

Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2023.01.01

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Speaker-AM: Steve Helterbrand

Title: Faith Of Our Fathers

Recording:

tinyurl.com/SteveFaith





Articles

Like A Fetter, 1/1/23, By Sam Bunyard


There are a lot of classic hymns in our books that we love to sing – but do we always understand the words? One of my favorite lines in one of my favorite hymns contains a word that we don't hear very often. "Let Thy goodness like a fetter bind my wandering heart to Thee." What does that even mean!?

A fetter is a chain or metal shackle that is usually locked around the ankles of a prisoner. The song O Thou Fount of Every Blessing contains a prayer that we comprehend the nature of God's goodness in such a way that it imprisons and binds us in deep connection with Him. The previous line: "Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be", increases this imagery.

In times past, if a person had a debt that they could not pay, they went to debtors' prison until such a time as they could pay it. The parable of the unforgiving servant applies this situation to us. In this parable, the unforgiving servant was forgiven of a debt of ten thousand talents – a truly unpayable debt. The same servant was then unwilling to forgive a comparably in-significant debt owed to him (Mt 18:21-35). The lesson of the parable is that those who are forgiven so much, must also forgive.

More broadly, the lesson is that those who receive grace must allow it to control their lives. The wages of our sin is death (Ro 6:23). Wages are earned and deserved, yet Christ, who was blameless and innocent, became the atonement for us (1 Jn 2:1). This grace brought us freedom from the consequences of our debt but should also make us slaves of righteousness (Ro 6:18).

May the grace of God bind us all to Him!



Hopeless To Hopeful, 12/11/22, By Hayden Cathey

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Co 15:58).

Our walk as Christians can sometimes seem hopeless. I have days where I look out at the world and wonder if I’m actually making a difference in my life. I look back at the course of my life and wonder what I have gained by giving up the pleasures of the world. In these times of hopelessness, the tempter often tries to trick us into believing that we have gained nothing by giving up our sinful ways and that we are making no difference in the world through our spread of the Gospel.

However, Paul makes it clear to the Christians in Corinth, and by extension to us, that those who labor for the Lord will never be laboring in vain. We have given up much to be children of God, and have sacrificed pleasure, worldly success, worldly renown, and acceptance, all for the cause of Christ. Yet, at the end of the day, no matter what the devil may whisper in our ear on hopeless days, all these things are worth losing if the prize we stand to gain is rest with our Lord.

And so, we must stand firm in the Lord, with confidence in Him, and with confidence in the prize that we are striving to achieve. Let us be immovable and unshakable in our labor for the Lord and our pursuit of a dwelling place with Him.