

Weatherly Weekly

June 28, 2020

2020 Edition, Number 26

Toning It Down

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A “country meeting” had gone exceedingly well, and elders from another community asked the preacher to work with them the following year. He came at the appointed time, and found his reputation had spread, and the building was packed. The elders met him at the car, told him they had never had such a gathering, so he must be very careful lest he offend someone with his forthright teaching.

Being young and brash, and having no more tact than to tell the truth, he reminded them of the undiluted lessons that had been given at the neighboring church in the previous year. He said that since he had not been in that section of the state before, the previous year's work must have drawn this year's crowd; and certainly was the reason he had been asked to come. He concluded, “If you expect to hold and convert these people with something other than the kind of preaching that brought them together, I'm afraid you have the wrong man. I'll get back into my car and go home.”

With much confusion... “Oh no, you must

have misunderstood us.” The preacher was persuaded to stay, and the meeting began. The preaching was strong, and seemed to get a little stronger, but the people continued to come, and several were converted.

I do not now believe, nor did I then, that “skinning the sects” is good preaching. Some fold will turn away from straight, plain truth, no matter how fairly we seek to present it. But we are dead wrong in thinking we can convert people to Christ with anything other than the Bible message. It will convict the world respecting sin, righteousness, and judgement; and many won't like that. But we are looking for the “few” who will like it, and will genuinely turn to God.

“Toning it down” will produce only “toned down” members of a “toned down” church. You may keep the money, the politicians, and silk-stocking row; but you will lose the backbone and fiber that is necessary for a church to prevail and please the Lord. And if “members” are not interested in pleasing the Lord and saving souls, why bother with any preaching at all. □

In Good Times and Bad

It's easy to give God the glory when you have great friends and family, and enjoy wonderful health and happiness. It's easy to praise Him when others surround you in like mind and your voice is joined in a chorus of hundreds. It's easy to be thankful when you walk along a quiet beach or sit atop a mountain where you can see forever. It's easy then. And I have had those times. You have, too.

There are “mountaintop” days when your cup is filled to overflowing, days when you can't thank Him enough. The simple song, “God is so good,” seems to be on “repeat” as it plays in your mind. In fact, you wake up to the message of Psalm 118:24—“This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.” Indeed. I love those days. Unfortunately, there aren't enough of them.

Psalm 145 is filled to overflowing with bounty and blessing. “Every day I will bless Thee, and I will praise Thy name forever and ever” (v. 2). Yet in the midst of this beginning-to-end song of praise, there is this realistic reminder: “The Lord sustains all who fall, and raises up all who are bowed down” (v. 14). There will be days when we fall, days when we are bowed down.

Hence, Can we bring Him glory when times aren't so good? Can we praise Him in spite of the pain? Can we thank Him in the midst of trials? Can we trust Him when we don't understand?

Job's response to Mrs. Job sums up the struggle (2:10): “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” What do I tell the young mom struggling with two toddlers in tow and feeling completely overwhelmed? Or what do I say to the sister that has buried a spouse or to the brother that looks into the mirror and speaks the word he never thought he would hear: “Cancer?” What words can be said to the one struggling through a divorce or to the family facing the loss of their home to a natural calamity?

In those moments of intensified emotion, the words, “Praise God!” ring hollow. Yet, in the aftermath of each situation just described, He can be praised. Looking back on life's toughest days, we can give Him the glory for what He could see when we couldn't. Have you never prayed for an outcome only to be denied, and then later been thankful that

God didn't give you what you thought you wanted? At the time of denial, our selfishness made it hard to praise Him. Given time and opportunity for reflection, it becomes easier.

One mark of spiritual maturity is to learn to glorify Him in days of delight and days of distress. After the Nashville flood of 2010, I made a list of lessons learned to our benefit.

- We learned that we are not in control.
- We learned that people are more important than possessions.
- We learned to quit complaining about insignificant stuff.
- We learned that God has given man an indomitable spirit.
- We learned that things could change in an instant.
- We learned to thank Him for our safety.
- We learned that after the storm comes a rainbow of hope.

Can God be glorified when times are hard and circumstances difficult? Yes.

When a friend's wife died just shy of their 30th wedding anniversary, he was given wisdom perspective when presented with this question. “If God had sat you down thirty years ago and said, ‘You can have her, but only for thirty years’—what would have been your decision?” He responded, “I would have still said, ‘Yes!’—and been thankful.” His friend paused and replied, “God gave you those thirty years.” He learned there and then to glorify God for the time that he had. It's a faith-perspective that, sometimes, only tragedy allows you to find.

The song “I Know That My Redeemer Lives” was taken from something Job said in 19:25. It's one of those hymns we sing with great fervor and emotion. It's also easy to conclude that whomever wrote those original words must have been experiencing a mountaintop moment unlike any other. Friend, Job wrote those words and . . . he wasn't sitting on a mountain. In fact, he was at one of the lowest ebbs of life. Even then, his faith stirred him to look past his troubles and glorify God for what he knew.

Life is hard and some days it gets harder. Ask God for help to see the good. Satan will do everything he can to convince you otherwise. Don't listen to that liar. Put your trust in the One who can see what you cannot see. Be thankful for what you have. And keep your eye cocked toward heaven.

Good times or bad—Glory to His name! □

Watch LIVE!

