

The Old Paths

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“Things In Which We Must Continue”

Jarrod Jacobs

One of the most difficult things a Christian must do is continue living the life of a Christian. The day-to-day activities and hardships can wear us down and discourage us if we allow them. I believe that this is one reason why many turn away from God to live their life in sin after becoming a Christian. Put simply, they cannot bear up under the strain of living for Christ on a daily basis.

Israel's downfall was apparent when we see them wanting to go back to Egypt (Hosea 13). They selectively remembered what little good they enjoyed in Egypt, and wished for those things so that they would not have to live as God's people anymore. Many Christians do the same thing. They selectively remember some good point(s) about their lives in sin, and wish to return to that rather than being patient, and waiting for eternity in Heaven with the Lord. James said, *“Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (Jas. 1:25). Let us consider some areas in which Christians must continue so that they might be productive citizens in the Lord's kingdom and see Heaven.

Continue In God's Word

Jesus told the Jews: *“If ye*

continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (Jn. 8:31). When Paul wrote to Timothy, he told him, *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”* (I Tim. 4:16). God calls upon His people to continue in His word. This was the instruction James gave the Christians in James 1:25. To “continue” is to: *“abide, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry”* (Strong's). Other passages show us the importance of continuing. Consider Paul's words to the Galatians (Acts 14:22) and the Colossians (Col. 1:21-23). In both places, he encourages them to continue in *“the faith,”* i.e., *“the gospel”!* Let us remember the words of Paul to Timothy: *“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them”* (II Tim. 3:14).

Continue In Prayer

Prayer is a great and wonderful blessing afforded the Christian. When we pray, we speak to God, thanking Him for His blessings, asking Him for help, and simply communicating with the Creator of this universe! When Jesus was upon this earth, He instructed people *“always to pray and not to faint (lose heart)”* (Lk. 18:1). When Paul wrote his epistles, he taught the same thing Christ did and encouraged the brethren to continue *“steadfastly in prayer”* to

God (Rom. 12:12, NKJV). To the Colossians, Paul wrote, *“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving”* (Col. 4:2). In the letters to the Thessalonians, Paul requested prayers. At one point, he told the Thessalonians to *“pray without ceasing”* (I Thess. 5:17). In fact, one of the marks of a *“widow indeed”* was that she *“trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day”* (I Tim. 5:5). Let us never take for granted the blessing of prayer and may we continue in prayer on a daily basis.

Continue In Brotherly Love

“Let brotherly love continue” are the words of Hebrews 13:1. Certainly, we need more love toward our brethren. In fact, brotherly love ought to be a way of life for the Christian. Paul said, *“Let love be without dissimulation (hypocrisy, JJ). Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”* (Rom. 12:9-10). Christians ought to have true love for their brethren, and not concealed hatred! In fact, one of the things we are to add to our faith is brotherly love or brotherly kindness (II Pet. 1:7). Are we continuing in this, or are we of such a nature that we have more love for worldly people than for our brethren??

Conclusion

Brethren, consistency is invaluable! As we start a “new year,” let us be reminded of something that needs to continue year-by-year -- continue in the will of God! Don't ever look back, or apologize for living as God demands.

Acts 9:20-23: Then And Now

Larry Ray Hafley, Baytown, TX

After the apostle Paul had obeyed the Lord's command to "arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord," we find these words concerning his activities.

"And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ. And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him" (Acts 9:20-23).

In a few brief strokes, the sacred penman previews the whole course of Paul's future labors for the Lord. Note that he "preached Christ...that he is the Son of God." Such sermonizing should be heard today. With infidels and agnostics in clergy clothes, with atheistic materialism as the new relevancy for science and the new morality for society, it is evident that the Son of God must be proclaimed.

What was the reaction of Paul's audience? *First*, they were amazed. Men often are amazed at the "turnabout" (conversion) of those whose lives have been

renovated and regenerated by the power of the gospel.

Second, they attempted public debate. The Jews learned that error is hurt by investigation as Paul "confounded" (bewildered, confused) them by "proving" his proposition. (Error suffers worse in public debate than anywhere else. That is why many false teachers today refuse to debate their doctrines.)

Third, they attempted murder. When dishonest men see that their position cannot stand the light of divine truth, they often resort to lying, ridicule, absurd arguments, character assassination, personal recriminations, and, as in our text, to physical violence. On numerous occasions Paul's preaching threatened his life. Though endangered, he remained undaunted, determined, as he said, to "finish my course with joy."

While we should not preach for the purpose of antagonizing others, preaching that does not bring opposition needs to be investigated. The preaching of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles resulted in "much contention" (I Thess. 2:2). Whole communities were upset. Riots broke out. Men who were otherwise

good and devout men, became enraged at the preaching they heard (Acts 13:44-46, 50). They were so engaged that they committed criminal acts (Jer. 26; Acts 7:54-60; 17:4-10; 19:21-40).

Why is the reaction not the same today? There are a number of reasons, but let one of those reasons not be because our preaching is soft, non-confrontational, unchallenging. Rather, let us "reprove, rebuke, exhort," and "hate every false way" with all patience and tireless teaching (Ps. 119:104; II Tim. 4:2; Jude 3).

In Acts 9:20-23, we see the exponents of error who esteemed the praise of Satan greater riches than the treasures of truth. In their inability to overcome Christ and their refusal to succumb to him, they exalted their folly and judged themselves "unworthy of everlasting life." So, today.

"A pessimist is someone who complains about the noise when opportunity knocks."

—L.E. Sloan

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