

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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February 17, 2019

Volume 39, # 08

Trials and Tribulations

As human beings, we go through many struggles in our lives. Acts 14:22 says "Strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of the God." Many of us go through these tribulations feeling sorry for ourselves and wondering why it couldn't have happened to "happy-go-lucky Joe" down the street. Anybody but me!

God teaches us that we can be longsuffering and come through our trials as stronger people than we were when the problems began. Read Galatians 5:22, "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness." Look at what Christ suffered for us! Why can't we endure, for just a short period of time, troubles for him? In 1 Timothy 1:16, Paul states "However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life."

We all can safely say that no matter how bad our tribulations are, Jesus' tribulations were much worse, and He suffered a lot more than we ever will. The biggest tribulation I have encountered during my 16 years on this earth was caring for my grandparents. When everything was going badly for my family and for me, I would start feeling sorry for myself. And also wondering when it would all end. But now that I look back on it all, I see it as a blessing that I had the opportunity to take care of them. Because of that, I have matured and learned life-long lessons.

Yes, it was extremely hard at the time, and even harder to appreciate, but I would always remember Jesus and the suffering he went through; and somehow, I realized it could be much worse! One of my favorite Bible verses is 1 Corinthians 10:13. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

This verse is my escape route when things get tough for me. When my grandparents were really ill, and it was a hard day of taking care of them, I would read this verse over and over again to myself during the day. It kept me going. I have never regretted taking care of my grandparents, because I believe it made me a stronger person spiritually. We all need to support each other, especially during our bad times. I know, from personal experiences, that I would not be where I am today if it were not for my brothers and sisters in Christ. When times get tough, just remember what Christ did for us. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16,17).

- Ashley Conover

Silver-Crowned Senior Citizens

"The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness." (Proverbs 16:31). One can easily recognize, from the silver in his hair, the approach of his golden years. Of course, some older people dye their hair to conceal their ages. And in some cases, the hair turns loose rather than gray.

Righteousness and Hoary Hair

For a truly righteous person, a hoary head represents the following:

A Life of Devotion to God. The individual who waits until he nears the setting of the sun before trying to break bad habits, obey God, and prepare for heaven has wasted valuable years, lost much power and influence, and gambled with his soul. In contrast, the person who turned to God and holy living in earlier years -- and pursued godliness is the type of individual who has attained something worthwhile. In his advanced years, he should be more God-like than ever.

Years of Experience in Useful Living. The inferior creatures "profit neither by their wisdom, nor the follies of the past. The first robin built its nest of the same materials, and with as much art, as the robin does now. Neither the bird nor the bee has learned anything by experience, by study, or by observation,--nor lays up, to transmit to future generations of bird or bees, the results of its own sagacity or observation." (Barnes). Man finds experience to be one of his most valuable teachers. The mistakes of the past are stepping stones to new heights. A long life of useful living gives one an accumulation of wisdom that can never be obtained without extended experience.

The Beauty and Grace of Maturity. There is a kingly dignity that surrounds an aged saint. Venerable qualities are present in the life that is nearing its goal. "There is glory and beauty in the field covered with green blades of early spring, but the period of its perfection is not in the spring, but in the autumn, when the full corn in the ear stands ready for the sickle." (Harris).

The Right to Respect. The law of Moses said, "You shall rise before the gray-headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:32). "There is something touching in the sight of hair whitened with the snows of many winters: the old, faithful soldier receives consideration from his king; the venerable servant is beloved of his master." (Spurgeon).

Some young people do not appreciate the aged saints. They fail to show the deference and courteous respect to which the elderly are due. The New Testament says, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder." (1 Peter 5:5). Paul told the young preacher Timothy, "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the young men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity." (1 Timothy 5:1, 2).

Hoary heads are not always found in the way of righteousness. If old age "be found in the way of wickedness, its honor is forfeited, its crown profaned and laid in dust" (Henry). What a sad spectacle to witness an individual whose life is nearing its end cursing God, railing righteousness, and influencing the young to serve Satan! The hoary head, which could be a crown of glory, becomes a crown of shame. The hair is white as snow, but the soul is as black as the outer darkness of hell itself!

- Anonymous

Think On These Things

The Bible instructs us about how to do many of the works we carry out as Christians. It tells us how to worship, how to become a member of God's family, and how to carry ourselves as Christians. We are also told to avoid certain things, such as lying, idolatry, and fornication. These all refer to works a Christian should or should not do. But much of being a Christian involves the mind. The Old Testament forbids murder, adultery, and other sinful acts. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5), goes a step further. He says that a person who is angry with his brother for no reason is sinning and one who lusts after a woman has committed adultery with her already in his heart.

So what do we think about to help us on our way as Christians? Philippians 4:8 plainly answers this question: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest." This rules out gossip, and things without proof. Dwelling on these things can be harmful to us. Have you ever assumed something bad about someone? As time goes by, you begin to think that person is worse and worse, until you begin to let it rule your mind. Then you talk to the person and find that what you thought about this person was not true. You then wonder why you spent so much time thinking about something so stupid. What good has it done you as a Christian?

"Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure." This refers to things that are according to God's law. Job 4:17 says that we will never be more just or purer than God. Therefore, God is our example of how to be just and pure. Romans 1: 1-7 says that the just shall live by faith.

"Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." This refers to things that are worthy of love and good news. This means we need not dwell on bad news or hateful things, but to remember how good life is (you have to admit it's much better than it was for early Christians). If we think on the bad things in life, it will never be enjoyable, and more important, it will hinder our work as Christians. We have been blessed with the hope of heaven, which is enough to outweigh all bad experiences in our minds. 1 Timothy 6:6 says that godliness with contentment is great gain. Maybe we shouldn't think about how hard it is to be a Christian, but about what we gain from it.

"If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things." This kind of summarizes the verse, encompassing all of the previous points.

So why do we have to think on these things? Proverbs 4:23 says that we are to control what we think because our minds deal with the issues of life. When we read a book about how to do something, we expect to put it to use in our lives. When a situation in which the knowledge can be used comes along, we usually do it without thinking. This is how our minds work with everything. I'm sure you've heard the expression, "What you put in your head is what's going to come out." Thinking on the things taught in Philippians 4:8 will make us better Christians. Why? Never forget this truth--God knows our thoughts as well as our actions.

- Jason Blackaby

> "One thing that is worse than a quitter is the man who is afraid to begin!"

- > "Live so that when men unearth your footprints on the sands of time they will not find only a heel!"
 - > "It is far better to forgive and forget than to resent and remember!"
 - > "A beautiful heart seems to transform the homeliest face!"
 - > "Someone ought to invent an amplifier for the voice of conscience!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*How God Prepares A Man!*" (Text: Exod. 3:7-10); Sunday evening: "*The Trial of Pilate before Christ!*" (John 18:28 – 19:16, Part 2).