

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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“If Thine Eye Be Single”

Matthew 6:22

Clear Vision Necessary – A small boy once asked a grocer for some potatoes with good eyes in them. The grocer was rather surprised by this unusual request and asked the lad what he meant by “good eyes.” To this the boy replied, “Mother said they had to see us through the end of the month.”

Successfully to live the Christian life, one must have good eyes. Adequate vision is imperative. A wise man of God once said, “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” (Proverbs 29:18)

We must realize that when one's vision is weak, one is indeed weak, but when one's vision is strong one is indeed strong. Each must look carefully to the future with a view to helping the weak and saving the lost. Furthermore, if the vision of an entire congregation is weak, there will soon be fault-finding, complaining, and spiritual degradation. The members will find fault with the elders, the preacher, and with one another, and a dead or divided congregation will ultimately result. One might say, “Idle hands, become the Devil's tools.”

Far-Reaching Vision Fruitful – When the eyes of the scribes

and Pharisees grew dim they overlooked the greater things in life. Jesus rebuked them for tithing mint, anise, and cumin, and neglecting justice, mercy, and faith. (Matthew 23:23). The letter of the law - yea, even the commandments of men - seemed more important to them than did the spirit of love and mercy and justice. To Jesus the healing of a withered hand was an act of mercy. To the scribes and Pharisees it was a desecration of the Sabbath. (Mark 3:1-6)

The full-grown Christian is able to rise above petty issues - to see beyond trivial things - and to envision and strive toward the true riches and the home of the soul. The understanding servant of the Lord no longer sees the earthen treasures, which "moth and rust corrupt," but lifts eyes of faith to behold "the things which are above," "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not," (Luke 12:33). The striving soldier of the cross looks beyond this veil of tears and sees the heavenly mansions which Jesus has promised the faithful. (II Corinthians 5:1; Hebrews 11:13-16)

Paul recounted persecution, physical suffering, and mental anxiety relating to the things of this world, but he looked beyond this to rest, and victory, and glory (II Corinthians 11:24-27; II Timothy 1:12; 4:8). Though in many ways troubled he wrote: "In nothing be anxious;..." Though many times straitened, he could always rely on the conviction: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me." Though always cognizant of the faith that "...our outward man is decaying..." he always was reassured: "...we have a building from God, ... eternal, in the heavens." (Philippians 4:4-7; 4:13; II Corinthians 4:16-5:1). What he envisioned stabilized him: he understood the law of God, and was happy in doing it.

Let us, therefore, determine to have "good eyes" that they may "see us through."

- John York (1953)

Excellence is a Habit

Aristotle said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." We are creatures of habit. Habits - overeating, thumb sucking, breath holding, nail biting, smoking, and the like - run the gambit from unpleasant to unhealthy. Other habits, like reading, healthy eating, exercise, money management, and getting adequate rest, greatly improve our quality of life. Yet our lives are all composed of habits from the time we wake up all the way up to bedtime. If a habit is negative, a cycle that includes triggers, feelings, and impulses can be broken anywhere along the way. If the habit is positive and needed, we can nurture that cycle by continuing it.

Think about certain spiritual matters that are matters of habit: faithful attendance, daily Bible study and prayer, pure speech, visitation, welcoming visitors at church services, involvement in church works, controlling the tongue, and any number of personal growth matters. Aristotle was right. Excellence does not consist in doing something once. It is not even found in the sporadic, occasional engagement. We cultivate excellence by focusing on certain areas with repeated, persistent effort.

Paul urged the church at Thessalonica to "abound more and more" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). That consisted in knowing how "to walk and to please God." Peter told the Christians dispersed abroad to keep their "behavior seemly among the Gentiles" (1 Peter 2:12). In the second letter, he includes excellence - virtue - as a Christian grace (2 Peter 1:5). Excellence is not something we are born with or just wake up possessing. It is, as Aristotle says, a matter of our habits!

-Neal Pollard

Life Begins at 80!

I have news for you. The first 80 years are the hardest. The second 80 are a succession of birthday parties. Everybody wants to carry your luggage and help you up the steps. If you forget your name, or anybody else's name for that matter, or what day it is, or an appointment, or promise to be in two or three places at the same time, spell words wrong—you need only explain that you are 80 years old.

If you spill soup on your necktie or dress, or fail to shave on one side of your face, or forget to zip up your dress or pants, if your shoes don't match, or you carry a letter around for a week before mailing it, that's all right. You're 80, you know.

At 80, you can relax without any misgiving. You have a special alibi for everything. Nobody expects much of you. It is a great deal better than 65 or 70; at that time they expect you to retire to a little house in Florida or Arizona and become a discontented, grumbling, has-been.

But if you survive until you're 80, everybody is surprised you can walk, surprised that you can carry on an intelligent conversation. At 70, people are mad at you for everything. At 80, they forgive you for anything. If you ask me, life begins at 80!

- Artie Edwards

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *“Walk With God: Overcome Sin!”* (text: James 1:12-15); Sunday evening: *“Ruth: Love in the Midst of Turbulence!”*

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting will be July 29-Aug. 3, with Aaron Andrews.