
The Messenger



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

**A Weekly Publication of the Christians Meeting at
Westlake church of Christ, 2291 Highway Z, Wentzville, Missouri 63385**

Website: westlakechurchofchrist.org

Sunday: AM Bible Study – 9:30 a.m., AM Worship – 10:30 a.m., PM Worship – 5:00 p.m.; Wednesday: PM Bible Study 7:30 p.m.

Dedicated to the Proclamation of the Truth in the Spirit of Love (Ephesians 4:15)

Volume 15, Issue 16

Evangelist and Editor:

Dempsey Collins

May 11, 2014

Listen to PROVE ALL THINGS on 730 AM WKRE, Sunday mornings from 8:15 to 8:30.

Teach Him to Deny Himself

by Curtis Pope

After the War Between the States, Robert E. Lee chose to devote his last years as president of a struggling school in Lexington, Virginia named Washington College (later Washington and Lee University). Until Lee's untimely death in 1870, Lexington became a place of pilgrimage for thousands of old soldiers who came to see their old commander and seek his advice on matters of both national and personal importance, as well as to introduce their sons to the aging Confederate hero. One such pilgrim brought his infant son to show General Lee and realizing that the old warrior's death was imminent, asked for some guiding principle to relate to his son when he was older. Without hesitation the general suggested, "teach him to deny himself."

Such advice strikes at the very core of the human struggle for character in an unprincipled world. While we are not born in sin as some believe, we are born selfish. No one faults infants for such self-centeredness, but the trait in them is obvious. When hungry, wet, dirty, tired, or lonely a small child is completely unconcerned for its mother's convenience but wants its needs met, and met NOW! In the process of maturing, most learn that there are others in the world who also deserve consideration and that one's own selfish interests are necessarily subordinated in the interest of the common welfare.

Sadly, our time in history reveals that self-denial is in short supply. Broken societies all bear witness to the decline of self-denial as a prized virtue in our world. Without the willingness to deny self, peaceful marriages become impossible as two self-involved people vie for supremacy. A lack of selflessness breaks down the normal care expected from parents toward their children, and its effects plague the next generation by robbing children of the example of self-denial they should have learned from their parents. Selfishness rears its ugly head in the lack of civility evident in a "dog eat dog" world and never bodes well for the long term prospects of a culture's survival when few are willing to make the sacrifices necessary for its defense or financial viability.

As Christians know, Robert E. Lee was not original in his advice concerning self-denial. In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." While Lee was a religious man, my guess is

that his advice to his former subordinate was focused on character building and the necessity of self-denial in the Reconstruction South. Jesus' challenge is instead centered on the imperative nature of denying self as a prerequisite to taking up the cross and following Him. Notice how he does not indicate that cross bearing and following him are simply easier when preceded by self-denial, but requires that anyone MUST deny himself in order to answer the call of discipleship. Therefore, a failure to deny ourselves stands as the single greatest obstacle to our living lives that prepare us for heaven.

As was mentioned above, while not born sinful, we are all born selfish. At the age of accountability, Satan uses ourselves against us in order to tempt us to sin. In I John 2:16 John says, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world." All of these temptations have their roots in an exalted view of self. The lust of the flesh is an inordinate concern for how the self feels. The lust of the eyes seeks out illegitimate avenues to acquire what looks good to oneself. The boastful pride of life tempts us to go to any extreme to make sure the self looks good to ourselves and others, ignoring no perceived slight to our selfish sense of honor.

In some of his last words to the young evangelist Timothy, Paul warns of difficult days to come, stating that even among brethren some will be "lovers of self, lovers of money ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3:2, 4). Brethren, we have arrived at such times. It is evident in split churches, broken homes, half-converted Christians, and a generation that seeks nothing but its own way in matters religious. As Paul points out, all of these other types of selfish love stand in bold opposition to the love of God.

While our culture is not littered with idol temples as was the world in which the apostles labored, all of us are plagued with a tendency toward the idolatry that enthrones self. Unless we subordinate self to Christ we become as guilty of idolatry as the ancients. We cannot serve the Lord and harbor any secret allegiance to self. We must make a choice whom we will serve (Joshua 24:15). However, the choice is one that must go far beyond any single individual's resolve. In our pulpits we must continue to teach of the singular importance of denying self. Elders must insist that in our Bible classes we must not simply teach Bible stories or scriptural doctrine, but along with these principles teach and apply self-denial, which is the foundation for understanding Biblical imperatives. Even more fundamentally, in our homes we must teach self-denial. Whatever else your child learns in your home, all else pales in significance to the importance of learning this principle. For the sake of the Lord's church and the welfare of the souls of yourself and your child, "teach him to deny himself."

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses.

"...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." - James 5:16