

THE SOUTHWESTERNER



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A CALL TO MATURITY

Phil. 3:15-16

Clay Bond

Throughout the Scriptures the call to spiritual maturity is expressed in various ways. For example, in Philippians 3:12-16 Paul used an athletic metaphor to illustrate the need for spiritual growth. If we are to mature spiritually, we must have the attitude of an athlete pursuing a prize. It is not enough to encourage people to study and know their Bibles without teaching them why they should grow! We are to study and know our Bibles because the Bible teaches us how to live the Christian life and pursue the ultimate goal of Heaven.

Pursuing the prize starts with an awareness that we have not arrived. In the Christian marathon, we are continually striving to reach the end and must keep running steadily until we have reached that finish line (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Heb. 12:1-2). As a maturing Christian, we cannot ever be content with our prayer life, biblical knowledge, or our good works. The call to maturity demands that we constantly strive toward the goal of being more and more like God.

Secondly, one who is pursuing the prize makes the maximum effort. Picture a runner nearing the finish line, reaching forward, straining every muscle, pushing himself to get there first! That type of zeal and effort should describe our spiritual fervor. We should be running to win and straining every spiritual muscle in pursuit of the prize (1 Cor. 9:24). The maturing Christian cannot allow the trials, hardships, and temptations of life to overwhelm him. We grow spiritually by enduring the trials (Jas. 1:2-4), overcoming life's hardships (Ps. 27:13-14) and triumphing over temptation (Jas. 1:13-15). Everything that we need to know to pursue the prize has been given to us in the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). The call to spiritual maturity demands that we continually strive toward the goal, giving our very best effort.

Thirdly, those who are pursuing the prize must continue on the path of spiritual progress. The phrase, "let us walk by the same rule" is used of armies marching in battle formation. The key is to stay with your unit, stay in step, be consistent, and keep moving forward! In the church, God has provided new Christians and struggling Christians godly examples to follow (Phil. 3:17). If you are reaching for the finish line, surround yourself with strong runners who spur you on. In the Scriptures, God has provided all Christians the spiritual food we need to mature and develop (2 Pet. 1:3). The call to spiritual maturity demands that we continually strive toward the goal, giving our very best effort, staying in step with our unit.

Finally, as we pursue the prize it is imperative that we maintain a proper focus by keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus (Heb. 2:2). Of all the things that may cause a Christian to quit the race, taking our eyes off of Christ is perhaps the most dangerous. Whether we are distracted by entertainments, seduced by the secondary, or looking back longingly at the broad path, we will begin heading toward our focal point and abandon the race. While sin can easily trip up an immature Christian, as we grow spiritually we develop discernment and with that a distaste for sin and healthy appetite for holiness (Heb. 12:2; Heb. 1:9, 5:11-14; Amos 5:15; 1 Thess. 5:21-22). The call to spiritual maturity demands that we continually strive toward the goal, giving our very best effort, staying in step with our unit and above all keeping our eyes focused on Jesus Christ.

It is a sad reality that there are some who have grown up in the church but have never grown in the Christ. They did not heed the call to spiritual maturity and somewhere along the way, they stopped striving for the finish line. The story is told of a man who tried to climb to the top of a

prominent mountain and fell to his death. At the bottom of the mountain, there is a little grave with a tombstone that has the man's name and then it says, "He died climbing." That should be the epithet of every Christian! May we continually strive toward greater spiritual maturity.

SW



"THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH"

Andy Baker '06

Timothy got the warning in I Timothy 6:3-5 because there were some in Ephesus who had knowledge but were rejecting truth, wanting to teach something else. Thus, envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, and other consequences were resulting (6:4-5). When knowledge becomes king, Christ and His truth are set aside, and there will be consequences as there were in Timothy's day. Consider:

My knowledge can be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. The gospel is simple in nature. Man has a problem: sin. Christ provides the solution: the gospel. The adversary has been planting false ideas since the beginning (Genesis 3:1-4). The devil corrupts the message, the messenger, and the hearer so the message is unclear about what God has said through Jesus (see II Cor. 11:3-4).

I can know everything but Christ and Him crucified. As Solomon concluded Ecclesiastes, he said, "Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh" (12:12). With the Bible, it may be that someone can know exactly what commentators, authors, poets, etymologists or prophets said, and still fail to grasp the responsibility of living soberly, righteously, and godly (Tit. 2:11). Paul didn't use man's wisdom or eloquent speech in his first trip to Corinth. He allowed the simple knowledge and power of the message of Jesus to convict the Corinthians and to motivate them to be obedient (I Cor. 2:1-5).

I might know, but not be loving when I speak and act. I Corinthians 13:2 uses the illustration that a person might have great understanding and yet fail to have love as the underlying factor. When love fails to be the motivation for speaking truth, a Christ-like spirit ceases to be in the conversation (Eph. 4:15). Thus, one can become obsessed with arguing and sowing the seed of discord.

My knowledge can be dwarfed by my pride. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up" (I Cor. 8:1 ESV). Bible study is to win souls, not win arguments.

Sometimes being right becomes more important than letting the beauty of Jesus be seen. Paul classifies teachers like this as "proud, knowing nothing" (I Tim. 6:3-5). The point of the passage is that when Christ ceases to be the focus of all Biblical study, knowledge ceases to be beneficial and yields to pride in a very ungodly way.

The Reminder, The Graber Road Bulletin Weekly Bulletin, April 14, 2019.

SW

CONIAH AND THE THRONE OF DAVID

Ronnie Scherffius

One of the great errors of our time is the premillennial doctrine of the one-thousand years reign of Jesus in Jerusalem. Passages such as Daniel 7:13-14 (a prophecy in Jesus ascension) and Amos 9:11-12 (a prophecy fulfilled the church [cf. Acts 15:13-18]) are used to teach an earthly reign of Jesus. Though the Scriptures do in fact reveal that Jesus will come again (Mt. 25:32-34; Jn. 14:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; et al) it is never affirmed that Jesus will set foot on this earth. In fact, Jesus said that He would "receive us" to himself (Jn. 14:3) and Paul affirmed we would "meet Him in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

One text of the Old Testament that is both decisive but destructive to the premillennial error is found in the prophecies of Jeremiah. Speaking of Coniah (a.k.a. Jeconiah (1 Chron. 3:16) and Jehoiachin (2 Kings 24:6) Jeremiah wrote:

Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah. (Jer. 22:28-30)

While at first view this passage may seem to have little impact on the premillennial earthly reign of Jesus, a closer observation reveals that Jesus cannot reign in Jerusalem and His reign be as it is described in Scripture. David spoke of the Messiah as reigning from Zion over all the earth and ruling over His enemies with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:6-9). Isaiah characterized the Messiah's reign as a government of, "peace" that would have "no end" (Isa. 9:7). How does the prophecy of Jeremiah regarding Coniah, a king of Judah who was taken into Babylonian captivity

and died in Babylon have any effect on the premillennial reign of Jesus? Jeremiah's prophecy simply will not allow a successful prosperous earthly reign of Jesus in Jerusalem!

Note again the end of Jeremiah's prophecy, "for no man of his [Coniah's] seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30). Matthew's gospel account begins with the "generation of Jesus Christ" (Mt. 1:1). From Abraham to Solomon (2-6) we find familiar names of those great men and women in the family tree of Jesus. But it is the name of one of the kings of Judah after the time of Solomon that especially catches our attention: "And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon" (Mt. 1:11). Jesus is a descendant of Coniah! According to the "word of the LORD" (Jer. 22:29), No descendant of Coniah "shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jer. 22:30). How then can Jesus, a descendant of David (Mt. 1:6) through Coniah (Mt. 1:11), prosperously rule on the throne of David?! Hear the words of Jesus, "My kingdom is not of this world" (Jn. 18:36).

The word of the Lord assures us that the Messiah will in fact rule on the throne of David (2 Sam. 7:12-14; Acts 2:30), and at the same time that none of Coniah's seed will prosper while sitting on that throne! Thus, we conclude that the throne of David on which Jesus will reign is not an earthly throne but heavenly. Therefore, Peter would preach that Jesus is reigning even now from His throne (Acts 2:36).

Premillennialism is false from start to finish! "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD": Jesus was born to be King (Jn. 18:37; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Acts 2:30); He was raised up from the dead to be King (Acts 2:32-36); He is now reigning as King (1 Tim. 6:15)!

Midtown Messenger, The Midtown Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, July 7, 2019.

SW



ENVY AND RESENTMENT

D.J. Stucky '16

Envoy and resentment are both natural emotions, yet still very dangerous. When we see people who have things we like, it is natural to want what they have. If we work hard to achieve what somebody else had handed to them, it is natural to feel some resentment. These feelings can be exacerbated if the other person flaunts what they have, intentionally or otherwise. However, we

must never allow these feelings to change our behavior.

Jacob loved Joseph more than all his children because he was the son of his old age and made him a tunic of many colors, Joseph's brothers resented him for it (Gen. 37:1-4). To make things worse, Joseph revealed several dreams that implied his whole family would one day bow to him (37:5-11). Joseph's brothers had heard enough. When Joseph was sent to them in the fields, they plotted to kill him (37:12-20). Reuben convinced his brothers to throw Joseph into a pit instead, hoping to return later and save him. However, Judah and the others sold Joseph to slavers (37:21-30). The brothers then deceived Jacob into believing his son was devoured by wild beasts (37:31-35)

Joseph's brothers allowed resentment and jealousy to inform their decision making. It was unfair that Joseph was the favorite, and the way he handled his position provoked his brothers to jealousy (Gal. 5:26). Yet we have nothing to be jealous of, for God has given us everything we need (1 Pet. 2:1-3). Even when our brothers are doing well, our response should be to rejoice with them instead of resenting their happiness (Rom. 12:15). Envy will never lead to anything positive. To this point in the history of God's people, it led to the murder of Abel (Gen. 4), the ejection of Ishmael and Hagar (Gen. 16), and the feud between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 25-28). Were it not for Reuben, Joseph would have also been killed in the name of envy. Reuben took a stand for what was right, even though his brothers were ready to do wickedly. Unfortunately, he did not go far enough. He intended to save his brother secretly, and that secrecy cost Joseph his freedom. Our stand for righteousness must be obvious to all (Matt. 5:14-16), or we too may remain enslaved by sin.

There will always be people who have what we want. There will always be people who have been given what they may not deserve. There will always be people who are difficult to get along with. Envy, resentment, and violence are never the answer. Instead, let us be content to live in away pleasing to the Lord.

From Faith to Faith, Granbury Street Church of Christ Weekly Bulletin, December 3, 2017.

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For a schedule of programs visit them at
www.thegospelradionetwork.org

Record for the Week of October 20, 2019

Bible Class	173
Morning Assembly.....	226
Evening Assembly	160
Iglesia de Cristo	
Morning Assembly.....	N/A
Contribution	\$N/A

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PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

Mark DeAvila has been hospitalized in California due to continuing heart transplant complications.

Diana Rodriguez is suffering from 3 herniated discs in her lower back.

Bud Wade will be going to M.D. Anderson in Houston to determine the next course of treatment for his cancer.

Health Concerns: Lucile Johnson, Sue Shamburger, Bonnie Thetford, Angela Young, Jo Young.

Shut-ins: Jeannette Hansen, Rosemary Garrett, Jon Little, Bobby Johnson, Elvira Martinez, Ginny Oswald, Jan Smith.

Others: Sonny & Lee Barr, Rodney Boes, Olivia Carson, Caleb Crouchet, Bill Ellison, Ada Fleming, Bonnie Gomer, CK Holt, Deborah Hoover, Nell McCown, Bill & Nancy Ponds, Cynthia Puente, Kay Westbrook, Gib Young.

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Tuesday, 10:00 am (September-May), Men's and Ladies' Bible Classes | Wednesday, Bible Classes, 7:00 pm

RADIO PROGRAM – *The Word of Life* | Sunday, 7:30 am | KLBJ, 590-AM and 99.7 FM | online at swcofc.org/word-of-life