

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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WHAT DOES YOUR HEART WANT?

The Bible, because it came from God and is for man, gets at the very heart of who and what we are. It doesn't dilly-dally; it tells us what we need to know about ourselves without *venire [sic]* or camouflage. It plays no favorites and excludes no one.

Most folks reject such notions, mainly because they've never really studied the Bible. They have a passing knowledge of it, but they don't see it as the most important book in their lives. They sort of tolerate its message and pay lip homage to Jesus as its main character, but they don't take the time to know either the message or the Man. They may even subscribe to the need to worship occasionally but they don't look to the Book for the information they need to know about worship, when and how it is acceptable. To them the Bible is for weddings and funerals, Christmas and Easter, little else.

One reason for this hesitancy to keep in contact with the Bible is that it requires something of you. In fact, it requires quite a lot of you. The Bible imposes on our "freedoms" and retards our "want-to's." If you read it, it will bring you to conviction and charge you with change. It will condemn your actions and probably inhibit your "fun." Furthermore, the Bible calls for adjustment — immediate adjustment. It cries out to its reader, "why tarriest thou?" (Acts 22:16) It calls for action today — right now — not after awhile.

With these thoughts in mind, may I just rephrase some questions the Bible asks, either by actual interrogatives or by implications? What are your real interests? Notice, I said what are your real interests, the ones you actually put first in your life. Not, mind you, the ones to which you will readily admit, to which you will give intellectual agreement, but the ones that you are actually pursuing with diligence? We will all admit that we are to "seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33), but there are lots of people who admit that who are seeking something else first — just lots of them. Where is your real focus, your real goal? What is your first hope? What regulates all that you do? How do you spend your time, effort, talent, even money?

What are your real motives? In other words, what causes you to do what you do? God said, “thou shalt love the Lord thy God...” (Deut. 6:5). Love should be the motive for all that we do — no matter the situation. We all know that, don’t we? But is that what our real motives are — in the love of God? Do we seek to bear one another’s burdens in the same way He bore ours? When someone says something that rubs you the wrong way is your motive, one of restoration or retaliation? What determines your course of action? Is it love? “Love suffers long and is kind” (1 Cor. 13:4). Are you? Do you?

What are your real goals? Again, we all know intellectually what the right answer is to that question. But we sometimes get our priorities mixed up and spend our energies in the pursuit of worldly things. Someone has said we tend to give a first rate dedication to a second rate cause. Instead we should “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). The only goal that makes any sense is a heavenly one. We know from experience that we will not long be here, that even if we live our “three-score and ten” we will soon pass from this place. What then? That alone should be sufficient grounds for us to look for something better, something that guarantees us a longer existence not damaged by the ravages of time.

I’m aware that these are not the kind of questions you would like to hear. “How are your grandkids?” is much more pleasant. So is “How’s the new job going?” or “Are you feeling better now?” And all these are legitimate questions, ones that we do well to entertain. But the greatest questions of all are those whose answers have eternal implications, the ones which, if answered properly, will result in our eternal life in heaven.

- Dee Bowman

HAVING A BAD DAY?

Having a bad day? Thankfully I am not, but I certainly know what it is like to suffer through one from time to time. A headache, the flu, a stomach bug or shoulder surgery can ruin any day. Someone telling lies and spreading rumors about you or, worse yet, hearing that a friend is the one tearing you down can be upsetting. No day is made better by hearing bad news from a doctor. What about the parent teacher conference that begins with, “Your child talks too much and is disrupting other students?” Is your day made better or worse by such a meeting?

These are just a few random examples of events that can adversely affect one’s day. As you can probably see by these situations, the intensity of a bad day is somewhat relative and variable. For example, bad news from the doctor may be “your child has an

ankle sprain and will have to miss at least a game and a week of practices". This is not what we wanted to hear, but it is certainly not as bad as "your child has a torn ACL and will need surgery and will miss the entire football season."

There is not much we can do about the chance happenings of life or what evil people do to us, but we do not have to let them ruin our happiness. The truth is, life is not always perfect or the way we want. What we need to do is understand that hurts and frustrations are just a part of breathing. They are nothing more than minor inconveniences in the grand scheme of existing. This is not to minimize what we go through on bad days, but a little perspective is good.

What is a bad day? Some might say it is any day when events cause us mental or physical pain for any reason. Is that a good definition of a bad day? I don't think so. In just a few days the 2016 Summer Olympics will begin and many athletes will celebrate victory. For some it will be one of the greatest days of their lives. How do elite athletes get to the point of winning? Many of them endure years filled with days on end of mental and physical pain. It is called training and preparation. Most are not willing to pay this price for a moment of great joy.

Is it a bad day when one is called on to suffer for Christ in preparation for eternity? The apostles evidently did not think so. "...When they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Acts 5:40-41). While I am sure they did not enjoy the beating, it is clear the apostles thought it was a great day. It was a day for rejoicing.

The apostle Paul had a lot of "bad days" if we say suffering for Christ is a bad day. "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:24-28) Earlier in Second Corinthians Paul describes all that he had gone through as "light affliction." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). He was looking for a "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Paul did not think he was having a bad day when he had to suffer for Christ. In fact he says the "sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory

which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18). Like for the Olympian who endures much for victory, Paul believed eternal victory is worth any price we must pay.

No Christian should view himself or herself as having a bad day when called on to suffer for Christ. Peter said, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter 4:12-13). Perhaps if we could face persecution with this mindset it would be easier to remain faithful.

Are you having a bad day? I hope things are going well in your life and this day is good. If you are going through some hard times, I pray they will soon end. Please never think you are having a bad day by serving Christ. Perhaps it would help to think of the “bad day” Jesus had to give you hope. I don’t think He looked at it as a bad day, but rather one of triumph and victory. It was the day He finished the Father’s Will. (Matthew 19:30).

- Terry Starling

Have Courage

Courage when the road is rocky,
Courage when the skies are gray!
Courage when you've been defeated,
Courage when hope's fled away!
Courage when your faith is shaken,
Courage when strength's failed you, too;
May God grant you daily courage
That will always see you through.

- Unknown

> “A tongue three inches long can kill a man six feet tall!”

> “Consecration, not perfection, is the mark of the saint!”

> “Live as if Christ died yesterday, arose this morning, and is coming back tomorrow!”

- > "Discontent is the penalty we must pay for being ungrateful for what we have!"
- > "One of the weaknesses of our age is our apparent inability to distinguish need from greed!"

THIS WEEK'S SPEAKERS: Sunday morning: Greg Needham; Sunday evening: Keith Baumgardner.