:31,32). My friends, sin is still sin, and until we seek His forgiveness, we have sin in our souls when we have done that which is wrong. Learn the Word of God, find out if what you are doing is wrong (even if you were very sincere when doing it — Acts 23:1; 26:9), then take the steps God requires to get rid of those sins before it is eternally too late (Acts 22:26; Jas. 1:21; 1 John 1:5-10).

- Donald P. Ames

Five Tragedies of Life

- (1) A man struck a match to see if the gasoline tank on his car was empty. It wasn’t!
- (2) A man patted a strange bulldog on the head to see if the critter was friendly. It wasn’t!
- (3) A man sped up to see if he could beat the train to the crossing. He couldn’t!
- (4) A man touched a high voltage electric wire to see if it was still charged. It was!
- (5) A man quit attending services of the church on Sundays to see if he could make more money in overtime work. He did – but he lost his eternal soul in the process!

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23). Who are you working for?

- unknown

> “The heart has no secret which our conduct does not reveal!”

- > "The man who pays an ounce of principle for a pound of popularity gets badly cheated!"
 - > "One reason the dog has so many friends: He wags his tail instead of his tongue!"
 - > "People with tact have less to retract!"
 - > "A diamond is a chunk of coal that made good under pressure!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Uzzah: Difficult Lessons!*" (Text: 2 Sam. 6:1-11); Sunday evening: "*The Gospel of John: That You May Believe!*" (Text: John 20:30-31).