

The Old Paths

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“Life Isn’t Fair”

Jarrod Jacobs

I recently had the opportunity to talk with a man whose wife has MS. As we talked about this tragedy, he recounted how he had “big plans” at one time. He had intended to retire, and he and his wife would travel together. This is not possible now since she is mostly confined to her house as the disease spreads. As I left the man’s house, many thoughts flooded my mind, but the first thought was, “I don’t have any problems!” Sometimes, I think I have problems and difficulties, but when I think about what this husband and wife are living with, I realize how insignificant my problems are!

Another thought which came to mind, was the fact that life is not fair. The man I spoke to made similar comments along this line. He stated how it was not fair for him and his wife to have to endure such hardships since they were “good people who never hurt anybody.” His statements called to mind the observations David made in Psalm 73. As he saw the wicked people flaunting God’s word, and seeming to get away with it, he considered his own life, and thought perhaps he had been wasting his time (v. 1-13). It was not until he went to the “sanctuary of God” that he changed his mind, for it was then that he “understood ... their end” (v. 17-19, 27). In spite of what life may throw at us, we must be as David and never turn our backs on God.

No friends, life is not fair. One of the physical consequences of sin is that the righteous suffer for the deeds of the wicked (Gen. 3:16-19; Ps. 73). Similarly, we see the ungodly prosper due to the deeds of the righteous (Gen. 30:27, 39:2-3, 23; etc.). These facts bring to mind the words of Solomon, who said, “I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them” (Ecc. 9:11-12). In other words, life is not fair!

In light of the above, it ought to make Heaven that much sweeter to us! This is a place of equality and justice. Jesus promises “rest” for those weary in labor (not the lazy! Matt. 11:28-30; Heb. 4:11). Jesus is also the One who will judge us on the last day (Jn. 5:22, 27). We can be assured that He will be fair in all things! Jesus is a judge that cannot be bought, bribed, or befuddled by man!

We cannot make life fair, but we can make life better by making sure we live as Christ would have us to live, beginning by treating others the way we would want to be treated (Matt. 7:12). We must also be a good example among folks (Matt. 5:13-16). When we treat one

another as we want to be treated, and show a righteous example before our family and friends, this will not make the “hurtful things” go away, but it will help to soften the pain when life is not fair! Such an attitude must be seen in the Lord’s church as well. Folks, remember that WE ARE ALL WE HAVE!! Therefore, let us do what we can to help one another, and be loving toward each other (Jn. 13:34). Our home and the church are but two places of “refuge” as we live our life in an unfair world plagued by disease, danger, and death. Take some time starting today to pray for one another (I Thess. 5:17). Then, let us take time to comfort and help each other in this unfair life.

“Convenience Or Priority?”

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During a recent written visit with a faithful, yet very concerned brother in Christ, he mentioned an alarming reality. He mentioned his knowledge of a congregation of the Lord’s people who determined to have but one worship service each Lord’s Day in order to “alleviate the troublesome problem of parents and children making decisions regarding ball games or worship.” What decision, dear reader? The Master said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). The inspired apostle Paul said, “And He (Christ) is the head of the body the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). What does that passage

mean regarding priority?

Some of us who have been a part of the church of Christ for a few decades see presently a dangerous trend. Many of us are at a loss as to how best to deal with the onslaught of such digression; seeing regardless of what we do, some members of the Lord's church will still leave in the midst of preaching, singing, and even praying in order to conveniently abide their plans. Such souls have caused us to shorten the song service to two songs before prayer, find men to pray that won't "preach" with their prayers, place communion before preaching (as a convenience to those who "just have to leave") and even state regarding the contribution, "as a matter of convenience we'll take up the collection at this time". And shame to the preacher whose sermon goes beyond the allotted twenty-five minutes! Is it not the case that whether morning or evening, we try to be "accommodating to the convenience of the audience" instead of establishing the time of worship as the PRIORITY OF OUR DEVOTION TO GOD AND HIS KINGDOM? Pray tell me how "convenience" compliments the understanding of Matthew 6:33?

When one considers the depth and riches of God's saving love (Rom. 5:6-8; 8:38-39), convenience certainly is not an adjective of relationship! When one considers the preaching of the apostle Paul, convenience is not among the references of his descriptive life. In fact, when one reads and considers earnestly the assembling of the saints in the first century, only the ignorant (here pronounced "ig-NOR-ant") would claim such as convenient! In fact, the contrast of the earliest brethren and our present con-

veniences causes wonderment at our right to claim "diligent" as one of our characteristics. Notice Acts 2:46-47 where the writing says, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (emp. mjd) Who would dare claim such daily continuance in the temple was "convenient"? Adding to this Acts 17:11, one actually wonders if the customary "twice assembling on Lord's Day and once at mid-week" is actually a matter of convenience!

The point is, dear reader, the more convenient we make serving our Lord, the less of a priority He remains in our lives! The fact is this life of being a Christian is one of servitude (Rom. 6:22; II Pet. 2:16). We don't "own" the church (Col. 1:18; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23); we are privileged to be a part of it (I Pet. 2:1-10; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:12-13). Faithful service to Him proves our love for Him (Jn. 15:14) and our brethren (I Jn. 3:11-24). When convenience takes over our lives, then we have said, "I'm in charge of my life and what I want comes first!" That's not obeying Matthew 6:33! With that type of attitude, we

are no better than Felix who said to Paul, "When I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." The record never mentions Felix again: apparently, calling for Paul to help him learn more of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come never reached a time of convenience in Felix' life!

Children learn from the examples of their parents. When parents teach by their example, "We know this or that is important to you, so we'll work to see you get to indulge it by making Christ and His church less a priority in our lives," then the devastating result of "I'll obey when I have a convenient time" ought not surprise us! When the alien sinner sees by our actions the tendency toward convenience more than priority when we worship God, then the horrid attitude of apathy from this soul ought not surprise us! It is when Colossians 3:1-4 becomes a RESOUNDING REALITY in our lives that our families and the world around us will note "CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH ARE MY LIFE ... NOTHING EXCEEDS THIS PRIORITY!" That, dear reader, is what convinced souls of the truth in the first century, and that is what will do the same in this day and time! Oh yes, remember that His return might not be at our convenience ... BUT IT WILL BE AT HIS! (Acts 17:31) Have you "readiness" as a priority in your life!?

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