

Gimme That Old Time Religion!

Joe Slater

I have no idea who wrote the original song by this title. It has many variations. I'm thinking of the one Buck Owens sang. One verse says: "Well it was good enough for Mother, it was good enough for Papa, it was good enough for Sister, and it's good enough for me."

The French skeptic Voltaire supposedly said, "If you wish to converse with me, define your terms." Voltaire was wrong about many things, but he got that one right. What is "that old time religion"? I need a definition before I'm willing to say, "It's good enough for me!"

We cannot tell what various singers meant when they sang about "old time religion" being "good enough" for them. In some renditions, "It was good for the Hebrew children" (coming out of Egypt in the Exodus) and "it was good for Daniel" (in captivity in Babylon). But I seriously doubt any of the singers were offering animal sacrifices like the Hebrews did, or strictly observing the dietary laws of Moses like Daniel.

Following the religion of one's parents and siblings may or may not be advisable. Again, the question boils down to this: "What is 'that old time religion'?" If Mother, Father, and Sister all were following the religion that is revealed in the New Testament, then by all means, "It's good enough for me!"

The sad fact is, however, that much of what passes today for "that old time religion" is not nearly old enough! Many are following a Pope and a celibate priesthood; but all of that arose after the New Testament was completed and in defiance of it. It isn't nearly old enough! Others are sprinkling babies and calling it "baptism." Nobody ever heard of such until long after New Testament days. Some may call it "old time

religion," but it isn't old enough! Multitudes accompany spiritual songs with various instruments other than the one authorized in the New Testament (the heart, Ephesians 5:19). Not until centuries after the New Testament did that practice begin. Is it "old time religion"? Perhaps, but it's not old enough!

The religion of Christ, revealed in the pages of the New Testament, is not merely "good enough" for us; it is the very best. There is no improving upon it! All the additions and subtractions from it, and alterations of it, have caused only division and apostasy. Let us diligently practice what is genuinely "that old time religion"!

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The School of Hard Knocks

The psalmist prayed, "You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according to Your word" (Psalm 119:65).

At first, taking the verse alone, we might think he was thankful that God had blessed him with an easy life—but not so. In verse 71 he wrote, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes."

It seems the psalmist had apparently gone through what has been called "the school of hard knocks." While we seek to avoid the pains in life, we need to learn that if our heart seeks the Lord, we can learn from our painful experiences. When troubles come, we have the choice of facing them with bitterness or with assurance that "we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). In the "school of hard knocks," we must learn to seek comfort in God's word, submitting our lives to Him and His will.

Are there afflictions and difficulties in your life that sometimes seem insurmountable? If so, have you learned to turn them over to the Lord? By faith, find comfort and strength in God's word: "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6-7). Do you seek strength in prayer and God's word? Have you let the Lord be your Teacher in the "school of hard knocks?"

--Ron Bartanen (Arthur, IL) via Bulletin Gold

FELLOWSHIP PROVIDES STRENGTHENING

"Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17).

Fellowship provides an opportunity to strengthen one another. This is the effect that Christians should have on each other.

Solomon wrote about fellowship, "*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up*" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

Clearly it is better to join with others. I have found that when working alone on spiritual growth, it is hard for me to stay focused. However, it is also true that when we are with others, we can spend our time on trivial matters.

What do we talk about when we get together? Is it worldly things or is it spiritual matters? The goal must be to improve each other and thus strengthen one another. It takes a strengthened faith to resist the call of the world.

"*Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds*" (Hebrews 10:24). Love, truly caring for others, takes time to develop. Good deeds are not something that we have as a life style or habit. We need to be stimulated to love and do good deeds. It is easier to be stimulated when others encourage us.

Let us strive to strengthen our brothers and sisters so that we all may be good examples of our Lord Jesus.

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)