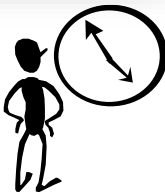


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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Learning to Fly

By Jefferson David Tant

Among the many things that I have learned from my work in Jamaica are the “Lively Choruses” that they love to sing. Here is one:

“Tis easy to smile, when life flows along like a song,
but the man worthwhile, is the man who can smile,
when everything goes dead wrong.”

Have you ever experienced any difficulties, hardships, or obstacles in your life? If not, be patient, for they will come. Didn't the disciples we read about in Acts suffer difficulties and persecution, as well as our Lord Jesus Christ? We know they were scorned, beaten, imprisoned, suffered shipwrecks, and some were crucified. Paul listed some of the things he suffered.

“Are they servants of Christ? -- I speak as if insane -- I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches” (II Corinthians 11:23-28).

Then Paul goes on in the next chapter, writing again of things he has suffered. *“Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me--to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He*

has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (II Corinthians 12:7-10).

Was Paul ever discouraged, wanting to give up? I don't think so. So, what was Paul's attitude about the things he suffered? Notice his words in II Corinthians 12:10: "*for when I am weak, then I am strong.*"

How did Paul acquire the strength to endure, to go on, and not give up? Perhaps a hint can be seen in what he wrote in I Corinthians 9:25: "*Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.*"

What were the "games" he referred to? Very likely the Olympics, as they began in 776 B.C. and were still going on in the 1st Century.

Note that Paul wrote of those who "compete" in the games. The King James translation says "*that striveth for the mastery.*" We can obviously see some effort put forth in the use of the word "striveth." This is from the Greek "*agonizomai,*" which is defined as "to struggle, literally (to compete for a prize), figuratively (to contend with an adversary), or genitive case (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently, strive." (Strong's Greek Dictionary)

Perhaps you have never trained for the Olympics, but you can imagine the strain, exhaustion, and aching muscles that come with the rigorous training that enables an athlete to compete. And no matter what the pain, they don't want to give up, for they are looking forward to competing for the prize. Paul says they compete for a "perishable wreath, but we an imperishable," which would be heaven. Is it worth it for us to compete? Obviously so.

I read the story of a man who found a butterfly chrysalis that had a small opening. He watched for some time as the butterfly struggled to squeeze through the small opening in the chrysalis. After some time, he got some scissors and snipped off the remaining bit, and allowed the butterfly to emerge. It had a swollen body and small shriveled wings.

The man expected the butterfly to expand to full size and fly, but that never happened. He did not understand that the butterfly's struggle to exit the chrysalis forced fluid from the butterfly's body into its wings, which would enable it to fly and fend for itself. The struggle was what strengthened the butterfly. But without the wings, the butterfly soon died.

Likewise, it is our struggles in life that strengthen us. As the athlete's struggles strengthen the body so our spiritual struggles can strengthen our faith.

I asked for strength, and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom, and God gave me problems to solve. I asked for prosperity, and God gave me brains and brawn to work.

I asked for courage, and God gave me danger to overcome.
I asked for love, and God gave me troubled people to help.
I asked for favors, and God gave me opportunities.
I received nothing I wanted but gained everything I needed.
(Glenn, Mercedes and Lauren Hitchcock)

Too many people never achieve spiritual success, because when opportunity knocks, they are either too busy with things of the world to take notice, or they decide they don't want to give up the pleasures of sin they enjoy, or possibly they decide they just don't want to endure the struggles and pain they know they will endure. But it is the struggles from which we can learn to fly, as with the butterfly.

Question: Will it be worth it to enjoy the pleasures of the world for a season, and then to spend an eternity in the fires of hell? Yes, the world offers temptations, and there are struggles that young people face, but it is through overcoming them that we learn to fly, as does the butterfly. Then, you can smile, "when everything goes dead wrong." Do you remember what Paul and Silas were doing while in prison after being beaten? "...*they were praying and singing hymns of praise to God*" (Acts 16:25) That's called "overcoming."

Some think, "I plan to become a Christian later." There are three things wrong with this.

1. Some get so caught up in the world that they never change.
2. Some die before the "time" comes. I have been to too many funerals for young people or older who died before the "time" came.
3. We are given no timeline for when Christ will return, and the Judgment will come.

"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour" (Matthew 25:13).

Happiness Without Faith

By Doy Moyer

"Since I've given up my faith, I'm now happy and at peace." This is a common type of statement we see from those who walk away from the Lord. It seems counter to the idea that true happiness and peace are found in Christ. I do not doubt that one who leaves the Lord feels happy. The question is, why?

I believe at least one reason lies in the basic issue that we all face in serving the Lord: will I deny myself to please Him or will I deny Him to please myself (Luke 9:23-26)? If I do not feel the need to serve Jesus, then I will not have to fight the dissonance of trying to deny myself while, at the same time, dealing with the difficult temptation of wanting to please myself. I don't often feel very happy when I have to deny myself; it's hard and frustrating at times. If I remove that fight from my life by removing Jesus, then I no longer have to grapple with giving up what pleases me for what pleases Him. I can be happy ... in one sense.

But this gets to the basic issue of what happiness is about. One who has quit the Lord feels happy, but it's a happiness in the moment, not a happiness in a future hope. It's a

peace that comes from no longer fighting the difficulty of self-denial, not a peace found in forgiveness and eternal rest. The road of giving up the Lord comes at a cost. It trades momentary happiness for a living hope.

Don't buy into the passing pleasure angle here. The world says we have to be happy, but it's a very narrow consideration. Recall the choice made by Moses: "*By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin*" ([Hebrews 11:24-25](#)). Moses could have been happy by enjoying the pleasures of sin, but he knew these were fleeting and temporary. Instead, he chose to look beyond the here and now to the reward that would later come ([Hebrews 11:26](#)).

Therein lies the choice for all of us. You can find a measure of pleasure and happiness by quitting the Lord. But you also need to know the true difference between the type of happiness you are banking your life on. The happiness found in Christ is not the momentary type, but that found in purpose, hope, and life. What kind of happiness are you willing to give your soul to? Is it worth it?

Larimore and Tant

By F. Yater Tant, September 22, 1955

In the 1890s the beloved T. B. Larimore held a six-month meeting at Sherman, Texas, and baptized something like 250 people. His prestige there and his influence were almost comparable to Paul's in Galatia at the time the Galatians "*would have plucked out their eyes*" and give them to the apostle.

Some months after the great Larimore meeting, the digressives moved into Sherman and literally swept the church off its feet. Of the people Larimore had baptized, something over 200 joined the digressive church. The loyal brethren, trying desperately to stem the tide sent for J. D. Tant and worked up a debate between J. D. Tant and a leading digressive preacher of the day (we believe it was A. D. Rogers, but would have to check the records on that before saying for certain.) The debate attracted wide attention. Tant stayed in Sherman for nearly a month; he told this writer (his son) that he made more than 500 personal calls during the time he was there, talking with those who had gone astray, pleading with them to return to the truth, pointing out the error of digression. He made as many as six or eight calls on some families, staying in some places until three o'clock in the morning, reading the Bible, teaching, and praying with them.

When the time came that he had to leave all except about thirty of the 200 or more who went to the digressives had returned to the truth. Tant wrote Larimore that so great was the affection in which he was held in Sherman that it was his (Tant's) judgment that one simple statement from Larimore to the effect that he believed instrumental music in Christian worship to be sinful would be sufficient to cause the total number of those still in digression to return to the church.

Brother Larimore replied that he had wept much over the divisions which were de-

veloping among his brethren, that he knew there were godly men and women on both sides of these questions, and that he had made up his mind "not to take sides" with either the one group or the other. He did not write the statement Tant had asked for.

Long before his death, however, Larimore realized that it was impossible to be "neutral" in a fight between truth and error. He did make the statement Tant had asked, and many, many others pleading with his brethren to remain true to the Book. He repented of his long years of indecision and "neutrality" and wrote Tant that he deeply regretted his unwillingness to declare himself during the Sherman crisis. He had made a grievous mistake, and he wished it were possible to repair the damage his silence had done.

We find a few good brethren over the country now who are attempting to walk the same tight wire of neutrality between truth and error on the present issues before the church. One preaching brother declared he was going to "stay in the middle of the road" on current questions; another thinks it best not to use men in the congregation where he preaches if they have been "prominent on either side" of the current controversies; still another declares that he "is neither for nor against" such cooperative arrangements as Herald of Truth and institutional orphan homes and church support of colleges.

It all has a familiar ring. There were many such men in the days when the digression developed sixty to seventy-five years ago. They were determined to stay "neutral." They preached for churches that had the organ and for churches that did not have it. Most of them finally went with the digressives. A few, a very, very few, followed Larimore's course and publicly renounced the errors of the Christian Church.

When the truth of God's word is at stake there is neither time nor place for "neutrality." If centralized evangelistic cooperatives are permissible, then brethren ought to push vigorously for them, promote as many as possible, and perhaps finally develop one fine eldership which could take the "oversight" of all the foreign mission work of all the churches in all the world. This was the frankly avowed desire of one of Broadway's (Lubbock) missionaries who stated such to this writer some four years ago. Suppose these cooperatives are not "according to the pattern" as set forth in the New Testament. In that case, the gospel preacher who will not oppose them is either ignorant of God's word, or else is too cowardly to oppose that which is popularly received. In either event, he ought to take stock of himself, and "set in order the things that are lacking."

(Incidentally, the Sherman brethren paid Tant \$40.00 for his work with them and promised to send him \$60.00 more "when we pick the cotton this fall." In the mid-1930s Tant wrote them a letter, telling them he did not want to press them unduly, but something like forty years had gone by, and he was wondering if they had picked their cotton yet. If they had, he was sort of hard-pressed and could use the money!)

