

around trying to get the brethren to “fire” Paul from his apostleship because “he preaches too long”?

Consider Jesus. Jesus “*continued all night in prayer to God*” (Lk. 6:12). It is doubtful that those who whine and complain about a “long sermon” have ever prayed “*all night to God.*”

When Jesus was waiting to die, he asked Peter, James, and John to be with him during those awful hours of agony. The disciples fell asleep. Jesus exclaimed, “*What, could ye not watch with me for one hour*” (Matt. 26:40)? The next time you are tempted to moan and groan about “a sermon that goes a little longer than you think it should, let the Lord’s question ring and echo in your ears, “*Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?*”

Trends

Surveys conducted in 2018 and 2019 show that 4% of American adults say they are atheists when asked about their religious identity, up from 2% in 2009. An additional 5% of Americans call themselves agnostics, up from 3% a decade ago.

—Pew Research Center

Psalm 14:1: “*The fool hath said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’*”

Sentence Sermons

“**Faith is not believing God can. It is knowing God will.**” —Ben Stein

News & Notes

Pray for the African brethren. They are suffering due to riots, loss of property, persecution, etc. Please consider donating if you're able! 1 Jn. 3:17

Pray for sister Wilma Cardwell. She's a great encouragement to all!

Please pray for Lana May. She is really suffering due to her health issues.

Pray for all our members who do not attend regularly. Try to give them words of encouragement!

Pray for the all our young people. They too face many trials and temptations.

There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?!

Anyone need prayers? Let us know so we can announce it and post it.

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Words of Life

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“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”

John 6:68



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God Helps Those Who Seek Him

Craig Thomas

Today's **Thought for the Day** comes from Psalm 121. In this psalm the author expresses a great truth: God helps those who seek Him. In verse 1 the psalmist is looking for help, looking for assistance to overcome the difficulties in his life. Thus, he asks the question: “*From whence comes my help?*” We all experience times when life presents hurdles, we, by ourselves, are entirely incapable of surmounting. A natural response to such situations is to look for assistance. Where do we turn for succor in such times? In such circumstances most turn to carnal and worldly sources for help. Many handle times of stress with drugs and alcohol. Many handle relationship problems with anger, sexual immorality, and divorce. Many seek happiness in material things. They throw caution to the wind and run up the credit cards to the max. Seeking carnal solutions for spiritual problems will never work! The psalmist is wise as he realizes carnal solutions may initially seem plausible and offer happiness. However, that happiness is fleeting and temporary (cf. Heb. 11:25). In the end it leaves one with an “empty sack.”

The psalmist looks for help in the only place that will provide true fulfillment and satisfaction: “*My help comes from the LORD*” (v. 2). It is no accident the psalmist follows up that first phrase with “*Who made heaven and earth.*” Consider that the observable Universe extends ~46.5 billion light years in every direction with over a billion trillion stars. There are more stars in the observable Universe than grains of sand on the entire Earth! God spoke the Universe into existence from nothing! (cf. Gen. 1; Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 11:3). If He was able to accomplish that glorious and awesome act, surely, He can help me deal with my relatively miniscule difficulties. As Paul writes (Eph. 3:20):

“*Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,*”

What is “*the power that works in us*” to which Paul refers? I believe the answer to that question is found in Ephesians 1:19-20:

“¹⁹ and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰ which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,”

When we faithfully call on the LORD for His aid in overcoming our difficulties in life we have at our beck and call the power that: (1) summoned the Universe into existence from nothing, (2) raised Christ from the dead, and (3) elevated Christ to God's right hand in heaven. Why would we ever doubt God's ability to help us successfully navigate the problems of life?!

That "mighty power" serves as an airtight guarantee God will help the faithful. The psalmist puts that guarantee in these words (vv. 3-8):

³ He will not allow your foot to be moved;

He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel

Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The LORD is your keeper;

The LORD is your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,

Nor the moon by night.

⁷ The LORD shall preserve you from all evil;

He shall preserve your soul.

⁸ The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore."

Thus, we can "count it all joy when [we] fall into various trials" (Jas. 1:2) because the LORD will bring the most powerful resources imaginable to our aid. Those resources are at our beck and call if we ask in faith (Jas. 1:5-8):

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Barnabas, Son of Encouragement

SWORD TIPS #2089 (OCTOBER 17, 2020)

Joe R Price

³⁶ And *Joses*, who was also named *Barnabas* by the apostles (which is translated *Son of Encouragement*), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. (Acts 4:36-37, NKJV)

What a wonderful man this *Joses* (*Joseph*) was! He had such a way of comforting, consoling, exhorting, and encouraging fellow Christians that the apostles named him *Barnabas* (son of encouragement). We want to encourage others, but sometimes we don't know how to do it. Let's learn from *Barnabas*. He encouraged others through generously serving others. He generously gave of his possessions to relieve needy saints. He was generous with his reputation, putting it on the line to vouch for *Saul's* conversion when others were afraid (Acts 9:26-28). He was generous with his time and energy to travel to *Antioch* to teach and strengthen new Christians (Acts 11:21-24). He was generous in giving his life to preaching the gospel in many places with *Paul* and others (Acts 11:25-26; 13:2; et al.). To encourage others, we must come out of our own little world and serve others with genuine care, concern, and contact. *Barnabas* did that as an

expression of his faith in the Lord. We can be encouragers, too. The Lord calls on us to "exhort one another daily" (Heb. 3:13). So, let's join hands with *Barnabas* and build up one another in the most holy faith (*Jude* 20).

He Preaches Too Long!

Larry Hafley

(NOTE: What follows is not a personal defense, nor a defense of bad judgment. Due to age and infirmities, some of our dear ones who love the Lord are not able to sit for long periods of time. Generally, the godly who suffer in the flesh are the last to murmur about "long preaching." It is those weak in the spirit, or one who has a hidden agenda, who hollers the loudest.)

Recently, a liberal brother visited our services and in a very gruff manner complained, "He preaches too long!" He let it be known that he was not a happy hearer! I reasoned with him, but he would not be calm, so I walked away and left him grumbling about the length of the sermon.

Perhaps some churches are used to 20 minute "sermonettes," sermons that have little Scripture, that do not rebuke sin, and that are decorated with cute, clever stories. They are accustomed to worship services that are convenient six packs of "Gospel Lite." That is, they have 60 minutes of time allotted for everything--announcements, singing, prayers, the Lord's supper, and a short "message" from the "pulpit minister." He entertains, creates smiles with his pleasing manner and subtle wit, and accepts smatterings of laughter and applause. He leaves his audience with a "good warm feeling." He never speaks of hell or acts like he ever met anyone that will go there. He rarely uses the Bible to sustain his points, and never is heard to say a thing is true "because that's what the word of God teaches." No, that would be too dogmatic, even "legalistic." Instead, he sprinkles his talk with quotes from popular, "trendy" sources, and charms his audience with his personal grace and aplomb. Visitors go away without learning the difference between New Testament faith and that of the Methodist Church they attend. In other words, "Gospel Lite."

To such people, our services likely will be regarded as being "too long." But what of those who are "hungering and thirsting after righteousness"? "All things are ready," Jesus says, "come to the feast." However, you only have 15 or 20 minutes in which to eat! (Isn't it strange that the same brethren who complain about a "long sermon," are the ones who can sit for an hour on a metal folding chair in the fellowship hall!) In effect, they say, "Do not 'force' me to feed for more than 20 minutes on Him who is 'the bread of life,' but I will sit all afternoon at a picnic table!" Brethren, where are our priorities?

Consider *Ezra*. He spoke "from the morning until midday...and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law" (Neh. 8:3). If some of our brethren had been there, perhaps they would have started a whispering campaign to have *Ezra* removed from the pulpit because "he preaches too long!"

Consider *Paul*. He was "guilty" of "long preaching" (Acts 20:9). We do not know how "long" it was, but we know that it was "long" enough for the Holy Spirit to call it "long preaching." On another occasion, *Paul* preached "from morning till evening." (At least *Ezra* had the "good sense" to quit at "midday," but *Paul* went on "till evening." For shame!) Again, do you reckon someone went