

# “THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

## Serving God by Serving Others

By Gene Taylor

Those who are obedient to the gospel become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). As servants, they are to serve. They are to be doing those good works for which they were created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). In fact, they are to be *“zealous”* for those works (Titus 2:14).

Romans 12:1-2 encourages Christians to be *“living sacrifices”* for the Lord. That is accomplished when we start living for the Lord and doing those things His will would have him do. One of the things the Lord wants His disciples to do is to serve others. He illustrated and emphasized this in John 13.

At what many have come to call the “Last Supper,” Jesus paused, girded Himself with a towel, took water, and washed His disciples’ feet. He told them, *“You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him”* (John 13:13-16). Jesus was not binding the rite of “foot-washing,” rather, He was showing that those who would be His disciples were to be of a mind to serve others, regard their needs, and do what they could to help them.

James declares that if one is going to have a saving faith, that serving others is an essential aspect of that faith. In the second chapter he states, *“What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead”* (James 2:14-17). One can profess again and again to be a Christian and to have great faith, but if he does not see to the needs of his brethren he, in reality, has no faith.

Serving others is an important matter to the Lord. When He depicted the judgment scene in Matthew 25, He stressed how important it is to Him and how it should be to us for He showed that it affects one’s eternal destiny. To the righteous He said, *“Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me.’”* (Matt. 25:34-40). The unrighteous were told to depart because they had neglected to be of service to others (Matt. 25:41-46).

Opportunities abound for those who would be like Christ to demonstrate their love for Him by their service to their brethren. They can start by giving their brethren a friendly hello and a warm greeting. They can speak a kind word of encouragement; send a card to the sick or those absent from services; prepare a meal for the shut-ins; visit the sick, elderly, the weak, or discouraged; help the sick and/or elderly with chores; provide financial assistance when needed; and, of course, pray for their brethren.

It is vitally important for all Christians to actively serve their brethren for in so doing, they serve the Lord. ■

# Discouraged, Disappointed, Disenchanted, Disconnected, Disillusioned, Disheartened, Disengaged

By Jonathan Perz

When one's expectations for local churches full of imperfect people drive their faith, they often end up facing one if not all of these "D's." I talk to so many who have walked away because they are hurt by the church. Yet their greater challenge is that they place too much emphasis on and have unrealistic expectations for a local church. Their faith is largely rooted in the local church and not in the Lord. So, when the local church fails, as it will, their faith falters.

Local churches will struggle, face challenges, and fall short (read Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 for a synopsis of failings of local first century churches). In a perfect world, local churches would never disappoint. But we live in a sinful world, and churches at their best are made up of struggling sinners who are forgiven. Still, Satan tempts, and Christians succumb. Church members thus don't always say the right things or act the right ways. Therefore, it is critical to ensure our faith is always rooted in He who will never fail us and He who will never disappoint us.

For those out there struggling to rekindle their faith and recover from their hurt, I point you to Jesus. Remember why you love and follow Him. Then you will have a basis upon which to love and labor with His imperfect, struggling people – the church. It also serves well to recall that the church we will gather with in heaven will not be made up of struggling imperfect souls, but those who were victorious. There will be no sin there. So, with that as our hope, let us rekindle our love for the Lord and His people, putting our trust primarily in Him as we strive to encourage one another to reach home. ■

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## When Church Is Boring

By Frank Himmel

What do you do when you find that church is boring? It's time for a change! Now the question is, change what?

Many folks think the answer is to change the church. I just read an article about a new church created for men only, men who find church boring. Discarding more traditional environments, they meet in a gymnasium one Saturday evening a month. A rock band provides entertainment. The preacher speaks in front of the scoreboard, with the clock running. He guarantees to have them out in one hour! This sort of innovation is not unusual. Many religious leaders hail it as a positive development, a way to reach out to those who otherwise would have no interest in church.

Some might not go that far, yet they still insist on change. Contemporary music, drama, and short sermons that are little more than pep talks are the order of the day. Clapping and cheering have replaced old fashioned amens. Celebration and praise are the buzzwords, with the world's calendar dictating the subject celebrated.

Malachi lived at a time when people found "church" boring. Speaking of Israel's worship, God said through the Prophet, ***"You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it"*** (Mal. 1:13, NAS).

God proposed two changes to these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home. ***"Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you"*** (v. 10). The better solution, the change He preferred, was to repent. ***"If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,' says the Lord of hosts, 'then I will send the curse upon you'"*** (2:2).

Notice what God did not approve: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

The preacher can work to make his sermons more interesting, the song leader can try to select more meaningful hymns, and the one who leads in prayer can give more thought to what he says.

However, when worship as God directed is boring, the main change that is needed is in the heart of the worshiper. ■

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

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