

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A Consuming Society

"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8).

Ephesus was "the chief commercial center of western Asia Minor" (cf. "Ephesus," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, pp. 115ff). Access to the sea, mountain passes, inland rivers and the temple of Diana all contributed to the city's financial vigor. Timothy was working in a bustling, wealthy metropolis not unlike those of twenty-first century America.

Having lived there himself for three years, Paul knew firsthand the dangers faced by the Ephesian brethren. He understood the empty promises of affluence, the anxieties of maintaining social and financial status, the covetous desire to accumulate. He perceived that *"those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"* (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Paul thus writes to his young protégé that he should *"flee these things"* and warn the rich to avoid the snares of materialism (1 Timothy 6:11, 17-19).

A consumer-oriented society is driven by a manufactured compulsion to buy. The consumer must be persuaded to part with his hard earned money and purchase the goods being produced. How is this achieved? Primarily by fostering discontent in the consumer. We sell it, throw it away or donate it to charity so we can buy the newer, sleeker, faster, bigger or prettier one. Happiness is always just over the horizon, just one more L.L. Bean order away.

The tangible damage of rampant consumerism is evident: Mountainous debt, marital stress, decreased Lord's-day contributions and neglected children to name a few. But beneath the surface lurks a psychological unease, a restlessness that cannot be calmed, a yearning that cannot be satisfied. The masses wander through shopping malls, cruise

ships and cable channels in search "it" ... without knowing what "it" really is. "It" is a shimmering mirage, like rippling heat waves on the highway. No matter how far or fast you drive, you never seem to catch up to them.

"It" is contentment, an inner peace that cannot be purchased with Visa or MasterCard. It is the knowledge that life is being lived in harmony with our Creator. It is the realization that the only treasure worthy of our supreme effort is that which can be stored up in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Such contentedness does not come naturally to most; it must be learned (Philippians 4:11). *How well are you doing?*

- Jim Jonas

WHAT KIND OF SOLDIER ARE YOU?

We've all seen it happen. In fact, if we were to be totally honest, we might have to admit to being part of it from time to time. What am I talking about? Christians who forget they are Soldiers of Christ. Throughout history, the church has suffered because Christians have forgotten they are Soldiers. Have you ever witnessed Christians getting mad about something and quitting? Have you ever seen Christians get their feelings hurt and pout? Have you ever seen Christians not get their way so they attempt to stir up trouble?

Friends, Christianity is not a social club, it's an army. Christianity is not about having your desires met, it's about spiritual warfare. I have been taught by the Holy Spirit, trained by experience, tried by adversity and tested by fire. I am a volunteer in this army and I have enlisted for eternity. I will either retire from this army at the Lord's return or die in this army; but I will not get out, sell out, be talked out or pushed out. I am faithful, reliable and dependable.

If my God needs me, I am there. If He needs me in Bible class to teach children, work with youth, help with adults or just sit and learn, He can use me, because I am there. If He needs me in worship Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday, Gospel Meeting, or special services, I am there. I am there to preach, teach, sing, pray, work or worship. God can use me because I am there. I am a Soldier. I am not a baby. I do not need to be pampered, petted, primed up, pumped up, picked up or pepped up.

I am a Soldier. No one has to call me, remind me, write me, visit me, entice me or lure me. I am a Soldier. I am not a wimp. I am in place saluting my King, obeying His orders, praising His name and serving in His Kingdom. No one has to send me flowers, gifts, food, cards, candy or give me handouts. I do not need to be cuddled, cradled, cared for or catered to. I am a Soldier, and I am committed.

I cannot have my feelings hurt badly enough to turn me around. I cannot be discouraged enough to turn me aside. I cannot lose enough to cause me to quit. When Jesus called me into this army, I had nothing. And, if I ended up with nothing, I will still break even. I am a Soldier, I am committed, I will win. My God will supply all my needs. I am more than a conqueror, I will always triumph. I can do all things through Christ. Devils cannot defeat me. People cannot disillusion me. Weather cannot weary me. Sickness cannot stop me. Battles cannot beat me. Money cannot buy me. Governments cannot silence me, and Hell cannot handle me. I am a Soldier. I am committed. Even death cannot destroy me.

I am a Soldier in the army and I am marching, claiming victory. I will not give up, I will not turn around. I am a Soldier marching Heaven bound. I am a Soldier. Will you stand with me? If God is in it, you can do it.

Friends, let's buckle down and be a good Soldier for Christ. Or as Paul put it, "*Endure hardship as a good Soldier of Jesus Christ*" (2 Timothy 2:3).

- Steve Higginbotham [slightly edited-GFS]

HOW MUCH ARE YOU WORTH?

"Your adornment must ... be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

The *Reader's Digest* told the story some years ago of a young lady named Serita who lived on the island of Kittyattie in the South Pacific. When a man desires to take a woman as his wife, it is the custom of this land to reach an agreement with the bride's father on the number of cows he will accept in exchange for his daughter. The more beautiful the girl, the more she will cost. A strikingly lovely wife might cost as much as six cows. An average beauty would go for three.

Serita was not recognized as a beauty. Her shoulders were stooped. Her hair was always unkempt. She did not feel that she had much to work with and so put forth little effort to improve her appearance. Her father hoped he might get two cows for her but had made up his mind to settle for one if need be.

Johnny Lingo lived on a nearby island. He had proved himself a shrewd trader and had grown quite wealthy. Johnny saw something in Serita that others did not see. After several visits to Kittyattie, he announced that he was in love with her. Many laughed and declared that Johnny wanted his cows more than a beautiful wife.

Johnny visited Serita's father and asked for her hand in marriage. The older man prepared himself for the bartering process and asked how much he was willing to offer for her.

"Eight cows!" exclaimed Johnny. Such a price was absolutely unprecedented. One villager said that Johnny must be either crazy or blind. No one could understand why a smart trader like Johnny would give eight cows for a woman that he could probably get for one.

But Johnny understood something. He knew that a woman who was valued at one cow would act like a one-cow wife. Johnny didn't want a one-cow wife. He wanted an eight-cow wife and he saw Serita as an eight-cow woman.

It was really amazing how the stoop went out of Serita's shoulders and how straight she began to stand. Her beautiful hair became her glory. In fact, people soon began to consider her as one of the loveliest women in the islands.

It makes a great difference in our lives when we are worth a lot to someone. Therefore it should be a matter of frequent meditation for the Christian that our Creator has appraised us at immeasurable worth. *"You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:18, 19). It should make us stand a little straighter. We are valued far beyond eight cows. *"The brother of humble circumstances is to glory in his high position"* (James 1:9).

- Ken Green

Another True Story

She was approaching age five about the time that she regularly ran next door, where her friend, Denise lived. The question was always the same on Sundays and Wednesdays: "Can you go with us to Bible study?" "Can you go with us to worship?" Pretty soon, the answer was mostly, "Yes." The habit continued as these two girls became closer friends.

The day came when Becky asked, but the answer was, "No." But what happened was far from disappointing. Denise's father said, "She is going with us this morning, and we will see you there."

They came. They returned. Bible studies followed. It was not very long until Denise's father and mother were baptized into Christ!

Is being persistent with invitations worth anything? To these people it was!

We love it when people become amazed at the gospel of Jesus Christ! Everyone in Decapolis was when they heard of great things Jesus had done (Mark 5:20)! A man who was ghastly tormented by demons ran up to Jesus when He arrived in the country of the

Gerasenes, pleading for the Lord to refrain from tormenting him. Jesus commanded the unclean spirits to come out of the man and into a herd of two thousand swine. They rushed down into the sea and were drowned. Upon being freed from the demons, the man was returned to normalcy. In great gratitude, the man implored the Lord if he might accompany Him. Instead, notice the Lord's command to him: "**Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.**" (Mark 5:19).

What do you suppose would happen if we go and do likewise?

- Gary Smalley

* "Either He's Lord of all, or not Lord at all!"

* "Enthusiasm for Christ is contagious; has anyone caught it from you?"

* "Faith goes where eyes can't see!"

* "Dollars go further when accompanied by sense!"

* "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD," (Psalm 33:12)!

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)