

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“WE ARE HARD PRESSED ON EVERY SIDE...”

By Bill Fairchild, Jr.

“We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our body” (2 Cor. 4:8-10, NKJV).

The scene from Indiana Jones movie Raiders of the Lost Ark is a nightmarish scene to someone like me who does not like snakes—PERIOD! Everywhere he looked there were snakes! The fact is he was surrounded by them!

My father-in-law had a similar experience many years ago as a “timber man” in West Virginia. As he was surveying a prospective section of timber to cut, he noticed on the ridge not far from him—movement. When he looked more closely—the ridge was “alive” with copperheads!

Carefully looking around himself, he eased back to his truck. Now, the end of the story is that they ended up cutting timber, but not before having to dynamite the entire ridge! All I can say to that is, I never was cut out to be a timber man! You see, this fellow hates snakes!

Where are we going with all of this? Simple! The world we are living in presently is darkening! All we have to do is listen to the news whether it is local or national and it projects scenes of anger, hostility, meanness, insensitivity and open disgust for God and anyone who serves Him.

It can be—and often is the case—that God’s people not only feel outnumbered but surrounded by the enemy that is bent on ridicule and persecution. Morality has taken a back seat to self-indulgence, self-will and self-rule!

Not only has God been removed from the classroom, He is being systematically removed from society—at least that is what society thinks! Those of us who believe in, serve and honor the Lord know otherwise!

Satan must be pleased with all that is transpiring in the hearts and lives of so many, and he would like nothing more than to see God’s people adopt the same philosophies and turn their hearts away from God!

Just as David did, when we take a look around we need to start looking up! We need to look past all of the distractions of rampant sin, mistreatment, pandemics, and the negative realities of life and look to and see as David writes near the end of Psalm 10:16, **“The Lord is King forever and ever.”**

“God is working out His eternal purpose, not only in spite of human and satanic opposition, but by means of them” (A.W. Pink).

Brothers and sisters in Christ—my good friends—we must discipline ourselves to stay focused upon the right things and do as the apostle Paul urged the brethren at Colosse to do; **“Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2).**

As individuals who are husbands, wives, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends, it is our place to not only have our own faith to believe that our greatest joys should be found in the service of the King; we must teach the next generation and the next generation. Do not allow yourself to be squeezed into being like the world around them (Rom. 12:2)!

The apostle Paul by inspiration describes for the Corinthian brethren where the power and the glory resides and that is in the message, not the messenger! We have been entrusted with His saving message as God's elect people, His royal priestly people, His own special people, His holy nation! And that, my friends is the privilege we have then to ***"proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light"*** (1 Pet. 2:9). And those in the world generally don't care about any of this, but there are still some souls out there with "good and honest hearts" who are looking and searching for the truth, and we must demonstrate it in our lives and share it with our words regardless of the cost!

Our God is great! Our God is good. And one day, all that have and are living in this world will answer to the One true and living God (Rom. 1:18). And then ***"every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father"*** (Phil. 2:10-11).

Yes, we are surrounded by so much that is evil, wrong and disgusting, but there is One who is greater that assures His people of His presence, love and care! God grant each of us the desire to keep our eyes on Him and our hearts focused on His Word! ■

● ● ● ● ●

THYSELF

By Robert Jackson

Let us give attention to the words of Paul as he writes to Timothy, and he brings out some things about THYSELF.

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF 2 Timothy 2:15, ***"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*** One is to be a student of the Word. However, observe that he did not just say to show THYSELF...but to show thyself approved in the eyes of God. Many show themselves, but not in the right manner. No one can be approved until they study the Word.

BEHAVE THYSELF. 1 Timothy 3:15, ***"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."*** We are to behave thyself by being organized in the way of the Lord. Elders to oversee (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Deacons to serve (Phil. 1:1-2). This is the way the Lord would have us to behave in the house of God.

EXERCISE THYSELF. Again he mentions thyself in 1 Timothy 4:7, ***"But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness."*** Many today are very much up on physical exercise and this is good for the body. Yet, we are told to exercise thyself unto godliness. I fear there are very few that are doing much exercise along this manner. If so, then much good will be done.

TAKE HEED UNTO THYSELF. Paul told Timothy that the first person to take heed unto is thyself. 1 Timothy 4:16, ***"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."*** It is true that Timothy was able to teach others, but he first had to take heed unto his own life or he would not do the other. It is not difficult at times to get some to take heed unto others, but very difficult to take heed unto thyself.

SAVE THYSELF. Notice also that Paul said in so doing that you will ***"save thyself"*** (1 Tim. 4:16). Some would say it is impossible for you to do anything for your salvation. Paul said there are some things you can do in order to save thyself. **WHAT ABOUT THYSELF? ■**

"In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (Titus 2:7-8).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Tommy Glendol McClure, Editor and Evangelist - 925-759-4357

Web Site: www.lodiCAchurchofchrist.com - Email: lodicachurchofchrist@gmail.com - Phone: 209-365-9250