

July 2020

Dear Brethren:

What a difference a year makes! In spite of all the conditions that this coronavirus has created for us, all of us here in Maryville, Tennessee, bring you a very warm and special greeting in this month of July.

Last year I told you of the fifty-six men who pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor when they signed our Declaration of Independence, which gave us many personal freedoms from autocratic government control that we have enjoyed.

Today, because of this coronavirus pandemic, we the people of a free nation seem willing to sacrifice our personal liberties in order to feel safe from infection. This is because we, as a people, have been indoctrinated with the belief that in times of crisis, it is the government that can save us. What happened to our faith in God to wait on Him to save us?

A number of years ago there was a scientific study made to see how long children would wait for a promised reward. They took a group of young children and put them in a room and gave them each a marshmallow with a promise that if they would wait, and not eat that marshmallow now, they could have two marshmallows later.

What they discovered was quite revealing because while the adult who made this promise to them remained in the room, no one was tempted to eat the marshmallow. But what happened when the adult left the room? Well, after reaffirming the promise of two marshmallows if they would wait until he came back, he left the room. What do you suppose happened? Just as soon as the authority figure was absent, some of the children grabbed the marshmallow and literally wolfed it down. What happened next was funny to watch. The rest of the children waited patiently for a while, and then they also one-by-one began to pick pieces from their marshmallow as they watched others eat theirs. They were not willing to wait for something better.

But there was a small group—a remnant of the children—who waited, and waited, and waited for the authority figure to return with his reward. It reminded me of how we are all waiting for Christ to return with His reward.

It was quite humorous to watch these last children who were able to refrain from eating their marshmallows. They did whatever they could to keep from eating the marshmallow.

- 1) Some covered their eyes with their hands to resist the urge.
- 2) Some hummed tunes to themselves to resist the temptation to eat.
- 3) Some others just sat quietly and watched and waited.
- 4) Some put their heads down on their desks while waiting and fell asleep.

It is reminiscent of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 who all fell asleep while waiting for the bridegroom (Jesus Christ) to return, which finally happened at midnight as they slept.

Do you know what was very revealing in this study? They all had to wait for the man to return with more marshmallows. So those who ate their marshmallow right away, still had to wait the same amount of time, only to see those who had not eaten their marshmallow be rewarded with another one. Were there tears of regret shed by those who could not wait? You bet! Had they wished they could have waited for a better reward? Yes! But now it was too late.

What was also revealing was that those who picked little pieces off their marshmallow eventually ate the whole thing before the man returned with more marshmallows.

So, the question is, which group would you have been in?

- 1) Those who only waited until the authority figure was gone.
- 2) Or would you have waited until others began to eat and then done the same?
- 3) Or maybe you would have been one of those who kept picking at your marshmallow until it was gone?
- 4) Or would you have been in the small group that waited patiently until the authority figure returned with the reward?

Those few who were able to hold the vision and promise of something better in their minds were the only ones who were able to resist the urge to eat the marshmallow before the man returned.

How about you? Can you resist some of the pleasures of this life right now for a better reward later when Christ returns? God's salvation process is built upon patience to wait—not devouring the marshmallow right away—and the marshmallow we are talking about is the pleasure of sinful flesh that can separate us from God.

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear (Isaiah 59:1–2, *New King James Version* throughout unless otherwise stated).

Who Can Separate Us from the Love of God?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (Romans 8:35)

The implied answer is that all of these things are a danger, if we love the world. We can separate ourselves from God's love by falling in love with the world. Why? Because the love of the world can and will make us an enemy of God.

James 4:4 from the *Living Bible* says if you love the world:

You are like an unfaithful wife who loves her husband's enemies. Don't you realize that making friends with God's enemies—the evil pleasures of this world—makes you an enemy of God? I say it again, that if your aim is to enjoy the evil pleasure of the unsaved world, you cannot also be a friend of God.

And the Apostle Paul said:

As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" [Meaning the old man in us must die for Christ's sake if we are to be conquerors]. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:36–39).

Only we can separate ourselves from the love of God by falling in love with the world. If our goal is to marry Christ at His return, we must have the faith to wait for His return, and it is assured you, that time will come.

To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace (Ecclesiastes 3:1–8).

What Solomon is saying here is that the right thing at the wrong time is the wrong thing—meaning, sometimes it is beneficial to wait for the good things God is creating in us and serving God rather than having the marshmallow right now. How did Solomon come to this conclusion? God gave Solomon unprecedented wisdom and with it the opportunity to explore and participate in every form of pleasure. Instead of being satisfied, his testimony can be summed up in four brief words: "Therefore I hated life..." (Ecclesiastes 2:17). Why? Because in the end Solomon became a man without God.

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David (1 Kings 11:1–4).

Solomon chose to have the marshmallow now, in his early years, and because of this, in older life his heart was turned away from his God who had blessed him so richly.

How rich was Solomon? It says in 1 Kings 10:14 that the weight of gold that came to him yearly was 666 talents or 75 lbs. in today's measurements. That is 804,000 oz. or the equivalent of about 500 million dollars per year. This was besides the taxes he levied on the people.

The number 666 is also the number of the beast power in Revelation 13:18, which says no one could buy or sell except they had this number of the beast, probably referring to its currency.

So, what did Solomon learn through all his money and women?

Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Why? Because you are too old to enjoy serving God anymore.

Remember your Creator before the silver cord [of life] is loosed, Or the golden bowl [of your mind] is broken, Or the pitcher [of your body] shattered at the

fountain [because it can no longer hold the water of God's Holy Spirit], Or the wheel broken at the well [because of *rigor mortis*]. Then the dust [of our bodies] will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit [of life] will return to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:6–7).

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14).

What Solomon is saying to us all today is to serve God, build godly character before you are too old and feeble to do so. Solomon learned over time as he was inspired to write in Ecclesiastes 3:1–8 that everything had its time and to do some things prematurely, or out of order, would cause much trouble and confusion.

There are many spiritual lessons that can be learned from these few verses. Draw your attention to verse 5 of Ecclesiastes 3. Solomon said there is a time to cast away stones and a time to gather stones (that were cast away). What Solomon is saying is that even after you have gathered some stones and you throw some away, you may want to gather some up again after a while.

Let us now consider the example of God as a stone collector. Why is He collecting stones? To build His temple. God said He would build His temple after Christ's resurrection and the stones He would use are the ones who were called by His Father. Our stone collector (God) gathers many stones, but He also throws some away. How does He know which stones to throw away? By watching them and observing them in the tumbler of this world over a long period of time. In the tumbler God puts water (symbolic of the Holy Spirit) and an abrasive (symbolic of trials). In time—sometimes a great deal of time, months or even years—the character of the stone begins to be revealed after it is polished and the rough edges are ground away.

After this process a selection can be made, and only God knows when the time to select is right. This means we must wait on God to perform His work in us, and this is different for every individual.

In 1 Kings 6:7, it says that the stones for the temple were finished at the quarry (of this world) so that no hammer, chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built.

The spiritual lesson is that God is shaping and molding godly character in us while we remain in the world (John 17:15). This, of course, takes time, which means we must wait on God to perform His good work in us.

In conclusion: Do you know what was the result of that study with the children and the marshmallows? Those who were willing to wait for something better made better citizens. Also, those who had the foresight to resist eating the marshmallow right away, or until the adult or authority figure came back, were better adjusted young adults because they had the patience to wait for something better. They were also more confident and dependable because of their patient behavior.

Remember, all good things come to him who is willing to wait on the Lord (Isaiah 30:18).

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD,
The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His
understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who
have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary,
And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the LORD Shall
renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall
run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:28–31).

Those who wait on the Lord will receive their spiritual reward—a new spiritual body which will qualify them to become like God and to soar like eagles. This will be well worth waiting for and we can all achieve it if we determine to use our freedoms now—before they are taken away from us—to live God's Way of Life no matter what man may do to us. This we can do while we wait for Christ's return.

Your servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard W. Litz". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally below the typed name.

Richard W. Litz