

The Old Paths

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“The Swiftmess Of Time”

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Soon this year will be over, and with it all that we have accomplished, all that we have planned to do, and all that we have failed to do! This year sure has gone by quickly, hasn't it? As one year passes, we realize how swiftly time marches on.

On several occasions, the Bible talks about how swift time is. Job stated, *“My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and come to their end without hope”* (Job 7:6). Moses said, *“For all our days pass away under your wrath; we spend our years as a tale that is told. The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is their but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away”* (Ps. 90:9-10). The apostle Paul talked about our time upon this earth. He said, *“Look carefully then how you, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil”* (Eph. 5:15-16). It is foolish not to make the most of the time we have!

As we look back on 2013, has our time been spent for God or man? Let us ask some soul-searching questions and see how well we did in 2013.

Did We Serve God Acceptably In 2013?

I have often heard brethren pray that we will live in such a way that we serve God acceptably. This certainly is a great thing, for the Bible teaches that our actions must be

acceptable to God (Heb. 12:28). We must do all *“in the name of the Lord”* (Col. 3:17).

Yet, in considering our “everyday” lives, after such prayers, did we actually serve God acceptably in 2013? Serving God acceptably was first and foremost on the Hebrew writer's mind (Heb. 12:23-29). Where is it on your list of priorities?

Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money”* (Matt. 6:24). In Luke's account, Christ said, *“Let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as he one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves”* (Lk. 22:26-27). Were you served or did you serve in 2013?

We need to think sincerely about this matter of whether or not we served God acceptably. Our soul will be judged by the things we did in 2013, good or bad! Solomon wrote, *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Ecc. 12:13-14). *“If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will be my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him”* is what Jesus said in John 12:26.

Did We Murmur At God's Commands In 2013?

Paul said, *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God, without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world”* (Phil. 2:14-15). According to Paul, the reason that we should do all things without grumbling and disputing is two-fold: 1) That we may be blameless and innocent. 2) That we may shine as lights in the world. Remember brethren, Philippians 2:14-15 is not just a good idea or a suggestion. This is a command!! Seeing that this is true, when we find our life is not in harmony with the Scriptures, we are not to gripe and complain, but change (Jas. 1:22-25)!!!

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for God's people to murmur and complain. The Old Testament is filled with accounts of God's people complaining against Him (Examples: Ex. 12, 16; Num. 14, 16, 17). Why did God cause some to be destroyed in the Old Testament? It is because they were guilty of grumbling against Him (I Cor. 10:10)!! *“Murmuring against divine disposals and commands is a sin that greatly provokes, especially when it grows to such a head as to issue in apostasy, and a revolt from Him and His good ways”* (Matthew Henry Commentary, Vol. 6, p. 447).

Are we guilty of grumbling against God? Grumbling against God takes place when we complain, murmur, or when we try to excuse our behavior as right when we know it is in contradiction to God's word. The end result is disobedience!

Seeing that God destroyed His own people in the Old Testament for this, why do we think we are exempt from His wrath when we complain against

Him?

Did We Follow God In 2013?

We know that many followed their own lusts and desires in 2013. Did you do this, or did you follow God? How do we follow God? By obeying His word.

Ephesians 5:1-11 shows the Ephesians (and those who are Christians today) that they are the saints of God and need to act like it. In verses 3-7, we see that they were not to be engaged in sinful actions, or sinful words, and were warned not to be deceived by those speaking "empty words."

In verses 8-11, Paul says Christians are instead to "walk as children of light." They (and we) were also to "(Discern) what is pleasing to the Lord" and "Take no part with the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them."

Paul wrote the Corinthians and told them to be "followers" or imitators of him as he followed Christ (I Cor. 4:16, 11:1). When we study God's word, we will know how Paul was, and we will know how we are supposed to live. Will we follow God in 2014?

Did We Grow And Improve In 2013?

The command to grow spiritually is something that we cannot overlook. Just as young children grow physically, God expects His children to grow out of the "infant" stage to spiritual adulthood. Peter, on two occasions, wrote about Christians growing. He wrote in I Peter 1:24-2:2, "For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this is the good news that was preached to you put away all malice, ... deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual

milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation."

He then says in II Peter 3:17-18, "You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."

Seeing that spiritual growth is something we can control (unlike physical growth), God condemns some for their "stunted growth." In Hebrews 5:12-14, we read about Christians who had not grown as they ought. "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil."

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, and told them that they were still babes in Christ. This is because they were not "spiritual," but "carnal." They were still "babes in Christ" and were guilty of "envying, and strife, and division ... and walk (ed) as men." (I Cor. 3:1-3).

By growing and developing spiritually, we can provide help, comfort, and guidance to others

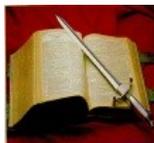
who are babes in Christ. There is no sin in being a "babe in Christ." The sin is STAYING a "babe in Christ"!! Just as a parent expects his child to grow and mature physically, so also God expects His children to grow and mature spiritually! Think of how terrible it would be if God's people refused to grow like they were supposed to!!

Paul made a distinction between the "babe in Christ" and one who was "spiritual" (i.e. spiritually minded, and not carnally minded, I Cor. 3:1). In Galatians 6:1, Paul says that restoring a brother overtaken in a fault was something that a mature Christian would do. What if we have not grown and are not mature Christians like we ought to be? Who will be helping to restore those who have left the Lord? In II Timothy 2:15, Paul talked about one who handles God's word aright as a "workMAN." As Hebrews 5:12-14 says, some cannot handle God's word because they are not of "mature" yet. How much did you grow in 2013? How much did I grow in 2013?

Conclusion

2013 is ending. Let us determine now to work and better ourselves in 2014. Let us take time to examine ourselves, see where our lives need improvement, and improve! How have we done in 2013??

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