

Quality Versus Quantity

Time may show that one of the greatest weaknesses in our modern civilisation has been the acceptance of quantity rather than quality as the goal after which to strive.

This is particularly evident in the United States.

Costly buildings are constantly being erected with no expectation that they shall last more than one short generation.

It is a common sight in our great cities to see workmen tearing down buildings which a few short years ago were considered the finest examples of the builder's art.

So poor are our present materials and so fast do our modern tastes change, that there is even a kind of sad humour about the appearance of buildings erected more than 50 years ago.

Not only in our architecture but almost everywhere else is this psychology of impermanence found.

A beauty salon ad recently defined a term which has long needed clarification.

It read: "*Permanent Waves. Guaranteed to last three months.*"

So, permanence is the quality of lasting three months!

These may be extreme cases, but they illustrate the transiency of men's hopes and the brevity of their dreams apart from God.

The church also is suffering from an acceptance of this philosophy of impermanence.

Christianity is resting under the blight of degraded values.

And it all stems from a too-eager desire to impress, to gain fleeting attention, to appear well in comparison with some world-beater who happens for the time to have the ear or the eye of the public.

This is so foreign to the Scriptures that we wonder how Bible-loving Christians can be deceived by it.

The Word of God ignores size and quantity and lays all its stress upon quality.

Christ, more than any other man, was followed by the crowds, yet after giving them such help as they were able to receive, He quietly turned from them and deposited His enduring truths in the minds of His chosen 12.

Matthew 4:1-11 [NIV] *"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.' Jesus answered, 'It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"* Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. *"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"* Jesus answered him, *"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"* Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. *"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."* Jesus said to him, *"Away from*

me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him."

Jesus Christ refused a quick shortcut to the throne and chose instead the long painful way of the cross. He rejected the offers of the multitude and rested His success upon those eternal qualities which He was able to plant in the hearts of a modest number of redeemed humans. The ages have thanked God that He did.

Pastors and churches in our hectic times are harassed by the temptation to seek size at any cost and to secure by inflation what they cannot gain by legitimate growth.

The mixed multitude cries for quantity and will not forgive a minister who insists upon solid values and permanence.

Many a man of God is being subjected to cruel pressure by the ill-taught members of his flock who scorn his slow methods and demand quick results and a popular following regardless of quality.

We who follow Christ are men and women of eternity.

We must put no confidence in the passing scenes of the disappearing world. We must resist every attempt of Satan to palm off upon us the values that belong to mortality.

Nothing less than forever is long enough for us.

We view with amused sadness the frenetic scramble of the world to gain a brief moment in the sun.

"The book of the month," for instance, has a strange sound to one who has dwelt with God and taken his values from the Ancient of Days.

"The man of the year" cannot impress those men and women who are making their plans for that long eternity when days and years have passed away and time is no more.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-14 [NIV] *"What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. **He has also set eternity in the hearts of men;** yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil, this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure for ever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him."*

What God is interested in is eternal values.

The church must claim again her ancient dowry of everlastingness.

She must begin again to deal with ages and millenniums rather than with days and years.

She must **not** count numbers but test foundations.

She must work for permanence rather than for appearance.

Her children must seek those enduring things that have been touched with immortality.

The shallow brook of popular religion chatters on its nervous way and thinks the ocean too quiet and dull because it lies deep in its mighty bed and is unaffected by the latest shower.

John 15:1-2, 16 [NIV] *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more*

fruitful.” ... “You did not choose me, **but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.** Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

Jesus Christ tells us that we are by remaining joined to Him we are to bear **fruits that will last**, eternal fruit, fruit suitable for eternal life with a Holy righteous Creator God.

What are these eternal fruits?

Galatians 5:22-25 [NIV] “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*”

These fruits are the God-like characteristics that come from the active presence of the Holy Spirit within us, the Spirit of Christ.

Just as we take on the characteristics of our physical parents because we spend a great deal of time in their presence, so we will find the more time we spend in the presence of God [the Holy Spirit] the more of His characteristics will “*rub off*” on us.

How do we spend time with Holy Spirit [God]?

Through personal conversation with Him.

Praise – praising God and thanking God for who He is and what He has done for all humanity.

Prayer – telling God of all our hopes and fears, and seeking His wisdom and help in every day-to-day matters.

Study of The Bible [listening to God speaking] – The Christian Bible has within its pages principles that can make our life now successful and prepare us for eternal life with our Creator.

Meditation – spending time in a quiet place away from the noise and action of this world to allow the Holy Spirit to place thoughts in our spirit [mind].

John 16:12-16 [NIV] “*I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. **But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.”*”

The spirit of truth is the Holy Spirit and if ungrieved will dwell in us by union with the spirit in us that makes us human.

Job 32:8 [NIV] “*But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.*”

Through this spirit in us the Holy Spirit puts thoughts into our mind.

1 Corinthians 2:4-14 [NIV] “*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”, but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit*

searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no-one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This is how we prepare for eternity, life that will have quality as well as quantity.

Faith in one of its aspects moves mountains; in another aspect faith gives patience to see the promises afar off and to wait quietly for their fulfilment.

Insistence upon an immediate answer to every request of the mind is an evidence of religious immaturity.

It takes God longer to grow an oak than to grow an ear of corn.

It will cost something to walk slow in the parade of the ages while excited men of time rush about confusing motion with progress.

But it will pay in the long run-and the true Christian is not much interested in anything short of eternal life with a quality that is beyond price.