

PATIENCE AND PREACHING

By Joshua Ortiz

Be patient when someone preaches to you. Have you ever heard the saying, “Don’t kill the messenger?” Well, that’s true when it comes to the preacher. As long as the preacher is using Scripture and using it correctly, then the message originated from God. (2 Timothy 3:16-17.) If you’re upset with the message, then you’re upset with God. Patience is needed in listening. Consider the reaction of the Bereans when they heard Paul preach. Acts 17:11 says, “. . . they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” When they found Paul’s words to be true, they followed Christ. (Acts 17:12.) Most of them listened to the whole message without quickly and impatiently rejecting it. Rather, they took time every day to test Paul’s preaching. And it helped them turn their lives to Christ. Sometimes the truth is meant to hurt in order to build up. Paul said, “For godly

sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” (2 Corinthians 7:10.) A true friend will always tell you the truth to help you stay on the right path. (Proverbs 27:17.)

Be patient when you preach to someone else. Paul told the young evangelist Timothy, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching.” (2 Timothy 4:2.) Timothy, the preacher, needed patience. Notice that having patience doesn’t mean we don’t preach; rather, our preaching needs to be done with patience. And it’s not just the pulpit preacher’s job to preach with patience. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, Paul told the Christians, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” We shouldn’t be verbally attacking

other people. Study how Jesus taught. He did good deeds for people along with preaching to them. (Acts 10:38.) Also, don’t get impatient or frustrated when someone isn’t converted right away. When you go out and evangelize, you are planting the seed in people’s minds. (Luke 8:11.) When someone plants an apple seed, does he instantly get an apple tree? No, it takes time for that seed to sprout. It may be years before someone is converted. When a person is converted, he still needs to be taught with patience. All Christians are always to be growing in knowledge and wisdom. Therefore, we all need to have patience with each other, especially new converts.

Remember God has shown His patience with you.

— Lebanon, MO

Bless The Lord, O My Soul!

By Joe Slater

Psalm 103 begins and ends with the words of this article’s title. Oftentimes we pray that God will bless us; but David exhorted himself to bless (praise, speak well of) the Lord. “*And all that is within me, bless His holy name!*” (v. 1b.) No doubt he wanted others to join him in praise; He even called upon the heavenly host of angels to bless the Lord. (vv. 20-22.) What motivated David to write this?

As all of us should, David felt a keen awareness of God’s grace. “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.*” (v. 2.) What specific benefits?

“*Who forgives all your iniquities.*” (v. 3a.) David knew all too well the ravages of sin. Both adultery and murder made him liable to the death

penalty! Yet God forgave him when he repented.

“*Who heals all your diseases.*” (v. 3b.) Some of David’s psalms indicate he was no stranger to life-threatening disease. But the Lord restored his health.

“*Who redeems your life from destruction.*” (v. 4a.) From his experience as a shepherd boy, to his conflict with Goliath, to Saul’s attempts on his life, to his battles as a warrior, David lived in constant danger. He survived only by God’s gracious protection.

“*Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.*” (vv. 4b-5.) Despite the

turbulence in his life, David praised the Lord for taking such marvelous care of him.

Read the rest of this psalm! Think not only how it relates to David, but to you. You may find yourself echoing David’s words “*Bless the Lord, O my soul!*”

— Justin, TX

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20,21.)

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

By Bobby Key

It is good to acknowledge our weaknesses. We are all weak in certain areas and the devil tempts us at our weakest point. Let us never allow Satan to take advantage of us; we must be fully aware of his schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11.)

Many times there is strength in weakness! The Lord told Paul: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.” The apostle then wrote, “Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9,10.)

In time of grief, suffering, and struggles, we sometimes ask, “Lord, where were You?” When Lazarus died, his sisters, Mary and Martha, wondered where Jesus had been and why he had not been present when they needed Him. Both sisters said, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” (John 11:21,32.) Many sincere souls have asked the same question and made similar statements down through the years.

Jesus prayed for the cup of suffering to be removed. On the cross, he asked, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Don’t be afraid of your weakness, your doubts, your fears. It is alright to feel anxious, empty, lost and alone. Struggling with weaknesses forces one to turn to God for strength.

In 1948 J.R. Baxter wrote the song, “Just a Closer Walk With Thee.” He wrote, “I am weak but Thou art strong. Jesus keep me from all wrong; I’ll be satisfied as long as I walk close to Thee. Through this world of toils and snares, if I falter, Lord, who cares? Who with me my burden shares, if I walk close to Thee. When my feeble life is o’er, time for me will be no more, guide me to that peaceful shore, let me walk close to Thee.”

When life tumbles in and we feel weak and helpless, may we be assured that God is near by. God is always present, and ready to help His children in times of struggle.

— DECEASED

LIKING WHAT WE GET

By Cecil Burch

The traveler asked, “What kind of weather are we going to have today?” The old shepherd replied, “The kind of weather I like.” “How do you know it will be the kind of weather you like?” The traveler scoffed. The shepherd answered, “Having found out sir, that I cannot always get what I like, I have learned to like what I get. So I am quite sure we will have the kind of weather I like.”

We read of another shepherd in the Old Testament, named David, who said, “This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Psalm 118:24.)

The Apostle Paul did not allow himself to be discouraged even though he knew he would face imprisonment, and he refused to let it affect the preaching of the Gospel. When he was on his way to Jerusalem he stopped at Miletus and met with the elders from Ephesus. After he had given them instructions he also told them, “I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there . . . but none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy.” (Acts 20:22,24.) When Paul came to Caesarea, the prophet Agabus took the apostle’s belt and bound his own hands and feet and said, “So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt.” They pleaded with him not to go. Then Paul answered, “What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 21:13.)

In this world of wars, conflicts, and heartaches that try the very depth of our souls we can still say with confidence that we do not know what the future holds but we know Him who holds the future!

— Amarillo, TX

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me . . . Indeed I have all and abound.” (Philippians 4:11-13, 18.)

A JUDGMENT DAY QUESTION

By Milton Smith

The question posed in the title of this article is not “who” will be judged on Judgment Day, but “what” will be judged. We know that every soul will be judged on this day. Jesus, Himself, said in Matthew 25:31-32, “When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.” Consequently, we know that every soul who ever lived will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. But “what” will be judged on that day? In other words, exactly how and in what manner will each person be judged?

Revelation 20:12 tells us, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those things that were written in the books, according to their works.” Paul tells us, “. . . every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.” (1 Corinthians 3:8.) It seems quite obvious that each person will be judged by his own obedience, conduct, and faithfulness. Even our motives will be considered. There are some people who do many good works in this life, but they often do those things for the wrong reasons. I’m sure there are even some atheists who do certain “good” works. But God will judge our motive as much as our action.

Paul tells us that we are going to be judged according to the things done in the body, “whether it be good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10.) We thus know that our conduct in this life will be part of our own judgment. Jesus also tells us that our service to our fellow man will be a part of our own judgment. (cf. Matthew 25:34-40.) Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 3:13 that “every man’s work shall be made manifest.” Every feature of our life will be judged on that day. Obedience, motive, conduct, service and faithfulness will be the type of things that will judge us. It will be those things viewed by God as having eternal value that will prove to be worthy of eternal reward.

— Tulsa, OK

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” (Revelation 20:11,12.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

EVIL

By Dalton Key

World and national news of late appears to be following a common theme: human beings, especially those in power or wielding influence, appear intent on running away from God and godliness at a breakneck pace. The ugliness we are seeing and hearing, day in and day out and around the clock, leaves our hearts troubled and our senses nearly numbed in disbelief.

The violence, corruption, and growing decadence of our day reminds us of the sordid conditions, the “perilous times,” described by Paul in 2 Timothy 3. Among the apostle’s warnings, note these ominous words: “But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:13.) From all appearances, evil men and imposters are, even now, alive and active and intent upon deceiving - and ultimately destroying - as many of their fellowmen as possible.

We may as well admit the obvious: the moral and spiritual fabric of this world is ripping apart before our very eyes. As God’s children living in a benighted realm fraught with ever-increasing levels of depravity and outright barbarism, we seem to share an unwanted kinship with Lot, of Old Testament days, who while living in Sodom, was “oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds”. (2 Peter 2:7,8.)

Lot’s soul was tormented “from day to day” in “seeing and hearing.” And he didn’t even own a smartphone!

Despite today’s worsening spiritual and moral climate, we do have reason for hope. Trials and tribulations are neither new nor novel. There was sin in the Garden of Eden. There was evil in the days of Noah. The cross serves as both evidence and answer to all of this.

Atrocities and iniquities will be with us until the end of time. The world has never been inclined toward God and godly behavior. But the good news is found in heaven’s promise: “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33.) And again, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4.)

Never forget this: We are not yet home. “Our citizenship is in heaven.” (Philippians 3:20.)



I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

By Danny Tunnell

The gospel is glad tidings of good things. It is “good news.” Paul wrote, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.” (Romans 1:16.) He describes the gospel as Jesus dying for our sins, and that He was buried, and that He rose from the grave on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:1-8.)

Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” (Luke 4:18.) The gospel is “good news” to the poor, it means deliverance to the captive, it is “good news” to the sick and brokenhearted.

It is a sad commentary on the human condition. Later in the same chapter where Jesus talked about the gospel, the good news, some wanted to throw Him off the brow of a hill! (Luke 4:29.)

“I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” (Habakkuk 3:18.) “The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” (Psalms 126:3.) “Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” (Psalms 107:21.)

You don’t have to be smart to have faith, but you do need courage. Faith in God always puts you in a place where you can be ridiculed or laughed at.

Instead of rejoicing and giving thanks unto the Lord for being so good (Psalms 107:10), some oppose the gospel. To them it sounds “too good to be true.” The gospel to them is surreal, it seems fictional, like a fairy tale. (Luke 24:11.) But with God all things are possible. (Luke 1:37.)

God’s desire is that all are saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4.) God takes no pleasure in the death of someone who is lost. (Ezekiel 33:11.) “The Lord is good to all.” (Psalms 145:9.)

Those living for the Lord will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12.) Jesus said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24.) He said, “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:10.)

Dawn Thomas expressed her heartfelt convictions with these words: “We’re an anchor for those who are hurting. It seems like we’re a harbor for those who are struggling most. And sometimes it’s not always easy bearing Calvary’s cross. We’ve been ridiculed by those who don’t know Him. Sometimes we’re mocked by those who don’t believe. Still I love standing up for my Jesus, ‘cause of all that He’s done for me! That’s why I’m not ashamed of the gospel; it’s still the gospel of Jesus Christ. No, I’m not afraid to stand and be counted, and I’m willing to give my life.”

One word response: AMEN!

— Miami, OK

PUPPY DOGS AND CHRISTIANS

By Richard Dent

It has been said that dogs are a billion dollar business in our nation. Our dogs are better fed than their keepers are. More money is spent on dogs than is spent on education, medication, or religion. All that one has to do to lose a cherished friend is to “kick his dog” or bad-mouth his pet. Back in the Ozarks where I began preaching, I had a wonderful friend, Lige, who used to tell me about his wife’s dog named Perky. He would tell me that Perky got to eat the chicken breast while he got the tailbone or the neck. We both got a laugh out of that.

Now I like dogs; I’ve had several of my own. There are some characteristics that dogs and Christians share. Here are a few:

(1) Dogs are said to be man’s best friend. If this is true, it reminds me of the Scripture in Proverbs 17:17 that says, “A friend loves at all times . . .” Proverbs 18:24 also says, “There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother.” In thinking about friends consider the story of King David and Jonathan,

King Saul’s son. These two had one of the greatest friendships ever recorded in Scripture. Also remember that grand old hymn, “What a friend we have in Jesus,” and that Jesus said, “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:14.)

(2) Dogs are intensely loyal. They will go with their masters anywhere. Now read the book of Ruth. Can we find a story about loyalty any grander than that one? Ruth told her mother-in-law that she would follow Naomi wherever she might go and so she did.

(3) Dogs are blind to status whereas some people are not. The Pharisees loved the chief seats and uppermost rooms and to be called master or rabbi. (Matthew 23:6,7.) A dog just appreciates being a dog; call him anything that you like. Remember the story Jesus told about the beggar Lazarus in Luke 16:21. The dogs came and licked the sores of his feet. Your dog doesn’t care if you are rich or poor.

(4) Last, dogs are nice companions

who will not have to have the last say. Read James 1:19. How about that?

Did you perhaps get a puppy or adopt a dog recently? Consider my friend, Lige, and give up the choice piece of meat.

— Liberal, KS

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