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Vol. 28 No 2

“From the Pastor’s Desk”

February 2020

AVOIDING FALSE EXPECTATIONS

Recently, as Pastor of a great church of volunteers, who serve the Lord by serving their time in service both on behalf of the congregation and this pastor, we gave a devotional book to each of them by Paul David Tripp. I and Pastor Sheri have found his writings most inspiring and informative for our daily walk. Just as a sample; in one of his daily journals he wrote these words: “*When we ask the present to give us what only eternity can give, we end up driven, frustrated, discouraged, and ultimately hopeless.*” I could not agree with him any more than that.....what a powerful statement.

I am sure that most of you are probably watchers of the latest news events that involved our upcoming Presidential elections. If we tend to believe the media, there are some who say that President Trump will be elected. Others are not quite sure. And there is the tendency for some people to trust those who advocate what they prefer rather than those who oppose such a thing as Mr. Trump being elected. It appears that the opposition to Mr. Trump’s election is doing everything that they can to see to it that such a thing does not happen regardless of how the American voters feel. I personally doubt that anyone knows because most Trump supporters are pretty private when it comes to expressing themselves in any polls.

But in the midst of such news, airwaves discussion, and the media doing everything to convince the general public to vote their way I would like to caution everyone to avoid false expectations. The Holy Scripture teaches us that “*Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.*” (Prov. 13:12)

UNHEALTHY EXPECTATIONS

The problem with being human, we are too earthly minded. Now I can hear someone ask: What is wrong with that? What is wrong with being what God made you to be? Why is this a problem for us human beings? For one, it is contrary to Scripture. We are told by the Apostle Paul, “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*” Why would Paul make such a statement?

Because the Apostle, who after having his life changed by Christ Himself saw that there was a better way to live in this world. He saw that he was better off when his thoughts became more occupied with the things where Christ now dwells, and where his final home would be, and decided it was better to set his mind and interests on that place. Albert Barnes said in his commentary on this verse: “*Since we are raised from the death of sin, and are made to live anew, the great object of our contemplation should be the heavenly world. Not on things on the earth (such as wealth, honor, and pleasure).*”

The problem with unhealthy expectations is - it sets us up for great disappointment. How many times have you seen little children leave Disneyland crying? You may think it was because they were tired. That may be the case. But with it also was the reality that even though that place can be a place of amusement, rides, happiness, etc. it can last only so long. It all eventually will come to an end. Add to the fact that the Park will close at midnight, or the body wears down and can handle only so much fun. Or the parents run out of money paying for all those things that their children want to take home.

But Disneyland is not the only place where one can leave with disappointed expectations. Sometimes it can happen visiting with friends and relatives. I know the holiday can create some expectations of fun and games, meeting old relatives and friends or former classmates once again. Prior to the events we can build in our minds what we expect to happen, the fun, the food, the talks, reliving old memories. And we may even hope and expect that those friends, relatives, associates will have improved in behavior, personality, and special graces only to find them worse rather than better. Again, being bitterly disappointed determined not to make that mistake again....only to repeat that expectation the next year.

WHAT ARE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS

I don't want anyone to give up on this life. **However, this life can only be so good, that is, if we don't make unreasonable demands on it expecting something that it cannot provide.** It does have its limitations. We can only live so long. We are limited to 24 hours in the day, some of which require proper rest, and proper sleep. Eventually we run out of time in a day, days in a week, months in a year, and years in a lifetime. It all has its limitations. But that is what heaven is for.

When all this comes to an end...there will be a new beginning. For the child of God it will take place...somewhere else. This is why we should live for eternity, not just for today, or for this year. That is why we take comfort in the promises of our Lord in which he has gone ahead to prepare for us a place. *And He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* John 14:2, 3

I remember in my childhood asking my parents for things that they were unable to give. I asked questions that due to my age and ignorance, they would not answer because they knew I didn't have the maturity to understand the answer even if they had given it to me. One thing about childhood is we (they) have a lot of unrealistic expectations. But that is true also when we are spiritually immature. *"Brethren, be not children in understanding."* 1 Cor. 14:20

Now what was the writer saying? **I believe he was saying: Be not childish; do not behave like little children.** They admire, and are astonished at what is new, different, exhilarating and may be considered amusing but what may be of no real value or useful. So many young people these days seem pleased with anything that will give them a new high, or what will amuse them, and at things that can fulfill their physical desire for pleasure and amusement. Solomon indulged himself in such a life as that...and what did he conclude in the end? He advised the young: *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;"* Eccl 12:1

Years ago, when I was in my teens, I got my eyes on a Cadillac. Now don't ask me why a teenager would want such a car when others would have been far happier with a Corvette. However can anyone explain why people want certain things? Well, one day a friend gave me a Cadillac...it was old, but I got one. For a few days I was delighted...then came time for the car to be serviced. I quickly discovered that I could not afford to have my desires fulfilled. It wasn't long before I was begging someone to take that car off my hands.

I like a statement that Paul David Tripp made when he asked about spiritually impure people who expected God to fix everything that was wrong in their life. He said, **"If God fixed everything for us in this life what would be the purpose of faith?"** We who tend to be like little children asking for unrealistic expectations...are in essence doubting the very goodness of God.

In 2020 we must remember that ultimately, the thing that we need to realize is this: most of what we really want in this life can only be fulfilled in the life that is to come. We must first cross Jordan, if we are going to enjoy the Promised Land. In this life everything we enjoy is only temporary. It all in the end closes just like Disneyland Park. Then we must begin a new day.

He hath made everything beautiful in His time: also He hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God makes from the beginning to the end. The truth is in this: We must realize, and I have said it and I say it again, that most of what we want in this life can only be fulfilled in eternity. **Earth is too small to satisfy our earthly human desires.** No wonder man wants to explore space. The truth is this...even that will not be enough. Only in heaven will man find complete satisfaction.

So today, before you petition the Lord for anything, first ask Him to sanctify your desires. We should not want anything that God doesn't want for us. And we should not refuse anything that God does will for us...even the cup that our Lord requested to be removed. God has higher purposes than we do. He foresees the future and we can trust Him with what He so chooses to give as well as that in which He refuses. Amen.