

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Refreshing!

To be refreshed is to have your strength restored, or to be revived in vigor and zest, renewed in inspiration or power to a condition where you flourish again as you once did. We are refreshed by cool water when thirsty, delicious food when hungry and peaceful sleep when weary. After refreshment we are ready to face whatever life brings with a positive attitude and great confidence!

“Refreshing” is a word used in the Scriptures to describe some Christians who relieve and inspire the souls of others. Philemon, of whom Paul wrote, was just such a one: “For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have

been refreshed through you, brother” (Philemon 7). Before the close of this short letter, again we see: “Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in Christ.” (Philemon 20). By this last expression we are not to see this refreshment as merely providing some small measure of happiness for Paul, but rather we should see it as corresponding with the claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, with its purposes and blessings. We should all desire to be refreshing Christians!

Several times we find this word in the writings of Paul. He desired prayers of the Roman Christians, “so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find *refreshing* rest in your company.” (Rom. 15:32). Paul commended the Corinthian Christians, stating that “we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.” (2 Cor. 7:13b). He praised individuals: “I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. (1 Cor. 16:17-18). He wrote of a brother who certainly overcame opposition and obstacles to aid him in prison: “The Lord grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains;” (2 Tim. 1:16).

Christians are refreshing to fellow-workers in the Lord’s vineyard when they determine to be just that. Earnest prayers and encouraging words are refreshing to the weary worker, the Bible-class teacher, the preacher, the deacon, the elder, and every soul who strives to overcome this world and live to please the Lord. The big temptation when we are weary is to

consider our work as empty and useless, and our work diminishes or becomes non-existent. To the beloved brethren of the Lord, Paul said, "...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58). Refreshment from a brother or sister in Christ goes a long way in supporting that steadfastness!

The greatest refreshing that exists comes from the Lord. In admonishing his Jerusalem hearers to obey the gospel in order to receive forgiveness of sins, Peter commanded, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; (Acts 3:19). There can be no doubt that the "refreshing" that comes "from the presence of the Lord" corresponds to "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Peter's previous sermon (Acts 2:38), and that these parallel phrases are descriptive of consequences that follow having sins forgiven or "wiped away." If we understand the word "refreshing," we can appreciate such a description of the good that follows release from the consequences of sin.

When the soul turns to God, there is indeed a "refreshing," a renewal, a springing forth from the "old man" (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9), the former life (1 Pet. 1:14), which was "separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12b). When one leaves the life of sin for the life of Christ, he is "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13), reconciled to God (Eph. 2:16), with "access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph. 2:18). These are "no longer strangers and aliens, but ... fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ... a holy temple in the Lord, ... a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2:19-22).

In the song, "*We Thank Thee, O Father,*" we thank God because "He sends the snow in winter, The warmth to swell the grains, The breeze and the sunshine, And soft refreshing rain." Farmers, whose crops have suffered from parched soil of drought, appreciate "refreshing rain" like no other. And maybe that is a way of illustrating "seasons of refreshing," when wilting plants are strengthened by a return of moisture to the soil, or when vegetation springs to life after lying dormant.

Refreshing brings strength from weakness, rest from weariness, joys of the Holy Spirit, peace with God and blessings from our Lord. In Christ we have deliverance from evils, relief from burdensome difficulties brought about by the guilt and condemnation of sin. Might that help us to see Matt. 11:28-30 with a greater appreciation? "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and *you will find rest for your souls*. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Oh, blessed rest! Oh, blessed "refreshing!"

Nothing refreshes Christians more than seeing others brought to faith in Christ, repentance from dead works and baptism for the remission of sins! Friend, can we help you today?

- GFS

Let's Get Together

Maybe it's the fast pace of twentieth century living; maybe it's too much TV, or it may be just plain indifference, but whatever the reason, it occurs to me that most Christians are not having enough personal contact with each other. Many rarely see their brethren except at Bible classes or worship. Surely we owe one another something more in this area--something more than our customary vestibule visiting and exchanging of parking-lot pleasantries; something more than a sort of in-passing relationship that is mainly church-building oriented. Must we become old, infirmed or unfaithful to warrant a visit from our brethren? Man is a social creature, ever subject to the influence of those about him. As evil companionships corrupt (1 Cor. 15:33), keeping good company can be profitable for all (1 Pet. 2:12; 3:1; Matt. 5:6) — especially for Christians who will be what they ought to be to each other. And that simply means, In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another... (Rom. 12:10)

Such love involves more than passive and partisan feelings toward other Christians. Christ alludes to deeper dimensions when he says, even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (Jn. 13:34) His love for the disciples was made **apparent** it could be seen in what He did! So must ours. Such love is the mark of discipleship; its presence is observable and influential (Jn. 13:35). Therefore, the fullest expression of sincere and fervent love (1 Pet. 1:22) is impossible apart from some form of personal contact and association.

Consider, for instance, the admonition to bear ye one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). How does one bear, who is not there? We may pray and sympathize from afar, but fulfilling the law of Christ in this area usually requires both heart and hand. Keeping in touch helps brethren to know when a helping hand is needed. But more than that, being together more means better communication between us; the kind in which we can confess our sins to one another (Jas. 5:16); the kind in which we can admonish, edify and exhort each other (Rom. 15:14; 14:19; Heb. 3:13). When the weak need to be encouraged (1 Thess. 5:14); when the sorrowed need to be comforted (1 Thess. 4:18), we need to be there. And even when there is no particular need

evident, our being there may mean more than we know. We see the need for the elders to keep in close touch with the flock of their oversight. Without it they could not watch in behalf of the souls for which they shall give account (Heb. 13:17). But we also must see our personal opportunities to serve the King by serving even the least among our brethren (Matt. 25:40) for we too must give account. Others cannot represent us in such service, we must be there.

Even if we cannot have the day by day association enjoyed by many of the early disciples, we can and ought to have more time for each other. So, let's get together!— for a home Bible study, for a meal, for a pot-luck, for coffee or for just an old-fashion visit. For the sake of every benefit and blessing that can be given or received by kin in Christ being together, let's get together!

- Dan S. Shipley, via Plain Talk, April, 1974

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Should I Leave My Family's Religion?"* (text: Phil. 3:4-8); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *To Be Remembered For All Time!* (Mark 14:22-26).

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting is scheduled for Sept. 18-23, with Eric Reynolds.