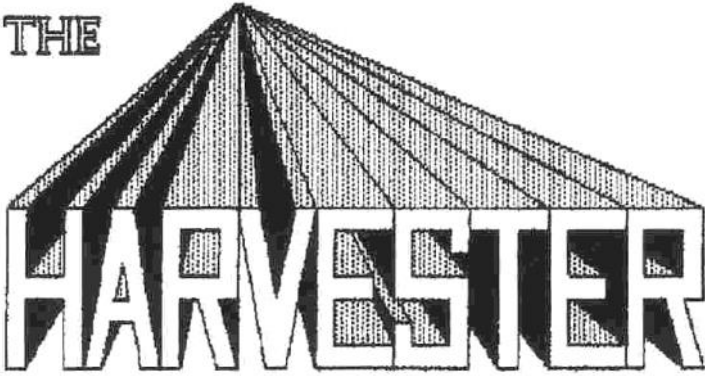


THE



"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)

September 2023

No. 453

POSITIVE CHRISTIAN LIVING

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (John 10:9-11)

When a person becomes a Christian he moves from a negative way of life to a positive way of life. Jesus made it very clear that He came so that we "*might have life, and that [we] might have it more abundantly.*" This is not speculation but a di-

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vine promise. As a Child of a King, life now has meaning and purpose. From beginning to end, Christianity centers in a positive Savior, based on a positive hope, revealed in a positive message, and encourages people to have positive attitudes and positive actions.

While all these facts are true about the positive nature of Christianity, it doesn't automatically mean, however, that every Christian is living a dynamic, positive Christian life. This is evidenced by the tide of negativism in our midst. Have you noticed how quickly many Christians in our conversations get around to the negatives? To listen to some talk, you would think that God has commanded, "Thou shalt be pessimistic." When we look at the negative side of life, we tend to get depressed. Our eyes lose their sparkle, we get grumpy, we become lazy, and this is when bitterness and hatred spring up, we become bound by our fears. If it stopped with just one person it would not be quite as bad, but it spreads like a forest fire in the hot dry summer to other members. We suffer, the work of the Lord suffers, and we take a step backwards in our progress.

In introducing this lesson, I wanted to make sure that we understood that people do become negative, and that to get rid of the negative attitude before it hurts someone else, we must change our individual attitude. There are some truths that are designed to help us move ahead in daily "positive Christian living." The material in this message has helped people change their lives in a very positive way for hundreds of years and it will help us too. I want to challenge each of us to use it now. Remember this truth, "You may not be able to change the world, but you can change yourself; after all, a better world begins with you."

A positive life centers in knowing God.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

It means commitment to Christ as Lord of your life.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46)

It has a goal of growing into the fulness of Christ.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: (Eph. 4:13)

It involves serving God in every situation.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Rom. 12:2)

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. (2 Cor. 4:16)

It is believing that “*we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*” (Rom. 8:28).

This is probably the hardest thing revealed in God’s word for man to accept. If we all could accept this without question, I don’t believe that there would ever be any negative thoughts among us. The verse doesn’t mean that all things may be good in and of themselves, but God is able to bring good out of it for our benefit.

It also means that we must trust the power of God.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, (Eph. 3:20)

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. (Php. 4:13)

In other words, we can’t possibly do it alone.

It means being an active productive member of the body of Christ.

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:12-13)

It means that we must have positive thoughts.

For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he... (Pro. 23:7)

It means that we must get our direction from God's word.

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psa. 119:105)

All of what we have just said is that positive Christian living is a lifestyle. It is doing. We seem to forget that we are responsible for our own lives. We all try to make excuses for the kind of life that we live. Many people that I have talked to who do not belong to the church or who have stopped being faithful say that they are not going to be a part of anything that has as many hypocrites as there are in the church. Yes, there are hypocrites in the church. Does this give a person the excuse to reject the benefits of being a child of God? The hypocrite, according to the Bible, will go to Hell. The person who stays away from God, according to the scriptures, will also go to Hell. Both people in this example have complete control over their lives. Regardless of what my neighbor does, I will be accountable for what I do. Accountability is the key word and is the most frightening fact that we will have to face.

So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. (Rom. 14:12)

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every

man shall be put to death for his own sin. (Deu. 24:16)

Why then would anyone allow the actions of another to keep him from God? The fact is to develop a positive attitude, we must feel a sense of self-responsibility. We must be willing to accept the blame for our own faults, failures, weaknesses, and mistakes. There are two other verses that show the importance of being responsible.

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (Rom. 14:10-11)

All of these words say you are responsible for the things that daily challenge your life. That doesn't mean that you cause everything that happens, but that you are responsible for how you handle the situation. We can never be happy until we take responsibility for our lives. Then we can let God guide us to peace and happiness.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. (Php. 4:11)

Next month we will talk more about being the best that we can and living a more positive life.

Adapted from a sermon by KENT DICKINSON
(Deceased)

PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

We are all familiar with the Parable of the Talents (Mat. 25:14-30). From context, we learn that a talent was a denomination of ancient money. The master's money was divided up according to three servants' differing abilities. This money was "entrusted," which meant the master expected to have it back; it was not a loan or gift. When the master returned, he commended two servants and scolded the third servant. From this

parable, we typically learn the lesson that doing nothing, as the third servant did, is essentially wasting our talent.

But there is another important lesson to be learned which we usually overlook. The third servant didn't actually "do nothing." He did "do something." It's nothing to brag about, but he did bury the talent. That took some work (digging). Maybe not much, but we can't say he "did nothing."

We need to examine the parable in its context. This parable is found between two other parables or stories: Foolish Virgins & Judgment Day. The real lesson has something to do with the end of time and being prepared for it! It's not so much about money but about time: HOW to use and spend time as we near the end.

Jesus always warned His followers about the end of time:

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. (Mat. 24:42-44)

Some did nothing but watch (1 & 2 Thes.). They gave up the responsibilities of their normal lives, and the rules of the world no longer applied, because they were waiting for the trumpet of the Lord, waiting for the end of time, waiting to be delivered, and they neglected the affairs entrusted to them. Why feed the hungry or even bury the dead? Jesus is coming soon. Why plant crops and weed the fields? Why worry about the harvest? The end is in sight. Why should we marry or have babies? Why should we start a new generation when Jesus is on the way and the end in sight? While waiting for Christ, they did not use their time wisely. Isn't that part of what the parable teaches?

Note that the master did not tell his servants how long he

would be gone or when he would return. What did they do in the meantime? They knew they would have to give back the talents. Similarly, what are we doing until Christ comes again? Will we use our time wisely like the first two servants? We know we will all stand before Christ and be judged on that Last Day.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

We get a hint of what Jesus expects us to be doing until He returns. Look at the parable of the Judgment Day (Mat. 25:35-36). We are not to simply wait and mark time until He comes. We must “*work the works of him who sent*” us, as Jesus said of himself (John 9:4). We must not grow “*weary in well doing*” either (Gal. 6:7-10).

Therefore, we must use our God-given talent, money, and time opportunities to our fullest until the Master returns. To be like the third servant is to waste our talent, to never put at risk our limited abilities. The third servant was called wicked and slothful (Mat. 25:26).

We cheat God when we don’t give him the full value of the talents and time we possess, when we dig in the earth and gain nothing more while waiting for his return!

What are we doing right for the Lord until He comes again? How are we spending time in these last days? Are we about our Father’s business (Luke 2:49)? Have we done many wonderful works in his name and done his will? (Mat. 7:21-22)

Adapted from a sermon by RAY MCMANUS
(Deceased)

GOSPEL MEETINGS

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
September 1 - 3	Ashlock Near Celina, TN	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
September 20 - 22	Oak Grove Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
September 29 - October 1	Van Lear Van Lear, KY	J. D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How long did Solomon reign over Israel?
2. Who slept under a juniper tree after fleeing for his life?
3. Which angel told Daniel the meaning of his vision of the ram and the goat?
4. Who will the "least person in the Kingdom of God" be greater than?
5. What was Timothy advised to take to help with his illnesses?

...ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

And remember last month's questions?

1. What disease did the Lord send upon Miriam?
LEPROSY (Num. 12:10)
2. How old was Moses when he died? 120 (Deu. 34:7)
3. What were the names of Elimelech's two sons?
MAHLON & CHILION (Ruth 1:2)
4. Where did Jesus first see Nathanael?
UNDER THE FIG TREE (John 1:48)
5. What type of tree did Zacchaeus climb to see Jesus?
SYCAMORE (Luke 19:4)

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