

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

*841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305*

May 20, 2012

Volume 32, # 21

Is Love to Blame?

Have you ever known parents who claimed that they loved their children too much to spank them? Ever known someone who tried to justify having sex outside of marriage because they loved the person? Ever known a Christian who would not rebuke and correct religious error because they loved others too much to hurt their feelings in this way? I submit that in each of these cases, love is being blamed for something that it has nothing to do with.

The Bible plainly teaches that love motivates us to do exactly the opposite of what was described in each of the preceding examples.

Love will cause us to discipline our children. "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24).

Love demands that we abstain from sexual immorality. If we love someone, we are not going to participate with them in an act that will condemn their soul! If we do, we are being selfish, not loving.

In **Ephesians 5:2-3**, God's word explains that walking in love involves avoiding fornication: "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-

smelling aroma. But fornication . . . let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints" (**Ephesians 5:2-3**).

Love will move of us to rebuke sin and correct error. Love will not allow us to stand idly by and watch those we care about lose their souls by committing sin or believing doctrinal error. Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (**Revelation 3:19**). The apostle Paul had strongly rebuked the Corinthians. In **2 Corinthians 2:4** he explains why: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you."

The right kind of love will never cause us to do the wrong kind of thing. Love "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth" (**1 Corinthians 13:6**). Real love will never be used to justify sin; rather, it will be used to help us identify what is what is right and good. The Lord's will is "that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent" (**Philippians 1:9-10**).

Love always seeks the most lasting good for the one who is being loved. Momentary pain or pleasure is not love's greatest concern. Love is focused on the eternal welfare of the one who is loved. "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (**1 John 3:18**)

- Steve Klein

The Search for Assurance

It was a discussion between preacher friends. We were wrestling with the question of how confident Christians ought to be, moment by moment, about their salvation. Some were arguing for an absolute assurance, others for a more cautious one. There is perhaps no concern

which weaves its way so pervasively through the history of God's people as does the desire for assurance in one's relationship with God. Christians seem to vacillate between two contrasting themes of Scripture—assurance (**1 John 5:3**) and warning (**1 Corinthians 10:12**).

The subject of assurance has been hotly debated down through the centuries, especially in the Calvinist-Armenian controversies. Are all who have been converted to Christ unconditionally assured of their eternal salvation, or is the life of a Christian one of probation in which his relationship to God is conditioned on faithfulness? Nothing is more clearly established in Scripture than the possibility of apostasy. As certainly as the wicked can turn and be saved, so can the righteous fall and be lost (**Ezekiel 18:21-26**). A Christian's fellowship with his Father is dependent upon an ongoing spirit of obedient **faith** (**Romans 11:19-22**; **1 Corinthians 15:1-2**; **Colossians 1:22-23**; **Hebrews 3:6, 14**).

Does this mean that we must live our lives in daily uncertainty about our relationship with God? Are we never, on this account, to experience any moment-by-moment assurance of our hope? This is a question which troubles many Christians and deserves study.

The evidence of Scripture on this matter is unequivocal. The heavenly Father clearly intends for His children to know assurance. The cry of "Abba, Father" is a cry of joy and confidence which comes from being sons, not slaves, of the living God (**Romans 8:15**). Paul affirms that the very essence of the kingdom is "righteousness, peace and joy" (**Romans 14:17**) and names "love, joy and peace" as among the "fruit of the Spirit" (**Galatians 5:22**). It goes without saying that there cannot be peace without assurance, and no joy without peace.

The apostle Paul himself is a great illustration of the confidence a Christian may have of his relationship with God. In the final hours of his life, he confidently affirms that "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day" (**2 Timothy 4:8**). In his heart there was a certainty about his destiny, an assurance of his salvation.

It may be objected that the case of Paul, as an apostle, is different than our own. It should not be. As a sinner, he was saved by the grace of God just as you and I must be. Having no righteousness of his own (**Philippians 3:9**), he was "justified by faith in Christ" (**Galatians 2:16**).

There are only two ways to be justified before God—by my own perfect righteousness or by God's grace. Since all men have sinned (**Romans 3:10, 23; Ecclesiastes 7:21**), seeking to find peace with God through our own righteousness is a dead end street. Confidence in our salvation and the peace it produces can come only from God's grace and assured promises. It is what God has done, not what we have done, which gives assurance of salvation. We are justified by faith—looking up to God, not to ourselves (**Romans 3:21-26**).

Does this mean that we no longer have to be concerned about sin in our lives? To the contrary, the person who truly trusts in God as Father has never before fought sin so ferociously nor hated it so intensely (**Romans 6:1-14**). True faith works the will of God (**Romans 1:5; Galatians 5:6; James 2:14-26**). True love keeps the commandments of Christ (**John 14:15**). Any failure to please our Savior will bring grief (2 Corinthians 7:10) and result in penitent confession (**1 John 1:9**).

But what if I am deceived and sin ignorantly? A single-minded will to do God's will (**John 7:17**) and a genuine love of His truth (**2 Thessalonians 2:10**) are an absolute defense against deception. If we trust in God with a whole heart, all that we yet need to know of His way will be revealed to us (**Philippians 3:13-15**). It is our task to bring to our Father a true heart. It is His task to redeem His trusting child, and He is liable to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (**Ephesians 3:20**).

But what if I study God's word and do all I know to do to serve Him and still can't find peace in my heart about my salvation? Remember that "if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth all things" (**1 John 3:19-20**). Put confidence in His promises, not your feelings.

God intends that the heart of every humble child of His be guarded by a peace which passes understanding (**Philippians 4:7**). The assurance of our hope comes to us moment by moment as we live our lives in faith. But it is not an assurance which is arrogant, cocky or heedless. No true servant of God, trusting Him, loving Him, ever dealt fast and loose with temptation or sin. The same one who said that nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God" also said, "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage lest after I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (**1 Corinthians 9:27**). The assurance of God is a holy confidence joined to a sober vigilance, in order that what we now assuredly hold, by His grace, may never be lost.

- Paul Earnhart

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: In Gary's absence today, Gregg Needham will be presenting the lesson this morning, and Tim Powell will present the afternoon lesson.

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting will be July 29-Aug. 3, with Aaron Andrews.