

The Lakeland Hills Leader

Lakeland Hills Blvd church of Christ

2510 Lakeland Hills Blvd
Lakeland, FL 33805
(863) 688-4336

Schedule of Services

Sunday

9:00 AM Bible Study
9:50 AM Worship
5:00 PM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study

Visit our Website:

www.lakelandhillschurchofchrist.com

For Sermon & Class outlines,
Bible Study Materials and
Other Information.

Visit our Facebook Page:

www.facebook.com/LakelandHillschurchofchrist for events,
information, and links to our
YouTube Archives

Visit us on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/channel/UCu7AG_3jUtpBDlr2NPqB3iw for
Live Streams and Video
Archives.

Elders

Bob Marschall
Leon Miller
Larry Wisdom

Deacons

Bucky Day
Sherman Johnson
Michael Sadler
David Williams

Evangelist

Kent Heaton

The Difficult Days

By Keith Sharp

The preacher (Ecclesiastes 1:1) admonishes young people to enjoy life while they can, but to keep God in their lives, because childhood and youth are vain (11:7-11), that is, they are fleeting and temporary. Old folks often observe to uncomprehending young folks how quickly life flies by.

Then follows a sadly beautiful, poetic description of the advancing bodily decay that leads to eventual death (Eccl. 12:1-7). Waves of trouble and sorrow follow one upon another (verse 2). The hands begin to tremble, the teeth fall out, the back and legs weaken and bend, the eyes grow dim (verse 3). Hearing fails, sleep is difficult and easily interrupted, and the voice fails (verse 4). The loss of balance causes fear of heights, the brave young man becomes a timid old man, the hair turns snowy white (or falls out), strength and bodily appetites fail (verse 5). The time comes to return to the “eternal home, and the mourners go about the street” (verse 5). Our most precious, earthly possession – life – is taken irremediably away. We will never walk this way again. The silver cord is loosed, ... the golden bowl is broken, ... the pitcher shattered at the fountain, ... the wheel broken at the well. Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it (verses 6-7).

Yes, that is sad, and Solomon so declares it. He encourages young people to remember God and thus to fully enjoy life “before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’” (verse 1). The pains, difficulties, and troubles of advancing age make it very difficult to enjoy life. Add to this the facts that some are lonely and sad due to the loss of their spouse, some feel they are useless since they no longer have husband and children at home for whom they care, or they no longer work to provide for family, and life can be very depressing.

So, what can old folks do? Paul described himself as “Paul, the aged” (Philemon 1:9). He had some sort of a bodily infirmity that gave him difficulty (2 Cor. 12:7-10; Gal. 4:13-14), he apparently had poor eyesight (Gal. 4:15; 6:11), and he endured incredible suffering for the Lord (2 Cor. 11:23-28). As his life neared its violent end, he was in prison, virtually alone, and in need of a warm coat (2 Tim. 1:8; 4:6; 4:9-13, 20-21). At the time he wrote to the Philippians, he was in chains in prison (Phil. 1:12-14), he was being criticized by some of his brethren in Christ (Phil. 1:15-16), and he faced the imminent possibility of a violent, unjust death (Phil. 1:19-26).

But still he could truthfully assert, “I have learned in whatever state I am to be content” (Phil. 4:11-13). He advised the Philippians how to have peace and joy regardless of what life brought them (Phil. 4:4,8). The keys to peace and joy are complete dedication to Christ (Philippians 1:21), humble obedience to God and service to others (Phil. 2:3-10), spiritual mindedness (Phil. 3:8), gentleness to others (Phil. 4:4-5), prayer (Phil. 4:6-7), and mental focus on things that are good (Phil. 4:8), yes, a positive outlook on life. After all, the worst that can happen is death, and, for the faithful in Christ, that means we get to go and be with the Lord (Phil. 1:21).

Believing Prayer is an important tool to overcome anxiety and depression. *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:6-7).

We must leave our troubles with our loving Father in prayer, ask Him for what we think we need, and trust Him to do what is best. But our prayers must be accompanied with thanksgiving (Ibid). He has promised to supply what we need (Matt. 6:31-34), and He cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Instead of complaining (Phil. 2:14), thank the Lord for the freedom, prosperity, and security we have. Over the last thirty years I have had African preacher friends die suddenly of unknown maladies, be murdered, die in tragic accidents, and live on the edge of starvation. Yet most maintain cheerful, thankful attitudes. How can we complain?

Complete dedication to Christ means we will assemble with the brethren every time we can (Hebrews 10:19-25), and we will thus encourage each other to “love and good works” (verse 24). A focus on helping others takes our minds off our own troubles (Phil. 2:4). There is something each can do to be useful. The one talent man was condemned, not for having little ability, but for failing to use what he did have (Matt. 25:24-30).

Dark days must come for all. We will have days of loneliness, pain, sickness, and weakness. The silver cord will eventually be loosed for each. We must so live that we may echo Paul, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”