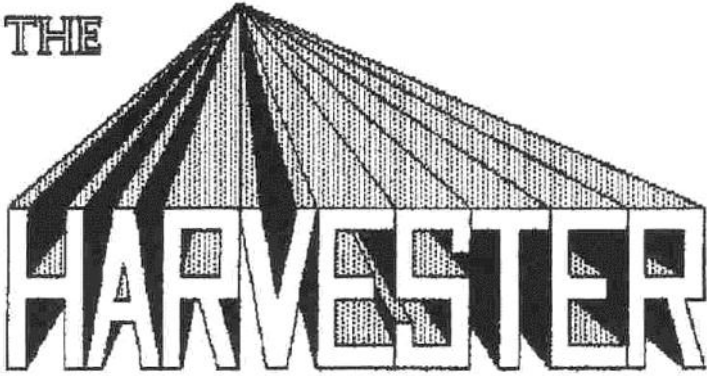


THE



"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)

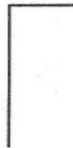
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No. 322

A WEAK GENERATION

A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Likewise, a congregation is only as strong as its weakest member. What if we had to rank order the members in our congregation from strongest Christian to weakest Christian? While we can only rank others based on outward appearance, the important question to ask ourselves is "where do I rank?" Now expand it to include all congregations in your area, state, the country, or the world. If we are honest with ourselves, we likely find

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ourselves quickly dropping lower down that order.

The point is that as Christians, we should all be tied for number one - a peculiar people (Titus 2:14), striving to be perfect (Matt. 5:48), to be Christ-like. However, this is not the case. The strength, determination, confidence, drive, and desire is missing. It was once there. We see it in readings of the early Church. We see it in descriptions of preceding Church periods in the letters to the congregations in Revelation. We see it in our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Is it in us today? No.

As described in Revelation 3, our Laodicean generation is weak. In our previous generations, loving God, and thus serving God, has been the priority, and it should always be (Luke 10:25-28). Today, rather than loving God with all of our heart and putting that above all else, we have started to attempt to juggle this along with family and friends, work or school, and our other desires.

We have become increasingly timid. At some point in our lives, we have likely been asked if we thought we were going to Heaven. How do we typically respond? "Maybe," "I hope so," "I've tried my best, so we'll see." Compare this to Paul's conviction in 2 Timothy 4:7-8.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

When have we ever spoke with such confidence?

Paul is not being boastful. Paul is showing strong faith. Faith is paramount to our Christianity, yet it is something we seem to rarely display today.

Whether it is studying, praying, evangelizing, or attending services, our generation cannot compare to those that have come before us. We do not approach these things with the devotion or desire, whether in mind or in practice.

Our generation is weak largely for two reasons. The first being that we are simply lazy. There is no question that our generation has grown up never having to work very hard, especially in comparison to our forefathers. Advances in technology have contributed to this. Today, we simply work less and receive so much more in return. Our past generations worked so hard, because that is what it took to survive and to support a family. That hard work and devotion was clearly prominent in their spirituality. These Christians were so knowledgeable about the Bible, they were often called "Bible thumpers."

The second reason we are such a weak generation is more disturbing: We don't want it bad enough.

Those who spend a lot of time around me know that I am enthusiastic about fitness and nutrition. Many often discuss with me struggles they have had with weight loss and maintaining it. They ask for advice on how to exercise and what to eat. In the past I would begin developing a plan for them, only to see them never follow through. Now I lay out an extreme situation: What if the only time you could exercise was 4 A.M., and you could no longer eat your favorite food? When the answer is "No, I wouldn't do that," the problem

is clear to me. They are unable to achieve and maintain the physical shape they desire not due to what they eat or how they exercise, but because they don't want it bad enough.

We see this in our Christianity as well. We say we want to improve things like our patience, our Biblical knowledge, or work on personal flaws, however we hardly put in the work to achieve them. The problem is not that we are lacking the means to achieve them. We have the time and resources. What our weak generation doesn't have is the desire.

Like faith, diligence is a cornerstone of our Christianity. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that God rewards those who diligently seek him. The way that we love and serve God can be seen in our actions. Can we honestly say that we can describe the way we study, pray, evangelize, attend services, and work on personal flaws with the word "diligently?" This generation cannot.

We each have personal flaws we know we need to work on in order to be more Christ-like. It may be a quality like patience or meekness, or studying the Bible to expand our knowledge. Like the previous example of fitness, we want to improve these things, but we struggle doing so, because we don't want it bad enough. Solomon discusses this in Proverbs 2:3-5:

Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

Do we work on our personal flaws and study

the Bible like we are searching for treasure? This weak generation is not searching diligently.

Drug addicts will do *anything* to get their fix. While it is a strange example, it shows if we want something bad enough, we will find a way. We will put in the time and effort. Too often we let our free time desires and hobbies beat out our Christian duties. We let little excuses keep us from attending services. If you really want to be there, you will find a way. If you really want to gain more knowledge, you will find a way. If you really want to remove a personal vice, you will find a way.

Our generation has become one where we expect to be served. We are baptized and expect knowledge, temperance, patience, meekness, and forgiveness to come to us over time. Is this diligently seeking God or diligently waiting? We show our faith with our actions (James 2:14-18). A Christ-like nature will not simply come to us; we have to go and get it.

In Mark 12:42-44, we read of the widow with two mites:

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.

There is a term from a card game called "all-in." This means the player bets everything on one hand. The widow went all-in. We need an all-in attitude with our Christianity. The

letter to the Laodiceans in Revelation 3 shows God clearly wants our Christianity to be approached with all-in effort, or not at all.

We are a weak generation of Christians; timid, lazy, and without the conviction, devotion, and drive that we need. Whenever we tell ourselves "I can't," the truth is we can; we just don't want it bad enough. We can all be strong Christians. It is there for the taking; we just have to go get it.

BEN

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. What weapon did Samson use to slay one thousand Philistines, according to Judges 15?
JAWBONE OF AN ASS (Judges 15:15)
2. Before David told his confidants to install Solomon as king, who was attempting to set himself up as king? ADONIJAH (I Kings 1:5-9)
3. After the positive outcome of the situation in Esther, Mordecai and Esther decided the two days commemorating it should be celebrated every year by the Jews. What is the name of this event? THE DAYS OF PURIM (Esther 9:26)

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4. To what reward did Judas agree for betraying Jesus to the chief priests? 30 PIECES OF SILVER (Matthew 26:15)
5. In Romans 4 Paul discusses the righteousness apart from circumcision of what Old Testament patriarch? ABRAHAM (Romans 4:9-25)

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: What is meant by "praying and prophesying" in 1 Corinthians 11:4-5?

ANSWER: *"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven."* (1 Cor. 11:4-5)

Prophesying is explained in 1 Corinthians 14:3 as that which has the effect of *"edification, and exhortation, and comfort."* Such prophesying or teaching is not restricted to those inspired, for the ability to so speak is equally gained by the words or writings of those who were inspired. *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (2 Tim. 2:2). Thus, the prophesying mentioned here is simply the teaching of God's truths, even as we do today as we are influenced by the written Word.

It is understood that only men may speak at an assembly of the church, while women are to be in silence (1 Cor. 14:34-35). The praying or prophesying, therefore, does not have reference only to the church assemblies, for in the assembly the woman is not allowed to speak anyway.

But there are numerous places in the New Testament Scriptures where women did in private exercise their freedom to teach: Priscilla in Acts 18:26. Phillip's virgin daughters in Acts 21:9,

Gospel Meetings

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
October 5 - 7	Valley Valley, AL	Donald Thompson (Wedowee, AL)
October 12 - 14	Dowell Hill Columbus, IN	Donald Thompson (Wedowee, AL)
October 15 - 19	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
October 18 - 21	Marrowbone Marrowbone, KY	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
October 26 - 28	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Tim Eldridge (Woodland, AL)
October 29 - November 2	Freefield Stateline, MS	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

Timothy's grandmother and mother in 2 Timothy 1:5, and the aged women were instructed to teach the young women in Titus 2:4.

These verses are not intended to imply that only in praying or prophesying is the covering important, but rather that in these two capacities the brother or sister assumes a role especially designed to God's service.

The understanding, therefore, is that wherever a brother or sister may happen to be, occasion will arise where prayer and the teaching of God's word will be possible. Should the brother have long hair when such opportunities are presented, it would distract from the effect of his prayer and teaching. It would even be contrary to nature and would thus hinder acceptance by those he was attempting to teach. Should a sister have such an occasion, her shorn hair would loudly proclaim that she was not in subjection.

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