

Westminster Presbyterian Church  
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Psalm 104:24-34  
Colossians 1:24-29  
Romans 12:9-21

### **"Triumphant Living"**

An old farmer was sitting on his porch, perched in his rocking chair, rocking back and forth, idling the time of day away. A stranger happened by and said, "How's things?" "Tolerable", came the reply. And then the farmer continued, "Two weeks ago a tornado came along and knocked down all the trees I would have had to chop down for this winter's firewood. And then last week, lightning struck the brush I had planned to burn to clear the fields for planting." The stranger looked at him in amazement, "That's remarkable, and what are you doing now?" The farmer slowly answered as he rocked back and forth, "I'm waiting for an earthquake to shake the potatoes out of the ground."

I have discovered that some people are a bit like that farmer. They believe that they can sit back and let God do all the work. Their participation in life is one of observation and comment. Generally, they're complainers. Don't ever ask a complainer to do any work, because they won't. You're wasting your breath. Their role in life is to observe and complain, if possible. They are side-line Christians, who never really engage in living life. They are incapable of leading yet, they will not follow. Consequently they become a road block to any kind of progress.

The Lord admonished his disciples - "Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only." In other words, are we capable of translating into action what we hear?

We are moral creatures in need of moral direction and purpose. To reduce our sense of self to a mere physical realm, and simply to seek to find pleasure or fulfillment as the means and ends of our existence is to deny the divine within each of us. Never forget that whether young or old, we are spirit possessed. A divine spark has been placed within each man and woman. Lodged within the physical is something of the eternal. Quite frankly, we must learn to accept the truth of God's word, or we must face the consequences.

Proverbs states that, "man is born to trouble as surely as the sparks fly upward." Solomon is describing the individual whose heart is set against God. Our relationship with a holy and loving God must be one of loving obedience and joyful service.

We must abandon any thoughts which speak of moral independence. We cannot decide the moral directives of life upon social opinion or prevailing societal trends. One important rule of leadership, "Don't allow the patient to prescribe the medicine." God knows the patient, he knows the illness and he offers to each one the curative process of remaking the human heart.

If we turn back the pages of the Bible one comes to the stirring challenge of Moses as he speaks to the people of Israel. Moses offers to the people of Israel a prescription for health. In the book of Deuteronomy, not once, not twice, but three times Moses, offers to the people of Israel, the moral directives of God. He spoke of obedience which leads to blessing. He clearly stated that disobedience would lead to destruction and ruin. Much to their dismay the people of Israel learned the truth of God's eternal commands.

The Assyrians, Babylonians and lastly the Roman Empire decimated the people of Israel. Psalm I speaks of the nature of our existence; the way of a righteous man leads to blessing. "The way of the ungodly are like chaff which the wind drives away. The Lord knows the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked shall perish."

A very brilliant but bitter and angry writer was asked to tour Europe. He was an agnostic. He went on the tour with his wife and young daughter. He received honors and accolades from universities, from royalty and from society. After the family returned home, his daughter, impressed by her father's fame, said to him, "Daddy, I guess pretty soon you will know everybody except God."

Scripture states plainly, "What does it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul." God is yet calling people to repentance and obedience. I'm convinced He's asking for faithfulness in faithless times and our faithfulness must (if it is to have any consequence) must be more than lip service. Our Lord Jesus Christ in observing the people of His day said, "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me."

Faithful progress in the Christian life is a necessity and our faith demands it in troubled times. Quite frankly we should get "better" as time goes on.

This is illustrated by the fact of what some considered the greatest race horse that ever lived. In 1973, Secretariat became the Triple Crown winner. When Secretariat won the Kentucky Derby this remarkable fact emerged. Track officials confirmed that Secretariat ran, each consecutive quarter mile faster than the one before. As he crossed the finish line, he was still accelerating. That ought to say something to us about the Christian way of life. The longer we're in the race of life the better we ought to become.

It's a great pity that so little of faithfulness is prescribed to the Christian character these days. For many, faith is an individual matter. We will not submit to the authority of the Word of God. We pick and choose what we will believe and how we will practice our faith and then apply it when it is convenient.

I dare say that we demand a great deal more faithfulness from other things in life. Let me explain. If your automobile started one in three times, would you consider it a good automobile? Probably not.

If your paper boy decided that you didn't need a paper on Monday and Thursday, would you say that he is trustworthy and honorable? If your refrigerator stops working for a day or two every now and then, do you say, "Well, it's not bad, it works most of the time." If you missed a couple of loan payments a year on your house or your car, would the banker say, "Not bad, that's ten out of twelve."

If you fail to worship God one or two Sundays a month, would you expect to be called a faithful Christian? If you believe in prayer and won't spend ten minutes a day in prayer what does that say about your belief in the power of prayer. If you say that you believe in the authority of the word of God yet never earnestly study the Scriptures, what does that say to others? There's a great contrast between faithfulness and faithlessness. God is searching for the faithful. Our times are going to demand it. The faithful are those who will love and serve Him with one heart and one mind.

Mark Hatfield told of touring Calcutta with Mother Teresa and visiting the so-called "House of Dying," where sick children are cared for in their last days and the dispensary, where the poor line up by the hundreds to receive medical attention.

Watching Mother Teresa minister to these people, feeding and nursing those left by others to die, Hatfield was over whelmed by the sheer magnitude of the suffering she and her co-workers faced daily. "How can you bear the load without being crushed by it?" Sister Teresa replied, "My dear Senator, I am not called to be successful, I am called to be faithful."

Pray that we might be able to say at the end of days, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have kept the faith." When we come to stand before our blessed Lord may we do so as workmen that need not to be ashamed in order that we might hear from the lips of our Savior, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter now into the joy of Your Lord."