

The Things that Matter Most

INTRODUCTION:

1. Here is the Lord's challenge to us:
 - a. "Seek" or "set your mind" on things above (Col. 3:1-2).
 - b. Be "spiritually minded" (Romans 8:6).
 - c. Focus on "the food which endures to everlasting life" (John 6:27); don't focus on that which is "temporary," but on that which is "eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).
 - d. In other words, we need to give more attention to the things that matter most.
2. What do we have to help us think this way? The New Testament
 - a. A uniquely spiritual "book," and so it trains us to think on spiritual things.
 - b. And one of the ways it does this is by praising people for the things that matter most.
3. So what I want us to do in the remainder of the lesson is to notice things for which people **were** praised vs. things for which they were not praised.

BODY:

- I. In the New Testament...
 - A. We never see people praised for their "nice house," but we do see them praised for what did with their house (and other resources).
 1. Nothing wrong, of course, with having a nice house or other nice things. And nothing wrong with enjoying those things, because as 1 Timothy 6:19 says, it is "God who gives us richly all things to enjoy."
 - a. Whatever we have, we need to remember the SOURCE of those things.
 2. But what is vastly more important is what we do with these things for the Lord's sake, and for the benefit of others.
 - a. And that is exactly what Gaius is commended for in 3 John 1:5-8.
 3. 1 Timothy 5 gives some qualifications for widows who could be supported by the church.
 - a. Notice in particular the qualifications in 1 Timothy 5:9-10.
 4. In the next chapter, Paul addresses those with nice things and tells them what to do with them.
 - a. 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

- B. We never see people praised for physical strength/abilities, but we do see people praised for spiritual strength.
1. Again, not trying to talk anyone out of trying to stay physically fit, or using whatever physical abilities you may have (Noah's homerun).
 - a. 1 Timothy 4:8 does say "bodily exercise profits a little..." May give us a clearer mind, more energy, and those things can certainly be helpful in serving the Lord.
 - b. But what does the rest of the verse say? "But godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."
 2. Let's go back to 3 John and talks about Gaius again.
 - a. This time, let's read vv. 2-3. Notice what John prays for Gaius and his commendation of him.
 3. Luke 1 records the birth of John the Baptist and at the end of chapter 1 this statement is made about his development:
 - a. "So the child grew and became strong in spirit" (Luke 1:80).
 - b. Boy did he ever, when you consider the details of his life.
 4. A similar statement is made about Saul, right after his conversion.
 - a. Acts 9:20-22.
 - b. Contrast with Galatians 1:14: "And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries."
 5. What's ironic in this whole physical strength vs. spiritual strength is that at least in come cases, physical weakness can make us stronger spiritually.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.
- C. We never see people praised for their outward beauty, but we do see them praised for their inner beauty.
1. And that's not the least bit surprising, is it, because inner beauty is what's precious in the sight of God.
 - a. 1 Peter 3:3-4.
 2. All through the N.T. we see people praised for their faith, love, hope.
 - a. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your **work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope...**" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3).
 3. Not only are these things precious in the sight of God, but they may very well be impressive to others, too.
 - a. 1 Peter 3:1-2.

- D. We never see people praised for “this world” knowledge, but we do see them praised for their knowledge of God’s word.
 - 1. Yes, there are indications in the New Testament that Paul was well educated, but that’s not even what Paul wanted to be remembered for.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.
 - b. We have people here (and others in the past) who have advanced degrees, and none of us begrudge you for that. Certainly some benefits to that advanced education, but that’s not why you mean so much to us.
 - 2. Apollos a good example, because he was known for being “mighty in the Scriptures.”
 - a. Acts 18:24-28.
 - 3. Here’s the comment Paul made about Timothy:
 - a. “From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation...” (2 Timothy 3:15).
- E. We never see people praised for their work in their chosen field, but we do see them praised for their work “for the Lord.”
 - 1. Let’s establish this point first—whatever your occupation, remember Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”
 - a. And so you’ll work honestly, diligently, conscientiously, and in some cases you may be rewarded with better and better opportunities.
 - b. And you can do some work for the Lord in the workplace—by showing Him to others, and by talking to others about Him.
 - 2. Thinking about different people in the New Testament and their occupations...
 - a. Simon (tanner); Luke (physician); Aquila and Priscilla (tentmakers); Cornelius (centurion); but none of these people are known for their occupations.
 - 3. We read this earlier in 1 Thessalonians 1:3: “remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope...”
 - 4. Romans 16:6, 12
 - 5. Maybe all of this helps us see the urgency of Paul’s admonition in 1 Corinthians 15:58.