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The Wooley Springs Helper

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Important Things

What's the most important thing in the world to you right now? Think carefully before you answer. For Christians, serving God is the most important thing of all. Solomon said as much in Ecclesiastes 12:13: *"Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all."*

For something to come first in our lives means that nothing comes before it – *nothing*. In Matthew 13:45-46 Jesus spoke of the pearl merchant *"who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it."* The merchant wanted the pearl so much that he sold all his worldly possessions to buy it.

What determines the price of something, be it a pearl, a plot of land, or a new home? In a free-market society like ours, the price of an item is determined by how badly people want it; i.e. demand. Someone who sells an item has to ask a potential buyer how much he is willing to give to up have the item. If he is unwilling to pay the price, he will just have to settle for something less.

The same can be said of service to God. We know and believe that if we keep His commandments, we will have eternal life (Romans 6:23). But each of us has to decide how much eternal life is worth to us. Let's think about that while we examine some scripture.

In this world, the godly life is not the easiest to lead. We each have to deal with distractions each day of our lives. One of the greatest distractions we face comes from materialism; that is, our desire to succeed and prosper in the world. Not that there is anything inherently wrong with success and prosperity, but even those of the Body who have the best of intentions can succumb to the temptation to put these things at the center of their lives (James 1:13-14).

We are blessed to live in a time and place where we can enjoy comfortable lives that our ancestors could only have dreamed of. We are blessed further to live in a country where the rights of citizens are guaranteed and protected. The thought of life without these things fills us with dread. Yet even were we to be deprived of these blessings, we are still followers of Jesus Christ and have obligations to Him and His Father which we are bound to fulfill.

In recent months we have undergone great changes in our lives due to a disease which has affected the whole world. Many of the businesses and services we use are now unavailable to us, or only partially available. Whenever we are in public, we are required to take steps to protect those around us. Nothing like this has ever happened before.

It is not the purpose of this article to argue the merits or demerits of the restrictions that have been placed on us. Suffice it to say that, as Christians, we are expected to be good citizens (Romans 13:1-7; I Peter 2:13-17). But matters of politics have no place in a house of worship. Corruption of the temple was one of the things that led to the downfall of Israel (II Kings 21:4-7; II Chronicles 26:16).

In I Corinthians 8:1, Paul began his response to the eating-meat-offered-to-idols issue with these words: "*Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.*" Was Paul saying that knowledge was unimportant? No, he was saying that it is important, but not as important as love. (In chapter 13 he told them that love was even greater than faith and hope.) The Corinthians had the *knowledge* that eating meat that had been intended for idol worship was not wrong; Paul was telling them that they also needed *love* for those who might feel differently.

Now observe in I Corinthians 6 that Paul soundly disapproved of brethren settling their differences in court. There were two reasons for this. One, the saints should judge the world, not the other way around (v. 2). Two, brethren should be more concerned with supporting, rather than suing, one another. "Why," he asked in verse 7, "*do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated?*" These words would surely cause a great deal of head-scratching in today's litigious society.

Sure, if you've been wronged by a brother, you have right to feel ill-used, and legally at least, you have a right to take legal action. But these actions put *both* your souls at risk – and no amount of "punitive damages" is worth that.

In the 14th chapter of Romans, Paul dealt with another instance of Christians putting their own feelings ahead of their love for their brethren. His words in verse 13 put the matter to rest: "*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.*"

Jesus said in John 15:12, "*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*" Christians who argue over matters that do not pertain to eternal life are not showing the love that Jesus commanded of His followers. They place their own souls at risk, and as we have noted, the souls of others as well.

We began by asking what is important to us, but we have also observed that sometimes judgments have to be made as to which of two or more competing matters is more important than the others. Paul said in I Corinthians 8:13 that he would sooner give up meat than cause a brother to stumble – even if he knew and was convinced in his heart that eating meat was not wrong. "*Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.*" (Romans 14:15)

It is inevitable that members of the Body will have differences. None of us is perfect, nor will we achieve perfection this side of eternity. That said, there is no dispute that is worth losing our souls. Nothing on earth is *that* important. If saving our souls requires losing our faces, so be it.

Arvid McGuire passed away on Tuesday, aged 85. Bro. McGuire was born in Limestone County and preached in this area many years. Arrangements are pending.

David Adams is recovering from back surgery.

Katherine Sammet has been given a heart monitor.

Dot Sims is expected to undergo surgery in the near future.

Address Fear with Faith in God

¹ The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. ³ Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, in this I will be confident (Psalm 27:1-3).

Fear has gripped many. Fear of disease, civil unrest, enemies, the future, and more has settled into countless hearts, filling souls with uncertainty, anxiety, and doubt. The psalmist David turned to the Lord in moments of fear and dread. We can and must do the same. With eyes of faith, David saw the Lord God as his light, his salvation, and the strength of his life (v. 1). David put his confidence in the Lord in the face of wicked enemies. While darkness drives many to be uncertain and fearful of life's path, Jesus Christ continues to be the light of the world (John 8:12). As many trust wealth, political parties, and even violence as a means of deliverance, true salvation from evil is only found in Jesus Christ (Luke 19:10; Acts 4:12). Pride leads us to trust in our strength and power, even when experience shows us trusting in the flesh ultimately fails (Jer. 17:5-10). God gives power to the weak who live by faith (Is. 40:29-31; 2 Cor. 12:9-10). Whatever evil forces arise in your life, the answer to enduring them and being victorious over them is in the Lord. Put your faith in God, love Him, and keep His commandments (1 John 5:3-5).

– Joe R. Price