

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



Dave Phillips, editor

number 1

Needing Encouragement?

Dave Phillips, Germantown

Have you noticed that Christians are often in need of encouragement? Some feel that a Christian who is at times disillusioned and disappointed with the events of life is somehow living below their calling. I recall one popular statement made to congregations is along the line of "if you're saved and joyful about your salvation, would you please let your face know it." I have always found myself cringing at the guilt-laden implication. While I think that it is very important to choose your disposition and many are unhappy in life because they so choose, isn't it possible that a God-fearing, Bible-believing, church-going Christian could struggle with periods of despondency? It is not a sign of weakness to be discouraged. It seems to be a sign of humanity.

The apostle Paul mentioned his emotional struggles when writing to the church at Corinth. Listen to a fellow struggler relate his spiritual battle:

"For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life." (2 Corinthians 1:8, NASV)

Paul is not bragging about his troubles. He is not wallowing in the mire of despair. He makes a simple admission - he felt the pressure of trials and strain of trying to accomplish much in the face of great adversity.

Do we stay in despair? Should we be proud of our discouragement? Paul didn't believe so, for he continued by sharing the solution to his predicament.

"...indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves in order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead..." (2 Corinthians 1:9, NASV)

The source of joy and deliverance that rescued Paul is the same source that will deliver us. We must trust in God and not allow our emotions to control our lives and dictate our dispositions. Trusting in the Lord and learning to overcome requires guidance from God and commitment from us. This has always been true. Remember Solomon's words?

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your path straight." Proverbs 3:5,6 (NASV)

Superstition

Dave Phillips, Germantown

Friday the 13th has just passed, a day that appears ominous in our culture. Some, for sure, use the occasion as a convenient conversation starter. Many, unfortunately, are bound by fear or dread days before the day ever comes. The entire day of the 13th is lived in an overly cautious, negatively expectant manner. I remember a quote (though I cannot remember the source) that declared, "Superstition is the worm that exudes from the grave of a dead faith." I paused when I first read those words, because it may sometimes seem that superstition can range from an innocent game that athletes play to a dangerous habit upon which gamblers depend. In reality, superstitious beliefs are a direct affront against God. Paul mentions to the church at Corinth that one of the greatest dangers in the battle against Satan is our struggle to determine what is true about Christ and the Christian walk. He states,

"We are destroying speculations (imagination) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:5, NASV)

We must understand that superstition is not the product of a spiritual mind focusing on Christ and recognizing the omnipotence of our God. In times of doubt, re-read the words of Paul to the church at Rome in Romans 8:37-39.

Jumping to Conclusions

Al Maxey, Pulpit Helps

A woman invited all her friends over for a special dinner. Desiring to impress them, she hired a maid, a butler, and a chef. She purchased the best steaks she could find and a top brand of mushrooms to accompany them.

When the chef noticed that the mushrooms seemed a bit discolored, the lady suggested he feed a few to the dog, since the hour was late and there was no time to purchase more. "If the dog eats them and doesn't get sick, they're probably all right!"

The dog eagerly consumed the mushrooms and showed no sign of ill effects, so the chef completed the meal and served the guests.

Later, as dessert was being served, the maid hurried in and whispered to the lady of the house, "Ma'am, the dog is dead!" Not waiting to hear any more, she leaped to her feet and told the guests they had no time to lose! They had eaten tainted mushrooms and must rush immediately to the hospital!

Later that evening, after the lady and her guests had returned from having their stomachs pumped, she asked the maid, "Where is the dog now?" "Out in the front yard ma'am," replied the maid, "where he crawled after the car hit him!"

How many times is a person's work, character or motives questioned, or even condemned, without the benefit of investigation. Jumping to conclusions is a very dangerous practice. We must learn to examine all situations, all information, and the actions of all people fairly.

Is the Holy Spirit Weird?

John Gipson, Little Rock, Arkansas

Peter Jennings, the television news anchor for ABC, recently did a one-hour special on religion which showed some of the strange things happening under the supposed influence of the Holy Spirit. People laugh and giggle, others swoon and fall to the floor as if they had been hit by an invisible hammer. While many seem impressed by these actions attributed to the Holy Spirit, I have to confess that it seems weird to me.

Sometime around 1950, Reuel Lemmons made the point that our God is a consistent God, "operating in religion according to the same patterns and same laws he uses in the corn field."

Then he added, "I see the tree across the street with its roots down in the ground and its branches up in the air, and I say, 'That is right; that is the way a tree ought to grow.' I pass by it without noticing it, but if I were to pass by and see that tree with its branches down in the ground and its roots up in the air I would stop and look twice. I would say that is an unnatural thing. That is not the way trees act under the laws of God. Now, the same God that would make a tree stand with its roots in the ground and its branches in the air, will not, when a man becomes religious, make him stand on his head. My God is one God. You will find him operating in the field of religion exactly as he operates in the field of nature."

I have tremendous confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit when I see individuals who do not gratify the desires of the flesh. They are obviously walking by the Spirit. I see the Spirit's power made evident when I behold lives filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 6:22-23). Yes! That is my God at work, and I am impressed.

People falling out, rolling around, twitching, laughing uncontrollably never make me think of God's Spirit. I take one look and say, "that's unnatural; that's weird." I can't begin to attribute that to the God I worship.