

“For I Have Learned...”

By Paul R. Blake

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

The apostle Paul's experiences as an evangelist taught him that his circumstances in life would not remain constant. There would be times when he would have plenty, and there would be lean periods where even the basic needs of life would go wanting. Paul discovered that these vagaries of existence did not prevent him from serving the Savior. Rich or poor, healthy or ill, free or in prison, Paul knew he could trust the Lord to strengthen him to face the task at hand.

But that's what Paul learned. What have I learned?

I have learned that I learn so slowly. Sitting down to examine the word of God is like sitting down to a feast at a table one mile long with a thousand varied dishes on it. While eager to partake of all of it, the prospect seems so vast and daunting that it appears that I will never get to taste it all in a lifetime. Each day as I learn another lesson, I find myself wishing I had known it in the distant past, and I regret the good that could have been done had I learned it years earlier. This sentiment propels me to faithfully continue the learning process knowing all the while that it will not be complete until my life ends.

I have learned that I don't know enough. Scarcely does a week pass but what I discover gaps in my knowledge and understanding. Walking through life with such gaps in wisdom is like walking across a wooden bridge with half of the boards missing from the road surface. As I look back on my life with all of its stumbles and errors, I am forced to wonder how I made it this far. At least this perspective should help me to be more alert to the potential for stumbling blocks of ignorance that lie ahead.

I have learned that I haven't done enough. As I look back along the highway of life at life, I see a myriad of gems of opportunity scattered behind me. Omar Al-Halif wrote... "Four things come not back: the spoken word, the sped arrow, time past, and neglected opportunity." "What ifs" and "might have beens" could occupy my waking moments if I let them. This insight should help me to embrace opportunities to be of service to God and others hereafter.

I have learned that I am weak. I find myself saying along with the apostle Paul: "For the good that I would do, I do not; but the evil which I would not do, that I do" (Romans 7:19). I gaze admiringly back at heroes of faith from the past and look in awe at devout saints in the present and wonder "why can't I be that disciplined?". Rather than quitting, I must press the supremacy of the mind and will over the flesh. However this will fail unless I admit that I cannot succeed without help the Lord; I alone am not enough to utterly defeat sin and its strength-robbing consequences. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24-25).

I have learned that I make mistakes. Some days it seems the only task I fully accomplish is that of making a fool out of myself. I have a smorgasbord of choices as to what to do with these mistakes. I could pretend that they never happened, only to repeat them another day. I could waste a lot of effort in trying to explain them away, blaming circumstances and persons instead of taking personal responsibility. Perhaps I could pine away the hours regretting my mistakes and become useless to myself and others in the interim. Or just maybe, I could look upon my errors as stern educators who can teach me better judgment, greater patience, and proper repentance.

But perhaps the greatest lesson of all I am learning is to trust God. In His mercy, He made the gospel simple enough for even me to understand. In His wisdom, He made His word to be full of wonders and treasures that move me to joyfully take a lifetime to uncover. In His kindness, He continues to supply me with opportunities to grow and do good even though I've squandered them in the past. In His Providence, He gives His great strength through His powerful word and in answer to prayers. And in His love, He sent His Son to forgive me of my sins. God has provided for and protected me thus far in life, even though I've meandered and stumbled along the pathway of life. I trust Him to continue to take care of me as I endeavor to learn more of Him and strive to be like Him.

A Moments Wisdom

According to William Bennett in *The Weekly Standard*, American men live an average of 73 years; smokers, 66 years; and homosexuals, 43 years. Once again, the Bible is proven correct (Rom. 1:27). Yet when we call for an end to promiscuity and immoral homosexuality, gay rights activists berate and slander those who are really only counseling them in ways that would save their lives.

To err is human; to blame it on someone else is really human.

Too many people are praying for mountains of difficulty to be removed, when what they really need is courage to climb them.

Those who know God will be humble, and those who know themselves cannot be proud.

He has the right to criticize, who has the heart to help.

Of all the commentaries on the scriptures, good examples are the best.

May I show others, O Lord, the same consideration that I wish for myself.

If you want to get even with someone, start with someone who has helped you.

Remember not only to say the right thing at the right time and place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment.

The mind, filtered by the word of God, is the key to Christian behavior.

If you meet someone today who is too weary to give you a smile, leave him one of yours.

We have no one to blame but ourselves when our enthusiasm and zeal are gone, if we have failed to feed them.

When you speak, always remember that God is one of your hearers.

The tongue, being in a wet place, is apt to slip.

Great minds talk about ideas; mediocre minds talk about things; small minds talk about people.

If someone lies "for" you, how do you know that they won't lie "to" you?

Leaving in a huff is some folks' favorite form of transportation.

Genetics explain why one looks like his father and if he doesn't, why he should. In a similar way, the Bible explains why those who are Christians look like their Father, and if they don't, why they should.