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VOL. XXX
NO. 7
February 15, 2015

Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

An Uncomfortable Comfort Zone

Recently, I have had a lot of time to draw spiritual applications from my knee replacement surgery.

Surgery is a tough choice. One option is to hobble about the best one can for the rest of one’s life, getting worse all the while. The other option is to endure a painful, drastic medical procedure, and to endure a period of difficult rehabilitation, for the promise of better health, less pain, and a more active and fulfilling lifestyle. The fear of the scalpel prevents many from improving their future.

Spiritual changes are similar in many ways. When our conscience bothers us, or when we grow uncomfortable in our relationship with God, it’s time to make a bold change! This may require some cutting, and then a period of recovery, but the end result is a closer walk with God, the joy of heaven, and a renewed ability to be active and fruitful in His kingdom for many years to come.

Change is scary, but when we follow the directions of the Great Physician, a good outcome is assured. Repent immediately, and you will say, “I wish I had done this sooner!” —*Charles Gaines*

Planting Shade Trees

An author named Dennis Swanberg made a comment that “the best shade trees you’ll ever plant are the ones you’ll never sit under.”

He means that some trees, like live oaks, take such a long time to grow and mature, that the person who plants them does so knowing full well that he will never benefit from them.

Why bother, then? He plants them for the benefit of others, especially future generations!

I read a story of an older gentleman named Clarence Hoelsing, of Hartington, Nebraska, who planted 20 acres on his farm with 7,500 walnut trees, which he bought from the forestry department for 30 cents each. Walnuts are notoriously fussy—they must be monitored for disease, beavers, and frost damage, they are sensitive to pesticides and weed-killers, and they must be pruned yearly. And Hoelsing knows that it is unlikely he will ever taste a single nut from his trees. Still, he has put the time and effort into them, because, “he hopes that his grandchildren and great grandchildren will remember him when they harvest” (www.farmshow.com). I have heard the same thing said of lumber lots, and of certain varieties of date palms in the Middle East that do not bear fruit for sixty or seventy years.

Is there perhaps a spiritual application? Absolutely! Some important things in life require an investment, which the one doing the investing will scarcely enjoy. But he does it for the future. Generous Christians save money for decades to build a worship hall which they will only get to use for a few years, but which will help the growth of the congregation for decades. Older Bible class teachers pour time into training the young people in the truth of God’s word, and developing within them a sense of duty. Mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers pass on a legacy of knowledge and values.

Let us be thankful for the thoughtful, visionary people who planted the shade trees we enjoy today. Let us pass on the same spiritual benefits to future generations of young Christians. —John Guzzetta

Have You Read Your Bible Lately?

William McPherson lost both eyes and both hands when a stick of dynamite exploded in his face. During long days of recovery, he realized how much the Bible meant to him, and how much he needed its strength. He could not see it. He could not read it in Braille because he had no hands. He tried to use his lips, but they were too numb and scarred from the blast. He discovered, however, that his tongue was sensitive enough to decipher the type. The dots left his tongue bleeding and sore, but he prayed to God to help him learn Braille and persevere. In the 65 years that followed, he read through the Bible four times *with his tongue!*

What will keep me from reading God's word? What if I have to get up a little earlier or go to bed a little later? What if I have to miss my favorite program? What if I am a slow reader, and don't enjoy reading? How many "what ifs" will keep me from learning God's will?

That McPherson fellow—I guess his example will haunt me the rest of my life!

—Paul F. Johnson

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
Nor stand in the path of sinners
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.
The wicked are not so,
But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish (Psalm 1).