

The Faith of Nobodies

‘An elderly lady was well-known for her faith and for her boldness in talking about it. She would stand on her front porch and shout **“Praise The Lord!”** Next door to her lived an atheist who would get so angry at her proclamations he would shout, “There ain’t no Lord!!” Hard times set in on the elderly lady, and she prayed for God to send her some assistance. She stood on her porch and shouted **“Praise The Lord. [O] God I Need Food!! I Am Having A Hard Time. Please Lord, Send Me Some Groceries!!”** The next morning the lady went out on her porch and noted a large bag of groceries and shouted, **“Praise The Lord”**. The neighbor jumped from behind a bush and said, “Aha! I told you there was no Lord. I bought those groceries, God didn’t”. The lady started jumping up and down and clapping her hands and said, **“Praise The Lord.** He not only sent me groceries, but He made the devil pay for them. Praise the Lord!”

Praise the Lord, indeed! The Lord’s name is to be praised morning, noon and night! For He deserves it!! For if we are alive, then that means we should automatically praise Him, if for nothing else that He is keeping us alive. But there’s so much vastly more than this. Life has difficulties. Sometimes, the devil shoots arrows at us, lays traps for us, causes loved ones to treat us badly,

even to curse us. But don't take it personally. It can be hard not to. Especially in the throes of dementia, elderly loved ones' personality can completely change as their brains deteriorate, sometimes totally forgetting who they are and seeing their beloved family members as total strangers, deserving of wrath. In these situations, life is really hard. But even in such perplexing circumstances, God is still working within them to bring about a glorious result. That is God's specialty. Not unlike that woman in the joke who saw the God-side in the groceries the angry atheist neighbor put on her porch. You see, her faith would *not* be deterred, nor denied. Her faith would continue to her very dying breath.

On the road to Jericho, Lord Jesus and His disciples were at the outskirts of the village. Coming or going, is not really clearly remembered, but there were two blind beggars sitting on the roadside, waiting for people to give them money to survive. This incident is recorded in Matthew 20, Mark 10, and here in Luke 18. According to Matthew, both men shouted at the Lord, proclaiming Him to be the Son of David, meaning the Messiah. Yet, one of them, Timai, rendered in Greek as Bar-Timaeus, spoke to Lord Jesus in Aramaic. Both men were "licensed" beggars, being blind and therefore unable to make a living for themselves. Their situation was duly recognized by the Jericho government which provided them with beggar's robes. Thus people who saw them knew they were legitimate beggars; not like the hustlers we see daily on Kingshighway, on Lemay Ferry and elsewhere. But these

two beggars were remarkable in that both had heard about Lord Jesus, and believed that He really was the Messiah, the Son of David. However, of the two, only Timai spoke with great reverence and deep faith when, as Mark 10:51 records, after the Lord had called them out, this man called the Lord, “Rabboni”, which is an emphatic form of “rabbi” in the original Aramaic, and which is best translated as “My Master”. This is more than just saying an equivalent like, “Reverend”, or “Pastor”. This is much stronger and heartfelt. Note that when Mary Magdalene finally recognized the Lord, freshly risen from the dead, as recorded in John 20:16, she also called Him “Rabboni”, the same as Timai does here in Luke 18. This form of address implies deep admiration, affection, trust and loyalty. All of which stem from genuine faith.

But this was not all. Perhaps both men did, but we know for certain that Timai, as recorded in Mark, stood up and threw off his beggar’s cloak. Doing so implies that he expects to be healed right there on the spot. This is faith! And so Lord Jesus simply tells him as Luke 18:42 records: “Now you will see. Receive your sight this moment, for your faith in Me has given you sight and new life”. He could instantly, miraculously see. And had no more need of his beggar’s robe. Neither did his companion. As Matthew records, both of them then joyously praised God and followed Lord Jesus and became new believers from then on.

Recall the old lady in today’s joke. While it is a joke, there are multiple accounts of very similar things happening in real life,

so much so that the joke could have actually happened just as it reads. And one can be sure that this devoted lady's faith would last until her death. As must ours as well. Consider the final chapter we read today from II Timothy. Chapter 4 is the conclusion of this letter from Paul, and it probably is the very last communication he wrote to anyone before his execution. For he wrote in chapter 4, verse 6: "And now the time is fast approaching for my release from this life and I am ready to be offered as a sacrifice". For the petulant Emperor Nero had to blame someone for the massive fire that burned large parts of downtown Rome just months earlier. Nero himself had set the fires in order to get back at his political enemies in the Roman Senate. But no one could know that, so he started the rumor that disaffected Christians were responsible, and the leader of them was the Apostle Paul himself. So Paul was the culprit and he would have to pay the price. So convincing were the rumors that many of Paul's friends, fellow pastors and evangelists, were taken in by them and, in many cases to protect their own reputations, while others sought to take advantage of his distress to elevate themselves among the churches, for whatever reasons, significant numbers disassociated themselves from Paul, preferring to, or at least pretending to, believe that Paul had gone off the rails, lost his way, and was now a liability to the churches. Paul supposedly was in a scandal! He says in verse 16: "At first there was no one I could count on to faithfully stand with me—they all ran off and aban-

doned me—but don't hold this against them". Thus falsely accused, and literally deserted by many of the Christians, Paul laments how so many have gone and believed the lies about him. Worse, they were now in danger of going off the rails themselves, for real!! Believing lies throws open the doors to our souls to become prey to ever more of the devil's deceptions

Paul here specifically names several former colleagues in verse 10: "Demas deserted me and has left to go to Thessalonica, for he loves his own life. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus has gone to Dalmatia". Paul was particularly distressed by the actions of Alexander. It's possible that Alexander had even testified against Paul, in a particularly stinging betrayal, related in verses 14-15: "Alexander, the jeweler, has done me great harm. May our Lord give him what he deserves for all he has done. Be careful of him, for he arrogantly opposes our ministry".

We can see here how people, even Christians, can all too often just turn into lemmings and follow what seems to be the prevailing winds of the culture, the "preferred" narrative of the people with the loudest voices, the biggest megaphones. In this case, it was Nero. His version of events regarding the burning of Rome was widely believed for years, until finally, after Paul was beheaded for crimes he did not commit, the truth came out about Nero's conspiracy against Rome itself and Paul. Fabricated allegations, rumors, resulted in the execution of an innocent man. Sound familiar, anyone? What's been going on in our country, and around

the world in the end times, are exactly the same. And how Christians all too easily believe them, too. Gullible, refusing to do the due diligence needed to ferret out the real facts from the massive fictions churned out by the lame-stream media. Did a guest on MSNBS just claim that President Trump said, “I can point the US military any place I want and kill anyone I want”? Tom Nichols, currently a columnist for *The Atlantic*, was “a former professor of strategy at the U.S. Naval War College in Rhode Island” and made the claim last Friday night. Just think, how many poor souls will believe this insanity. And the purveyors of such idiocy claim to be highly educated experts protecting the moral high ground!

Truly, as God’s people, we’re to follow what Paul commanded his protege and successor, Timothy, to do, in verses 1-5: “I solemnly instruct you to proclaim the Word of God and stand upon it no matter what! Rise to the occasion and preach when it is convenient and when it is not. Preach in the full expression of the Holy Spirit—with wisdom and patience as you instruct and teach the people. For the time is coming when they will no longer listen and respond to the healing words of truth because they will become selfish and proud. They will seek out teachers with soothing words that line up with their desires, saying just what they want to hear. They will close their ears to the truth and believe nothing but fables and myths. So be alert to all these things and overcome every form of evil. Carry in your heart the passion of your calling” as *faithful nobodies* who stand for the truth!

