

Nourishment

Joe Slater

“If you instruct the brethren in these things, you will be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed” (1 Tim. 4:6).

First-century Christians struggled with the dietary laws of Moses, food sacrificed to idols, and Gnostic notions about what should and should not be eaten. Paul warned the young preacher Timothy of the trouble false teachers would stir up over these and other issues. The bottom line was this: *“every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified (made holy) by the word of God and prayer”* (1 Tim. 4:4-5).

I’ve known a few brethren who still had scruples about Mosaic dietary restrictions, but they never made an issue of it. For the most part, we don’t have to deal very much with such questions where I live, and for that I am thankful.

Timothy, however, would have to deal with them as current issues. By instructing the brethren as Paul said, he would diminish the likelihood of division and the loss of precious souls. Timothy himself would also benefit from being “nourished in the words of faith and of the good doctrine which you have carefully followed” (cited above). What he and others consumed to nourish their bodies mattered little if at all; but their inner persons needed to be nourished with God’s word to generate faith in their hearts (Rom. 10:17). They needed not the demonic doctrines of the false teachers (1 Tim. 4:1), but the good doctrine (teaching) that Timothy had learned from Paul.

Peter urged his readers to desire the word of God with the fervency of a newborn child craving milk. With such nourishment, they would grow (1 Pet. 2:2). While milk comprises an appropriate diet for newborns, however, more mature people should eat stronger, more substantial food. The same is true in spiritual matters. The inability or unwillingness to tolerate more advanced Biblical teaching indicates a fleshly mindset (such as the Corinthians had, 1 Cor. 3:1-3) and spiritual immaturity (which also characterized the Corinthians as well as the recipients of Heb. 5:12-14).

How are you nourishing your soul? God’s word provides both milk for the babe in Christ and meat for the mature. Dig in! Bon appétit!

Riches To Share

“Charge...that they have their hope not set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who gives us richly of all thing to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to share” (1 Timothy 6:17, 18).

This morning Cops Protecting Kids called me. "Can you give a non-tax deductible donation to help us?" the man asked. We get calls like that every week. They all say "non-tax deductible donation". Under the new tax laws, you cannot deduct donations to many causes. These organizations are suffering because many have stopped giving.

Our donations to the church are still deductible, but what if they weren't? Would our giving to our church family cease? Would churches be unable to pay their utility bills, buy Bible class materials and the bread and wine for communion, and keep their buildings up? Would they be able to help those in need?

How deep is our love for Christ's church? For those in the church who are suffering because they lost their job? For people in our neighborhood and our community who are in need? Is our love for Christ and others big enough that we will dig into our pocketbook and pull out some cash or write a check to help someone who is in desperate need?

This is not to suggest that we need to help every cause that calls us soliciting money. It is not saying that we should give more than we can afford. But our hearts need to be in the right place when it comes to sharing the riches that God gives us. When we help others, God has promised to repay us richly, not only in this life, but in the life to come.

Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

--Donna Richmond Wittlif (Denver, CO)

Not Too Close?

“But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest” (Matthew 26:58).

A short time earlier, Peter had boldly proclaimed that he would not fall away from the Lord and would even die for him (Matt. 26:31-33). It is a little later now and the Lord is a prisoner on trial for His life. Where is Peter? The record clearly states that he is not by the Lord's side as he had so stated he would be. There is no doubting that Peter had a desire to be close the Lord but just not too close.

I find myself wondering if this is the way a lot of people feel today – wanting to be close to the Lord, just not too close. Maybe, just maybe, we all need to pause here and search our own heart. How does my life stand up against Matt. 6:33? Is Jesus my Lord on Sunday morning but not on Sunday night or Wednesday night? Is Jesus my Lord when hard times are upon me but not when everything is going well? Is Jesus my Lord when sickness strikes this human frame but not when I am in reasonably good health? Am I seeking to grow daily in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Pet. 3:18)? Do I desire the sincere milk of the word and study that word diligently to show myself approved (2 Tim. 2:15)? Am I living each day in a way that I am an example to the believer (1 Tim. 4:12). Is my body being presented to the Lord as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable (Rom. 12:1)?

I pray that we will never become so busy with our temporal affairs that the Lord gets pushed aside? May we never become so focused on our own desires, pursuing those things we want that the Lord is given only the crumbs of our life (Rom. 12:2; Luke 12:15; 1 John 2:15-17)? Do we want to be close to the Lord but just not too close?

My desire is that all of us will live each waking moment in a way that we can say, “I am ready.” “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

--Charles Hicks