

Oak Grove Church of Christ Newsletter - 2024.05.12

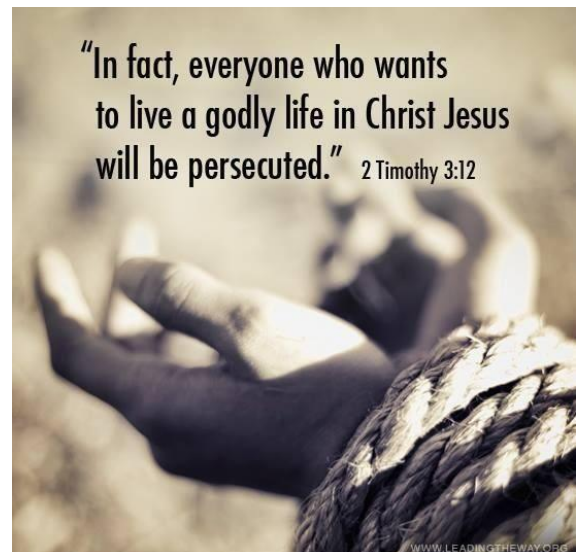
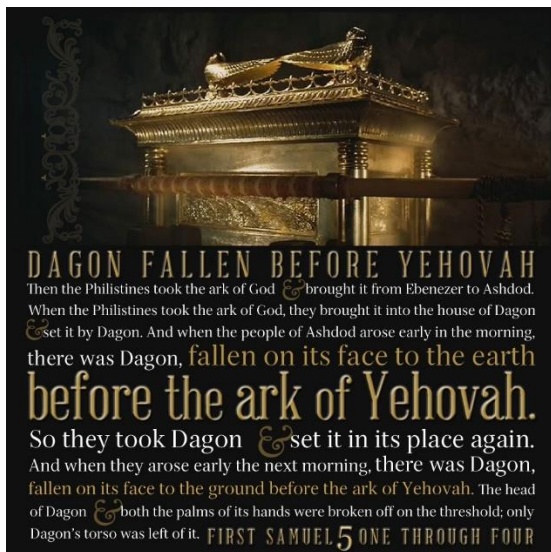
Website: oakgrovecofc.org
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Sermon recordings

Click or type the short URL, or visit oakgrovecofc.org/Sermons.

Speaker-AM: Patrick Hite
Title: Tearing Down Our Idols
Recording:
Recording Unavailable.

Speaker-PM: Steve Helterbrand
Title: When Life Isn't Fair
Recording:
Recording Unavailable.



Articles

Why do we sing?, 5/10/2024 By Sam Bunyard

“I will sing of Your power; Yes, I will sing aloud of Your mercy in the morning; for You have been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble” (Ps. 59:16). “I will praise You, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing to You among the Gentiles” (Ps. 57:9). “Sing to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day” (Ps. 96:2).

God is not silent about why He wants us to sing. What it boils down to is communication. Mechanical instruments do not produce the same clarity of thought as well-crafted words that are sung – and neither do the ornamental ‘oohs’ and ‘ahhs’ that serve no purpose beyond tickling the ears. When we sing in worship, we communicate a specific message to the hearers.

Worship in song (if the words are well-crafted) is, by design, both evangelistic and edifying. As repeated throughout the Psalms, we proclaim the good news among the Gentiles as we sing aloud! Like Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, we should want the unsaved to hear the message through our singing (Ac. 16:25). And we should also want the saved to hear the message! After all, we are “speaking to one another” (Ep. 5:19), and “teaching and admonishing one another” (Col. 3:16) in our songs!

If we understand the purpose behind our singing, we will sing songs that communicate truth effectively. False teaching can be learned from a hymn as well as a sermon, so let’s be careful what we are communicating! Additionally, some songs are so musically complicated that the message gets lost.

Finally, because of the purpose of singing, we must individually sing out! It doesn’t matter to God how we sound – it matters what we communicate! If no one else can hear us sing, the purposes of singing are not accomplished! So, let’s sing together!

Heavenly Places in Christ, 5/10/2024 by Terry Wane Benton

I pointed out that Christians are presently “in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3,7), and one preacher, in disbelief, asked, “What is it like in heaven?” He thought he had me stumped for claiming we are presently in “the heavenly places.” His question reveals a disturbing misunderstanding. It is disturbing because he leads other people into the ditch if he does not know that all Christians are in Christ, which is a heavenly place. If you are not in this heavenly place in Christ, you are not in Christ at all, and if you are not in Christ, you have no spiritual blessings such as redemption through His blood and forgiveness of sins. That is disturbing!

So, how can we be in “the heavenly places in Christ” without being in heaven itself, where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God? The expression “heavenly places” in Christ concerns a spiritual zone relating to being united with Christ. It is “heavenly” instead of “earthly” in origin. Since Jesus came to us from heaven, He is described as “the heavenly gift” (Hebrews 6:4). We have “tasted the heavenly gift.” That means Jesus is a gift that comes to us from heaven as God’s gift to us. If we can have the heavenly gift without being personally located in heaven itself, then there must be a way to enjoy heavenly things without first being in heaven itself. In like manner, if we can wrestle against “the rulers of the darkness of this age...in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12) then this struggle does not have to be going on in heaven itself. Thus, “heavenly places” can be a zone where we are doing battle with evil forces. When Paul says, “heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3), he speaks of a spiritual zone of safety in Christ where our hearts or spirits may find refuge. So, we are all in “heavenly places” where we are battling with forces of evil, but we are not all “in the heavenly places in Christ.” “Heavenly” simply references the invisible spirit realm, and “heavenly places in Christ” references the spiritual safety zone where we have great spiritual blessings to aid us in the spiritual conflicts we face daily.

To believe that we are not in “heavenly places” is to believe that the rulers of the darkness are right there where Jesus is seated in heaven. That idea also implies that we are not really wrestling against the dark forces since we are not personally in heaven. That is not what the Spirit tells us in Ephesians 6:12. We are really and presently “wrestling against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” In that case, we certainly could not take up the armor of God and fight. We would have to wait till we get to heaven. So, it is beyond reasonable dispute that we are all in the heavenly places. And some of us have come into Christ and were baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26-27), who is in this heavenly (spiritual) zone. Those who are presently in the heavenly places in Christ will one day get to go home to heaven, which is where Jesus and His throne are located. That place is heaven itself, while we await and do battle with forces of evil and darkness in “the heavenly places.” A place can be “heavenly” without being heaven itself. There is no darkness at all in the very presence of God in heaven, but there is darkness in “the heavenly places” because that is just a spiritual zone that is not fully visible and earthly. The heavenly places in Christ is a spiritual zone we enter now when we are baptized into union with Jesus (Romans 6:3-6; Galatians 3:26-27). In this region we are given great tools and resources for victory. In this region, we have “redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:3,7) and many other riches that provide us with the means of victory.

Have you entered the heavenly places in Christ like the early disciples? If not, you remain under the power of the forces of darkness. Can we help you come into the heavenly places in Christ for safety?