

We Walk by Faith

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2Cor. 5:7). “His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord’” (Matt. 25:21).

An ancient story tells about a king who needed a faithful servant and had to choose between two candidates for the office. He took both at fixed wages and told them to carry buckets of water from a nearby cistern and dump them into a large basket which he had placed a short distance away. He said that he would return in the evening to inspect their work. After dumping a few buckets of water into the basket, one of the men said, "What is the good of doing this useless work? As soon as we pour the water in, it runs out the sides." The other answered, "But we have our wages, don't we? The reason for the work is the master's business, not ours." The complainer replied, "I'm not going to do such fool's work," and throwing down his bucket, he went away.

The other man continued to work and by late afternoon he had emptied the cistern. Looking down into it, he saw something shining at the bottom. It proved to be a very valuable gold ring that had been lost in the cistern. The servant thought: "Now I see the reason for pouring water into the basket! If the bucket had brought up the ring before the cistern was dry, it would have been found in the basket."

Let us be loyal and faithful to the Lord in all things even when we do not fully understand His purpose, and even when we can't see visible results.

Keep Your Heart

Our hearts pump at a rate of 70-75 beats per minute. Though weighing only 11 ounces on average, a healthy heart pumps 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels each day. Every day, the heart creates enough energy to drive a truck 20 miles. In a lifetime, that is equivalent to driving to the moon and back. A healthy heart can do amazing things. Conversely, if our heart malfunctions, our whole body shuts down.

The same could be said of our “spiritual heart.” In Scripture, the word heart represents the center of our emotions, thinking, and reasoning. It is the “command center” of our life.

So when we read, “Keep your heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23), it makes a lot of sense. But it’s difficult advice to keep. Life will always make demands upon our time and energy that cry out for immediate attention. By comparison, taking time to hear God’s Word and to do what it says may not shout quite so loudly. We may not notice the consequences of neglect right away, but over time it may give way to spiritual heart disease.

Be thankful God has given us His Word. We must be careful not to neglect it, but to use it to align our hearts with His will every day. To keep spiritually fit, consult the Great Physician.

The Wonder of New Life

What is there about babies that makes us smile? Many people will stop everything at the sight or sound of a baby and will flock to gaze at the little one. This is especially noticeable in a nursing home. Though most of the residents are wheelchair-bound and often suffer from dementia, the visit of a family with a baby almost unfailingly brings a spark of joy to their eyes that—tentatively at first but then undoubtedly—becomes a smile. It is amazing to watch.

Perhaps babies bring a smile because of the wonder of a new life—so precious, tiny, and full of promise. Seeing a baby can remind us of our awesome God and the great love He has for us. He loved us so much that He gave us life and formed us in our mother’s womb. “You

formed my inward parts," the psalmist says, "You covered me in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13).

Not only does He give us physical life but He also offers us spiritual rebirth through Jesus (John 3:3-8). God promises believers new bodies and life eternal when Jesus returns (1Cor. 15:50-52). Physical life and spiritual rebirth—gifts to celebrate from our Father's hand. "I will praise You; marvelous are Your works" (Psalm 139:14).

The Seed of Promise

In June of 2006, Israeli doctors and scientists successfully germinated a 2,000-year-old date palm seed. Found at the Herodian fortress of Masada on the west bank of the Dead Sea, the seed was tagged "Methuselah" for the man with the oldest recorded age in the Bible (Gen. 5:27). In addition to the challenge of awakening a long-dormant seed, the team also wanted to learn more about the tree praised in Scripture for its shade, food, beauty, and medicinal qualities.

The date palm has an important role in the Bible. In the Old Testament, the tree is linked to the temple and presence of God. The New Testament describes excited crowds praising God and throwing palm branches at the feet of Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey.

God's promise to bless the world through a descendant of Abraham also lay dormant for 2,000 years (see Gen. 12:1-3). Finally, the Seed of promise sprouted. That Seed was Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah. Soon the story of His resurrected life would go out to every nation on earth, after His return to the Father.

The wonder of the seed of promise is now ours to experience. Time was not a factor. Neither was the barren ground of circumstance. All that matters is that we allow our hearts to be the soil in which the implanted Word is welcomed and worshiped. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

The Anvil

By John Clifford (1836-1923)

I paused last eve beside the blacksmith's door,
And heard the anvil ring, the vespers chime,
And looking in I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had?" said I
"To wear and batter all those hammers so?"
"Just one," he answered. Then with twinkling eye:
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's Word
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon,
But though the noise of falling blows was heard
The anvil is unchanged; the hammer's gone.

Ten Rules of a Harmful System of Religion

1. The leader must be in control of every aspect at all times.
2. When problems arise, find a guilty party to blame immediately.
3. Don't admit to making mistakes.
4. Never point out the reality of a situation.

5. Never express your feelings unless they are positive.
6. Don't ask questions, especially if they are tough ones.
7. Don't do anything outside of your self-perceived role.
8. Don't trust anyone.
9. Nothing is more important than soliciting money for the organization.
10. At all cost, keep up the image of the organization or the family.