

Lessons from the 2017 FC Lectures

Compiled by Paul R. Blake

On keeping your promises to your mate: "It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, And afterward to reconsider his vows" (Prov. 20:25). "LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill? ... He who swears to his own hurt and does not change" (Psalm 15:1, 4). "If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." (Num. 30:2). "Marriage isn't about what the husband wants or what the wife wants; it is about what God wants. A spouse's obligation to submit to their mates, just like a Christian's obligation to be subject to the elders, is between them and God. (Brent Hunter)

"Two things should not be done prematurely: Embalming and divorce." (Ralph Walker)

Attendance is not an accurate gauge of Christian faithfulness. How is their prayer life; how is their spiritual mindedness; are they eagerly and unselfishly doing good works? The decline in these things often indicates a falling away long before one quits attending.

"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24). Lord, I am unselfish; help me overcome selfishness! Lord, I am stronger; help me with my weaknesses! Lord, I am saved; help me to remain so!

On passing away with grace: "Gathered to his people" is often used in the Old Testament to describe the deaths of the Patriarchs and prophets: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron. "And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people" (Gen 49:33). After life is over, they are said in scripture to have gone to dwell with family and the righteous who have passed on before. "Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8). Note the gracious, acquiescent way they accepted their deaths. Little children fight sleep even though they may be exhausted; mature persons accept a period of rest as a natural and needful part of life. In like manner, mature children of God peaceably, naturally accept the coming end of their days and are content to go to their long home.

Erring Christians often demand that other brethren stop admonishing them and to just mind their own business. The brethren trying to restore them are instead minding their Father's business. Why do so many professed Christians believe that minding our own business is how one manifests love for a brother?

What good works do you bring to the local congregation? You cannot take credit for others' work. The congregation cannot take credit for your work. Nor can individuals do their works vicariously through other members of the church. Herein lies the spirit of institutionalism.

To be crucified means: "First, the man on the cross is facing one direction, he isn't going back, and he has no further plans of his own." (A. W. Tozer)

What a great invitation to visitors from out of town: "We invite you to move here."

Slave vs salaried: In Christ, we are slaves of God, not mercenaries who must be paid to fight.

"Hope that is based on past experiences cannot sustain one, if past experiences have been dire. Hope that is based on the power to change, whether in God, man, or circumstances, can sustain one; this in spite of the testimony of past experiences." (JRR Tolkien)

The sons of God married the daughters of men because they were beautiful. The righteous chose physical beauty over their capacity to enhance their resolve to remain righteous. As a result, they were morally corrupted until all humankind was wholly evil except for Noah's family.

The Restoration Movement was about restoring the church to the public view and acceptance, not to restore Reformation denominations to the New Testament pattern. Today, some conservative brethren are trying to reform the Restoration Movement.

Child rearing is like adoption. We are the birth parents giving up our children to adoption by a superior parent, God.

Grace empowers love. We cannot allow our emotions to rule over our reason regarding the law of God. We cannot void law because we have strong, motivating feelings to do so. When God,

motivated by His love, forgives our sins, over-ruling the His laws of justice, He is not permitting emotional love alone to void the law. Love is not reason enough to over-rule law, regardless of how strong the love may be. Only a power greater in strength and authority than law itself can over-rule law. Grace and mercy are the power and authority that enables and empowers God to forgive sins. We do not have the power and authority of His grace and mercy; we are simply the vessels through whom He occasionally dispenses His grace and mercy to others. Therefore, our love for others does not give us the power and authority to void or over-rule the law and justice of God, even though we may be motivated by powerful love for others. "Mercy triumphs over law."

There is a difference between doing works to be seen of men and doing works to let our lights shine. Jesus spoke of both of them in the Sermon on the Mount. "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:1). "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). Jesus was not contradicting Himself, but rather teaching humankind that doing good works in the presence of others for the well-being of others, moves them to glorify God. Doing good works in the presences of others for our own personal aggrandizement glorifies us and goes un-regarded and un-rewarded by God.

Strong Drought, Deep Roots

"Yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matt. 13:21). I was talking with a farmer about his soybean and corn crops. Rain had been abundant, and the results were evident. However, his comment surprised me. He said, 'My crops are especially vulnerable. Even a short drought could have a devastating effect.' 'Why?' I asked. He explained, 'Though we see the frequent rains as a benefit, during that time the plants are not required to push roots deeper in search of water. The roots remain near the surface. A drought would find the plants unprepared and quickly kill them. (From Neal Orchard)

Likewise, some Christians receive abundant blessings, fellowship, and teaching. However, when hardship, tribulation, or persecution enters their lives, they suddenly quit the Lord. Their roots have never pushed below the surface. Only roots that are deeply grounded in the Lord will endure in times of drought in our lives.

A Moments Wisdom

--"There is a fountain of youth. It is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love" When you learn to tap into this source, you will truly have defeated age." (Sophia Loren)

--Honesty is an expensive gift. Do not expect it from cheap people.

--Don't carry your mistakes around. Instead place them under your feet to use as stepping stones.

--Only your real friends tell you your face is dirty.