

Light and Life

Like a Fetter

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 insignificant 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!

- Sam Bunyard

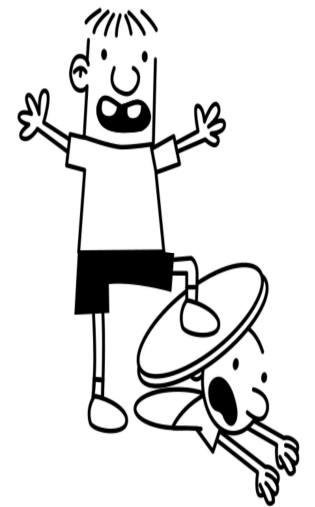
Just My Thoughts

Stop the Schadenfreude

Proverbs 24:17-18 reads, "Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice. For the LORD will see and disapprove and turn His wrath away from him."

The motto of many in this world is "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Though they may never utter these words, it is clear to the observant eye that revenge and schadenfreude (finding joy in another's suffering) are the liquor that many men and women of the world get drunk on. This passage deals with this concept, and the author encourages his reader to avoid rejoicing in the sorrow and misfortune of others – even our enemies.

God has an expectation of His people, a desire for us to treat His people with love and respect – even those who may be considered our enemies. We are all made in the image of God. We are children of the Most High and beloved by our Father. In the same way, while there may be people on this earth who wrong us, harm us, or otherwise wish us ill, we have a charge to love them all the same – regardless of their conduct. We have a charge to love and honor those who hate us, those with whom we disagree politically, those with whom we disagree on spiritual matters. To love and honor these people, we must put aside any kind of gloating or rejoicing when they fail or are brought low. Instead of joy we must feel compassion when our foe falls, and we must be there to pick them up.



- Hayden Cathey

ASSEMBLY TIMES

Sunday

Bible Class 9:30
Morning Assembly 10:30
Evening Assembly 5:00

Wednesday

Evening Bible Class 6:30

RADIO PROGRAM

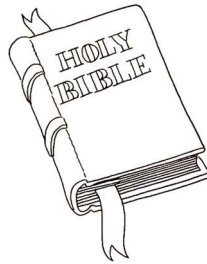
The Bible Speaks



Sunday 9:00-9:30a.m.
KURM 790AM

Downtown Church of Christ

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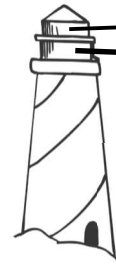
**Don't put a question mark
where God put a period.**

ELDERS:

Otis Hardin
Perry Johnson
Ken Parker
Alan Revier
GW Walsh

DEACONS:

TJ Burleson
Scott Hale
Joel Heiligenthal
Jason Hill
Chris Johnson
Brock McKeel
Randy Potter
Tim Roberts
Randy Shell



DOWNTOWN GOSPEL BEACON

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ROGERS, ARKANSAS**

January 1, 2023

Joyful New Year!

It doesn't have the same ring to it as 'Happy New Year!' – but that's by design. The word 'happy' is rarely used in the New Testament (and not at all in some modern translations). By contrast, the word 'joy' (or some variant of it, including 'rejoice') is used about 140 times; much more if we include the Old Testament.

And right there is a lesson for us.

While the world loves 'happiness' (by whatever means possible), the child of God knows 'joy' (in whatever circumstances they find themselves). The world is okay with pur-

suing 'happiness' by getting drunk or engaging in debauched behavior (1 Pe 4:3). The Christian pursues 'joy' by living in a close relationship with God (Ro 15:13, etc). There's a huge difference between those two approaches to life. One leaves us empty – never content with a transitory happiness. The other provides constant contentment – and joy.

And so, I wish you a 'joyful' new year. May we grow closer to God as we walk with Him, and closer to one another as we seek opportunities to serve.

- WKing

FAMILY NEWS

PRAYER LIST –

Preachers we support: Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Canada, Mexico, Peru, & U.S.

Sick: G&K Fletcher, Tony Tolbert, Diane Willis, J&M Swim, Jean Marshall

Shut-ins: Betty Jo Young, Billie Pennington, Shirley Cole, Mary Lou Lewis

Military: Kyler Sullins, Sean Potter

SINGING – Tonight is our first-Sunday-of-the-month singing. Let's come prepared to worship God in song – and to encourage one another!

SENTENCE SERMON: Today, January 1, is the first page of a 365-page book – so let's make it a good one.