

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Infectious Enthusiasm

(Jerry Fite)

I do not think anyone would describe one with enthusiasm as “*coming down with enthusiasm.*” But thousands in our country are “*coming down with the Covid-19 virus.*” There is a definite negative connotation surrounding the Corona virus, while enthusiasm fosters positive thoughts. But both are infectious.

One enthusiastic person can manifest a contagious positive attitude regarding his or her work and turn a discouraged work force into a happy productive one. One worker after another catches the spirit and is built up, instead of torn down.

Our local church is engaged in a local work of saving souls and strengthening all for eternal life in heaven. “Seeing the saving grace of God” occurring in a locality, like Barnabas saw in the church in Antioch, can move one to work earnestly, like it did Barnabas, to engage others in “teaching much people” (Acts 11:23, 26). Barnabas was an encourager because he was moved with enthusiasm for the work of the Lord. Such a contagious spirit can strengthen a church for sustained work, like it did in Antioch, for an entire year (Acts 11:26).

Conybeare and Howson, in their history of the life of Paul, distinguished the Sadducees from the

Pharisees in various ways. But the presence of enthusiasm in one sect and the lack thereof in the other was a distinguishable characteristic. The Sadducees “*were the disciples of reason without enthusiasm – they made few proselytes – their numbers were not great, and they were confined principally to the richer members of the nation. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were the enthusiasts of the later Judaism.*” (*The Life and Epistles of St. Paul, p. 27.*)

Sadducees denying the unseen spirit world and the future resurrection from the dead may not foster enthusiasm as believing that the spirit world is as real as the physical world and the hopeful resurrection is as certain as death that precedes it. The Sadducees were in power in the priesthood and entrenched securely in the Sanhedrin but would often give way to the Pharisees who possessed the hearts of many Jews. Enthusiasm drove the Pharisees, not the Sadducees, to “*compass sea and land to make one proselyte...*” (*Matthew 23:15.*)

The Zealots, a political sect of the Jews, were passionate in throwing off the yoke of Roman rule. Simon, one of the apostles, was at one time connected with these political enthusiasts before the party matured to greater fanaticism in A.D 66 (*Luke 6:15.*)

The chief captain may have referred to this group as the “Assassins” or “murderers” who hid daggers under their clothes to stab their adversaries while mixing undetected in crowds gathered at feasts. The chief captain was wondering if Paul was the Egyptian who stirred up a sedition and had apparently escaped when the government pursued 4,000 of this group as they followed their leader into the wilderness (*Acts 21:38.*)

Each Christian should be zealous in life. Each one of us has been redeemed by God’s grace and belong to the Lord. Good works should therefore be pursued with fervency (*Titus 2:14.*) The Christian’s zeal for spiritual gifts was not to stand out among others, but to edify others (*I Corinthians 14:12.*) Enthusiasm in selfless living is contagious in hearts captivated by a selfless Redeemer.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “*Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.*” He spoke from the point of view of self-reliant Transcendentalism. The Christian lives with enthusiasm supplied by the Lord, achieving great things to the glory of God! Christian, spread genuine enthusiasm where you are!