

POWER

“the gospel is the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16)

The Most Important Factor in Life

by Wallace Scaife

Recently, an internet search was made of people’s responses to a question about the most important “factors” of life. It was easy to detect a pattern from the attitudes and “mindset” of our modern culture. Time and space prevents going into detail, but consider a few of the contributions that have been observed:

- There are items that might be categorized as physical necessities like: food and water, clothing and shelter, safety and protection, and healthcare.
- There are items that might be categorized as social necessities like: friends and family, jobs and education, freedom and opportunity to do and experience interesting things (viz., to travel), and a desire to leave this place a little better than how we found it.
- There are items that might be categorized as emotional necessities like: love and happiness (e.g., giving and receiving – highlighted by the experiences of participating in each), as well as, compassion and understanding (i.e., to and for others).

Interestingly, there were few items that could be categorized as spiritual necessities. This is not surprising, as an obvious pattern has emerged ever since the so-called Italian “rebirth” of the 14th and 15th Century Renaissance. This so-called “Reawakening” has often served as a suitable “pivot point,” in history, when men began investing more and more interest in human achievement and less and less reliance on Divine dependence. Consequently, it has been said that:

“One word above all comes closest to summing up Renaissance intellectual ideals – namely humanism”¹

Little has changed over the last 600 years as men continue to be quite impressed with their own “humanity.” Subsequently, the “dawning of the age of Aquarius” arose as “new age” sociologists began rewriting the history – a history that elevates humanity and eliminates Divinity. For instance, in the Humanist Manifestos I and II, the following is found on page 10:

“We consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement. He must set

1 Judith G. Coffin and Robert C. Stacey, *Western Civilizations*, 2nd Brief Edition, © 2009, W. W. Norton & Company, p. 322

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intelligence and will to the task,"²
And again, on page 16:

"Humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves."³

These remarks are in stark contrast with what should really fascinate and fixate man's attention. The following proposition is a simple but sobering one:

"If there is a life after this life – and there is;
and if there is a judgment to come – and there is;
and if every accountable person shall stand in judgment before Christ – and each shall;
and if this life is given us that we may prepare for the life to come – and this is the case;
and if the Bible is our only and all-sufficient guide in making preparation for the judgment, and for the life to come – and it is;
then, it has to be the case THAT A KNOWLEDGE OF THE BIBLE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE LIFE AND EDUCATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL."⁴

In view of this, there is a lot to be said for such passages as the following:

Proverbs 4:5, 7 (NKJV) Get wisdom! Get understanding...And in all your getting, get understanding.

- 2 See "Wikipedia" for information pertaining to the Humanist Manifestos I, II and III: [HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/HUMANIST MANIFESTO](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanist_Manifesto)
3 Additionally, consider this web page for further observations and reviews of the Humanist Manifestos: [HTTP://MODERNHISTORYPROJECT.ORG/MHP?ARTICLE=HUMANMANIFEST](http://modernhistoryproject.org/mhp?article=humanmanifest)
4 Roy Deaver, How to Study the Bible, "Emphasis has been added" (wrs)

The Reality of Apostasy

by Marcus Teske

There is a difference between the Christian that has fallen short and the Christian that has fallen away into sin. A Christian that has fallen short of God's commands is one who is overcome by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). The very nature of sin is deceptive and from time to time it has overtaken Christians who are striving to please God in moments of weakness or ignorance. These sins, so long as a Christian strives to repent and live faithfully, are covered by the blood of Jesus according to 1 John 1:7. However, there are sins that the blood of Jesus will not cover.

The Christian that falls away from God is not like the Christian that falls short. The Christian that falls away from God is one who gives up on God, His commandments, and His covenant. The term for this course of action is apostasy. The Hebrew writer wrote about the apostate Christian in Hebrews 6:4-6 which states, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the

Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

This means that unlike the Christian who strives to live faithfully and falls short realizes his failure and repents, there is no forgiveness for the one who abandons God entirely. If a Christian goes back to a life of sin then they turn their back on God. The reality is that God cannot forgive someone who will not accept His Son's sacrifice and meet His conditions. If after having partaken in the blessings and forgiveness as a Christian, one turns his back on God, the blood of Jesus can no longer cover him.

The difference between a Christian who has fallen short and one who has fallen away is that one can be forgiven and one cannot. Are you willfully walking away from God?



WHAT WILL YOU DO?

by Michael Clarke

In 2nd Timothy 4:2, Paul writes to Timothy, “Preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season.” I am sure many of you know the names Michael Jordan and LeBron James. One of the reasons you know these names are because they are a few of the best to ever play basketball. The reason they were the best was because when the season was over they worked just as hard as they did during the season. It may have been months before the next season started, yet they treated it like the playoffs. Their attitude was to be ready for anything. They took the attitude of being ready no matter what to heart. God wants us to have that same tenacious desire to be ready in the Scriptures. If we are not expecting it, and someone asks us a biblical question, we should be ready and willing to answer it.

When we study hard and we know the word of God, we can be steadfast and immovable (1 Cor. 15:58). There were those in the NBA that were scared to try to score on certain players. These athletes were so good at their position that they could keep anyone from scoring. Some of them even prided themselves in the fact that no one could score on them. You and I need to have that same type of attitude for the defense of the church. We should know the Word so well that we will never compromise on the Truth. We should keep others from compromising the Truth. It should be the case that when it comes to defending the gospel, the Devil can never get past us. Christ proved that it was possible, in Matthew 4 and Luke 4. There may have been times in your life before where he (the devil) has gotten past your defense and has

brought you down. However, we must develop the faithful Christian attitude that says, “You will not get past me again.” You may be saying, “I’m only a young person, I can’t fight against an enemy that strong.”

When Paul wrote to Timothy, he was writing to a young person. One of the things Paul did not want Timothy to miss was that age does not matter. Paul told Timothy to not let anyone “despise your youth” 1 Timothy 4:12. He told him to be an example in “word, conduct, love, spirit, faith, and purity.” Since we know according to 2 Timothy 3:16 that all scripture is inspired, we can take what Paul said in 1 Timothy 4:12 and apply it to our own lives.

You may be thinking. “I can’t teach my friends the gospel, I’m not strong enough yet.” “I don’t have a good defense of the gospel yet.” “At my age, what could I do?” Most people have these excuses running through their minds, yet it is just the Devil trying to keep you from stepping up. When you are struggling with a new school or a new environment, think of Daniel—he was in another country, surrounded by people who did not believe in the God that he did. Yet, Daniel was still victorious. When you are dealing with people who are smarter than you are, think of Jesus, even at the age of 12, He was able to answer and ask questions to men who had been studying the Law their entire lives. That is the only way you can truly be immovable. Your age is truly just a number. The Gospel is the power that gives the impact.



Thank God for the Patriarchs

by Patrick Morrison

You probably already have in mind that I am writing about those early Bible characters such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. No, those are not the individuals to whom I am making reference.

This past Lord's Day my family had opportunity to visit a congregation of which we were once members. While most of the membership has changed, we found several familiar families still faithfully involved in the work. In particular was an older Christian man and elder that we had grown to love very dearly. On the day of our visit, he had a role in the public worship. As I listened to him read and explain from the scriptures, I also did a little reminiscing about our time under his leadership.

I recalled his enthusiasm as the worship assembly attendance grew closer and closer to two hundred. I recalled some very difficult and tumultuous times with which he had to deal as a shepherd of God's people. I recalled the tragic death of His wonderful wife as she lost her earthly fight with cancer (She won the eternal victory). I also reflected on my personal knowledge that even at that present time he was struggling with health problems of his own. He had been there, faithfully, through thick and thin. To me he seemed like one of the patriarchs of old.

The dictionary says a patriarch is "the oldest member of a group." It adds that a patriarch is "a venerable old man." We certainly want to keep our admiration and respect for mere men and women within the confines of Biblical limitation (Romans 12:3); however, in any given congregation, there are likely men, or women for that matter, who would fall into this category. They are like the patriarchs.

They are some of the oldest among us; they have seen growth due to faithfulness. They have seen small worship crowds because of a lack of love for the Lord. They have rejoiced over the good that has happened in the congregation. They have weathered the storms that always seem to come. They struggle with the health problems that come with age. Yet, in spite of it all, they are still in their seats when the saints assemble. They have continued to trust God and have not given up on His promises.

I know that many of them feel as though their age and health keep them from being instrumental to the work of the local congregation. I reject that notion completely.

These honorable Christians continue to exert a priceless influence on those of us who are eager to receive it. They teach us about the priorities in life. They teach us the necessary love of assembling with the Saints to worship God and encourage one another. They teach us that time is filled with swift transition but that the Gospel Truths that they learned and know are still good for families today. They are a testament to the hope of longevity for local congregations in communities large and small. Where would we be without them? Thankfully, we have our own local cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1).

We ought to thank God for these honorable ones among us. We ought to listen to what their lives can teach us. Maybe one day, we can honor them by being such a Godly influence on the generation that follows us.

