

THE

HARVESTER

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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SERENDIPITY

Do we have "serendipity"? Most people of this earth do not. Only a few have this special ability. The optimists of the world have serendipity. The pessimists certainly do not. And all Christians should have "serendipity", but unfortunately it seems to be a lacking trait among many.

What is "serendipity"? Serendipity is an attitude, an ability, and a mindset. In 1754 Horace Walpole wrote an old Persian fable called The Three Princes of Serendip (i.e., Ceylon). The Princes gained wide fame because of their rare ability to see good in every thing, every event, and every person that they met. From this fairy tale came the word, "serendipity".

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The dictionary says that serendipity is "an apparent aptitude for making fortunate discoveries accidentally." It simply means the ability to see good in every single thing! Some of our greatest discoveries were made through the mistakes (?) of others. Instead of yelling at how bad another messed up, someone had a positive outlook and found the good in the situation. Someone had serendipity!

Christopher Columbus was headed for India when he accidentally bumped into the New World. He did not exactly reach his goal but he was still satisfied with discovering America. When the apple fell on Sir Isaac Newton's head, he did not curse the rotten apple. It led him to discover something good called gravity! Coca Cola was originally made with tap water. A fountain clerk in a local drug store made the mistake one day of pouring soda water onto the coca cola syrup and the customer liked it even better! Corn Flakes were a mistake. Hand tissues were the result of a faulty batch of toilet paper. Yet all these wonderful discoveries were the result of serendipity.

For the Christian, this idea of serendipity is probably captured best in one verse of the Bible: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose"* (Rom. 8:28). No matter what happens, there is always something good hidden beneath the burdens of life. Whereas most people (pessimists) concentrate on the bad things of their lives, Christians (optimists) seek out the good in everything.

So the question is put to us again, Do we have "serendipity"? Do we truly see good in everything we encounter, even if it seems bad at first? When

we are persecuted, when we face seemingly unsurmountable obstacles, when we are sorely tempted and in the midst of various trials of our faith, do we still have a smile on our face and joy in our hearts? In the face of trying circumstances while we attempt to lead a godly life, are we able to look ahead and KNOW that everything will work out for the good?

I am afraid very few of us are able to do that. It does not seem that many of us have serendipity. When things go bad and not to our liking, we would rather complain and murmur like the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness (Num. 16:41; 21:5; 1 Cor. 10:10). Often we develop pessimistic attitudes and think the world is "out to get us". Everything that happens, we see nothing but doom and gloom in it. We allow the evil to overshadow the good!

But that is not the characteristic of a Christian. Throughout history, God's people have always known (or later learned) that no matter how bleak the situation looked, things would work out for the best, according to God's will. Did Jacob call it quits when Laban cheated him and first gave him Leah for a wife? Of course not. Jacob served another seven years and finally received Rachel (Gen. 29:15-30). Through some other unpleasant dealings with Laban, Jacob saw that things would turn out good and that God would bless him exceedingly (Gen. 30).

The classic example of serendipity involved Jacob's favorite son, Joseph. Here was a boy who was dearly loved by his father, yet hated by his brothers (Gen. 37:4). Later his brothers stole his special coat, threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery (Gen. 37:23-36). Then Joseph was later accused of rape and hauled off to the king's jail

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(Gen. 39). How could anyone see any good come out of this situation? But it happened. Through the providence of God, Joseph was elevated to a high position in Egypt and when he saw his evil brothers again, he explained: *"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life ... So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt"* (Gen. 45:5-8). Joseph was able to see the good in all his experiences of life. Joseph had serendipity.

There are numerous other examples in the Bible of the serendipity of God's people. It was unfortunate that Ruth's husband and father-in-law died in Moab but it turned out good that she returned with Naomi to Bethlehem and met Boaz (Ruth 1-4). Job certainly faced his share of troubles at the hands of the devil, but did he not learn that the goodness of God would prevail? *"The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning"* (Job 42:12). Though some of us may suffer like Job, we must always remember to exercise serendipity: look for the good in every thing, every event, and every person we encounter!

Sure, it was horrible that Jesus had to suffer and die an agonizing death on the cross, but look at the good it did for mankind. He opened the doors of heaven for us (Heb. 2:9-10; 5:8-9)! The early Christians endured countless persecutions and were scattered abroad (Acts 8:4) but what better way to spread the Word of God to other people! In Acts 21 Paul was captured in Jerusalem and later appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:10-12). This presented him the opportunity to preach before many dignitaries (Felix, Festus, etc.) and to travel to Rome! Indeed Paul suffered many hardships (2 Cor. 11:23-27), yet he found goodness throughout his entire life! *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Rom. 8:37). Finally, we cannot forget how John was exiled to the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). But the wonderful vision of Revelation was more than enough to make up for that persecution!

Every Christian should have the attitude of serendipity. In everything we do, say, or think, we must look for the good. Through adversity, through temptations, through tribulations, we ought to see the goodness that lies beyond the next mountain. That is serendipity!

RAY McMANUS

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who brought spices to Solomon in such large amounts that their quantities were never again equaled?
2. Before we partake of the Lord's Supper what should we do to prepare ourselves?

3. What event took place after the feeding of the 5000?
4. Proverbs observes that what animal has no commander nor overseer, and yet it stores its provisions and gathers its food at harvest?
5. What did David pick up from a brook on his way to fight Goliath?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Where did Rachel hide the things stolen from Laban, her father? IN HER CAMEL SADDLEBAGS (Gen. 31:34)
2. To whom did Jesus say, "Do ye now believe?" in John 16? THE DISCIPLES (John 16:29-31)
3. Was the Samaritan woman at the well aware of the coming of the Messiah? YES (John 4:25)
4. What animal was used as a sacrifice when a leader of the people of Israel sinned, according to Leviticus? GOAT (Lev. 4:23)
5. What did Rahab the harlot ask the spies for in return for her hiding them? SHOW OF KINDNESS TO HER FAMILY (Josh. 2:12)

LIFE IS A GRINDSTONE.
WHETHER IT GRINDS A MAN DOWN
OR POLISHES HIM DEPENDS UPON
THE KIND OF STUFF HE'S MADE OF.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

It is the resurrection day of our Lord (Mark 16:9).

It is the day Jesus was begotten from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

It is the day the stone became the head of the corner (Psa. 118:22; Acts 2:30-31; Acts 4:11; Isa. 28:16).

ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK . . .

- * The Lord began his work of creation (Gen. 1:5).
- * He rose from the dead (Mark 16:9).
- * He brought joy to the bereaved (Luke 24:33-34).
- * He established his church (Acts 2:47).
- * He became the head of the church (Acts 2:33).
- * The Lord ascended his throne (Acts 2:30).
- * He added three thousand souls to his church (Acts 2:41).
- * He gave the Holy Spirit to the apostles in baptismal measure (Acts 2:4) and to obedient believers in indwelling measure (Acts 2:38).
- * The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles with miracles (Acts 2:33).
- * The Holy Spirit revealed the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:23-30).
- * The Holy Spirit convicted the Jews of sin (Acts 2:37).
- * The Holy Spirit announced the terms of pardon (Acts 2:38).
- * The gospel of purpose, promise, prophecy, and preparation became the gospel of fact (Acts 2:22-47).
- * The early disciples met together and broke bread (Acts 20:7).
- * The early disciples contributed (1 Cor. 16:2).

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Speaker</u>
March 1 - 3	Napolean Church Woodland, AL	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)

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THE LORD HAD ALREADY CALLED

A call came on Sunday morning: "Tell mother not to go to worship this morning; we are coming." But mother went right on to worship anyway. The daughter was furious when she arrived and no one was home to meet her. She said, "I called you and told you that I was coming and you went to worship anyway . . ." The mother replied, "I'm sorry, dear, but the Lord had already called."

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37-38).

-- SELECTED --

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mk. 16:16; Heb. 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3,4).
6. Faithful Christian living (1 Pet. 2:11,12; Rev. 2:10).