



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 7

December 27, 2020

No. 52

The Principles of Life

David A. Cox

"It is more blessed to give than receive" — (Acts 20:35).

The words of the Lord that Paul recalled in Acts 20 set forth a different principle than the world gives us. The world says, "receiving or getting is better than giving." Jesus gives us a much deeper view of what is really blessed in life. The greater blessing and deeper happiness of life are found in two principle views of life.

The Principle of Gain

Gain can be used in a good way if one uses the blessing to give more to the Lord's work and help others. But in many cases, the gain is the acquisition of things one wants, not because of need. The gain in this mindset caused Jesus to warn "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). It is this view of gain that Paul has in mind as he wrote to Timothy, "godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:6-7). If we have the right attitude toward gain, we will view life more as a service.

The Principle of Service

Service is the way we would definitely describe the life of Christ. Jesus said, "did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). In Acts 20, Paul wanted to encourage the Ephesian elders to follow Christ's example in serving others. Paul had lived his life in emulating the example of Christ, and he urged others to do the same (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). As we all strive for our life to be one of service, let us remember the words of an old hymn...

*"Are you dwelling in the sunlight?
Is your path with roses strewn?
Do you walk with buoyant gladness,
In the steps that you have hewn?
Have you reached the top of Pisgah,
Climbing always firm and true? Don't forget that in the valley
There is someone needing you."*

May we ever learn the thrilling joy and peace of mind that comes from giving and serving. May we ever remember the words of the Lord "It is more blessed to give than receive."

A Godly Man in Wicked Surroundings

by Bill Hall

Elijah was a man who reached true greatness in the Lord's service. He was always ready to go where God would send him (I Kings 18:1; 19:15); to pray whenever prayer was needed (I Kings 17:20, 21; 18:36, 37), and to confront evil whenever confrontation was necessary (I Kings 18:17-24; 21:17-19). He was translated without seeing death, and he, along with Moses, was chosen to appear with the Lord on the mount of transfiguration.

The remarkable thing about Elijah is that he attained this greatness while living in a wicked and hostile environment. Had he lived in Judah during the righteous reign of Hezekiah or Josiah, we might not be surprised at Elijah's attainments. But he lived instead in Israel during the wicked reign of Ahab. He was subjected to the cruel intents of Jezebel. He was under constant harassment and threat of death. He became so discouraged at one point that he asked to die, but he never denied his God.

In this wicked environment Elijah was able to influence others. The widow of Zarephath was blessed through Elijah (I Kings 17:8-24). The multitudes on Mount Carmel were led to cry, "The Lord, He is God!" through his courageous efforts (I Kings 18:39). Elisha, his successor, must have been greatly influenced by him. And even Ahab was brought to humility on one occasion, clothing himself in sackcloth as a result of Elijah's rebuke (I Kings 21:27-29). The message of Elijah is clear. You can live a godly life and influence others for good in a wicked and hostile environment.

When one hears the excuses people make today, it is obvious that Elijah's message is badly needed in this generation. People excuse their failure to teach others the gospel with, "People are so prejudiced around here they just won't listen"; when the truth is, little effort has been made. If they are approached about their ungodly conduct, they explain that "You just don't know how terrible the people are that I have to work around every day". If their children go astray their explanation is, "Our children are faced with pressures that we didn't have growing up". Such statements, repeated often enough, become to many a "license" to do wrong and a salve to soothe their troubled consciences.

We must throw aside our excuses and make up our minds to do right. Elijah could serve God in wicked surroundings. And so can we.

A Heart of Forgiveness

by Joe R. Price

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26).

Christ teaches us to have a willing heart to forgive those who sin against us. We do not wait until the offender says, "Forgive me" before being ready to forgive. We are to probe our hearts and remove any malice toward one who has sinned against us. True, God grants forgiveness when the sinner petitions Him for relief according to His will (Rom. 10:13; Acts 2:37-38; 22:16). Still, Jesus, Stephen, and Paul illustrate the willing heart of forgiveness before sinners repented of their sinful deeds (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59-60; 2 Tim. 4:16).

God's readiness to forgive is our model: "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; And attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon You, for You will answer me" (Ps. 86:5-7). God is ready to forgive. Likewise, we must have hearts of forgiveness (Col. 3:12-13). The provision Christ states is unmistakable. If we are holding something against a person, we must forgive to be forgiven.