

Call to Obedience #495
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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On Taking Things For Granted

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Most of us do not take into account that life is like a river; it is constantly changing. The journey from the cradle to the grave is like that: physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually. Aging, in terms of going downhill, does not begin at 50 or 60, but in the early twenties. That is why so few Olympic records are broken beyond that age. From then on, our bodies begin to underperform. Some diseases such as Alzheimer's do not begin in our seventies—brain scans reveal that they can begin as early as in our late teens. To put it boldly, we are on a march to serious problems and the grave much earlier than we think we are. We have much less control of our lives than we think we do. Because of this, let us walk cautiously: *...to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God* (Micah 6:8).

The healthiest appearing youth may die of a heart attack or stroke or accident any day. We all live by the mercy of God. All of us. So, once we take things for granted, we set ourselves up for deep disappointments or for a crash. For this reason, we would be wise to start preparing to meet God when we know how to spell our name. Again, the only sure thing we know in life is that we are going to die, to meet our Maker. One of the greatest tragedies in life is to see people having wasted 50, 60, 70 or 80 years of life without having done anything to prepare for eternity. When they finally come near to the end of their life, they are confused or frightened, or they panic as to what is going to happen to them next as they sense within themselves that there is going to be a judgment to come (Heb. 9:27). And indeed, this judgment will be thorough, detailed and above all, it will be just. It will include every idle word that we have ever spoken (Matt. 12:36); as Solomon also said: *...God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil* (Ecc. 12:14, Rom. 2:16); and as the Revelation also confirms with these words: *...and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books* (Rev. 20:12).

The Book of Life will determine our eternal destiny: heaven or hell. If our name is in it, heaven is our destiny, but if not, then our destiny is hell. Our

name will be entered into the Book of Life if we have allowed Jesus to be Lord of our lives. The book of works will determine the degree of punishment for the wicked and the measure of rewards for the righteous. For example, for the wicked, it will be as Jesus said: *some will be beaten with many stripes, some with few.* As to the righteous, the size of their heavenly mansion and their position amongst the great assembly robed in white will be determined on the quantity and quality of good works they have done (Matt. 25:31-46). To avoid any confusion: “We all are saved by faith but rewarded according to our works.” Prepare to meet your God.

There will be nothing you can say to defend yourself as you are being judged. No excuse will be accepted. No hypocrisy will pass into the gates of God’s heavenly city. The Jews consider Jerusalem to be the holy city, but at the time of Jesus, Capernaum (the town of Peter), looked like the holy city. Jesus visited there more frequently than any other place and He felt at home there. It was there where He did more miracles than any place else. Therefore, you would think that the Capernaimites would have easy entrance into heaven, but this is what Jesus said concerning them: *then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out* (Luke 13:26-28). Thrust out! Pastors do a very great disservice to their parishioners when they do not let them know about these matters.

Do not take things for granted. Do not take *anything* for granted. Prepare to meet your God. You may be in a wonderful church like unto that in Capernaum, but the church will not carry you to heaven. No, it is the angels who will be sent for you, if you are found worthy, like Lazarus who begged at the gates of the rich man (Luke 16:19-26). Lazarus, despite his hardships, was prepared to meet his God; the rich man spent his life enriching himself, only to spend the rest of eternity without ever tasting a drop of water again. Oh my friend, remember: *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out* (1 Tim. 6:7); *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life...* (John 6:27).

Can you hear me? Can you hear me crying and raising my voice to you? Do not take things for granted. Also, do not take for granted the fact that because you lived victoriously today, you can be a little careless tomorrow. You must crucify the self-life each day, one day at a time because: *...Sufficient for*

the day is its own trouble (Matt. 6:34). God gave the children of Israel enough bread for each day, for six days of the week. It could not be stored for the next day or it would spoil. Each day, they had to get fresh bread. For the weekend, the Israelites received two portions of bread so they could keep the Sabbath Day holy. Do not defile the Sabbath. It is the LORD'S day.

Because life constantly changes, you have to learn to make adjustments. Build flexibility into your lifestyle. So, each day your river of life may change course: sometimes a little, sometimes much. Be ready to adjust. I strongly suggest that you hold everything in your open hands allowing God to take anything away from you at any time He desires. Until you do that, your romance and adventure with God does not really begin; you are not truly His. That was the way God began with Abraham, our father in the faith. That is the way God wants to begin with you. Your life, your spouse, your children and your possessions are not yours. They belong to the Lord. Keep all of them in an open hand so when God takes any of them, you will not be jarred. When God told Abraham to kill his own son, he was not jarred. I am sure he had emotions. That is okay. But he did not fuss with God about it. He rose early in the morning to get it done. He had learned that God's ways are higher than our ways (Isa. 55:9) and that His ways are past finding out (Rom. 11:33). Oh, how that helps us to not ask irrelevant questions such as: "Why is this happening?"

Christianity is not majoring on understanding but on trusting and loving. God sends trials: *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (1 Peter 1:7). And do not get the foolish idea that suffering is bad for you. God has built His kingdom on the principle of suffering. That is why we have: *In the cross of Christ, I glory*. Yet tragically, the natural man spends his whole life running away from suffering and from discomfort as a means of his salvation.

Again, life is like a river. It often changes its direction, intensity and volume. Sometimes, the riverbed is almost dry and sometimes, the river floods its banks. But it will always lead you to heaven. For some, their final passage may be in a chariot of fire as in the case of Elijah; for others, it may be through execution like John the Baptist and Paul; yet others may be carried to heaven from beds of ease—but stay in this river. Keep moving in it. It is ever refreshing and takes you to the throne of God. And most assuredly, when God takes something away from you, He always replaces it with something better. It may not look better to the natural eye, but it is better in the eyes of eternity. So,

always give Him praise without questioning why something happened. With that, be prepared to lose your house, your financial security, any of your loved ones, your friends and your health any day. God only takes things away from His children to bless them with more. Do not jump from the ship Zion and swim to the shore of worldly pleasures when the going gets rough. Stay on the ship. The world will perish, but the River of Life will roll on forever.

Yes: ...*The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD* (Job 1:21). Job said that and had no trouble letting go, and later was again blessed by God. Again, you allow God to win by His abundant grace as you let go like Job. But you can even do better than Job. Job later cursed the day when he was born (Job 3:1-3). Instead of self-pity, you want to be like Paul who said: *Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ* (Phil. 3:8).

And in reference to having things, Paul said: *And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content* (1 Tim. 6:8). That was his definition of Christian prosperity. With this, Christianity is designed to be a world religion. People do not have to be “rich” to be one of its participants. Prosperity is simply a blanket for the night, a shirt for the day, a piece of bread, a glass of water and ...*the fullness of Christ who fills all in all* (Eph. 1:23). Oh, oh, oh!

Summing it up, how do you accommodate the constant changes of the river’s flow in your life? You accommodate every change by making adjustments to it. Do not take your life for granted. Do not fuss about when your life changes due to the loss of things or loved ones. Just obey and follow, and you will get to higher ground. You will experience a new freedom and a new joy that the world cannot give, more than you ever had before. With that, you will not lose—God has no losers.

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