

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Striving For That Likeness!

The love of God has made possible the means whereby the vilest of sinners can become children of God. That is why John writes, " See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God;" (1 John 3:1a), What greater blessing can be found anywhere? What closer relationship can be enjoyed than to be His child? "*And such* we are." (vs. 1b). As such, the world does not know us, because the world does not know Him. Christ lives in us and we are therefore strangers to the world.

As children of God we are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ " (Rom. 8:17). Surely, our goal is to be like Him in as many ways as possible. We do not expect to be as deity, or like Him in power and glory, but it is certainly our goal to love as He loves, serve as He serves, be pure as He is pure, etc. He is our ideal, and we are striving to be like Him. By studying His life, cultivating His attitudes, imitating His character we grow in love for Him and something wonderful happens within us: WE ARE BEING TRANSFORMED INTO HIS LIKENESS: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:18). Friend, we must choose to let this transformation begin in our lives RIGHT NOW, and allow it to continue to mold us and shape us into the likeness of Christ as we live in this life. Our aim and effort is to be like Him. John says, "...we will be like him..." (1 John 3:2).

John writes, "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:2). If we knew the Lord as He is now we would know the perfection that this transformation constantly inches us toward. Attainment of this perfection is a goal that will be reached after this life is over. The sins that *afflict* all human-kind prevent our perfection now, just as sins prevented those who lived in Jesus' day from seeing His perfect character and reaching that perfection themselves. Only when we put off the corruption of the present life can we put on incorruption as well as immortality (1 Cor. 15:50-57). What glory awaits! What glory we long for! "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." (Phil. 3:20-21).

Friend, does the glorious perfection of Christ Jesus entice you to do whatever is necessary in order to possess it yourself? Will you have this hope in you? "And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (1 John 3:3). If we are to be like Christ we must put away sin, every impure thought and deed. "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God." (Rom. 6:12-13). May we assist you?

- GFS

WE NEED EACH OTHER

One of the worst characteristics of men today is an independent spirit. Children are raised to be their “own man,” depend on no one, pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, do what they believe will make them happy, and ignore everyone else in the process. We often live by the final words of William Ernest Henley’s poem, *Invictus*:

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.*

The problem with the “captain of my soul” mentality is that it is a philosophy never supported in Scripture. Man was made with a desperate need for companionship—not a spirit of isolationism. From the very beginning God knew and understood that it was “not good that man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). At the most elementary level, God’s statement referred to the need of life-long companionship—a problem answered through the creation of woman and the institution of marriage (Gen. 2:19–25). But man’s need for companionship spiritually extends beyond the home to even a need for a relationship with God and His people.

Throughout the Bible the spiritual heroes of the Bible are always seen with spiritual partnerships. Moses was given Aaron (Ex. 4:14–17) and later Joshua (Ex. 24:13). Jesus had twelve men and even within those men a smaller group of three—Peter, James, and John—who are seen giving support to him. The disciples were sent out by Jesus in pairs rather than being alone (Luke 10:1). Paul had companions like Barnabas (Acts 13:2), Silas (Acts 15:40), Timothy (Acts 16:1), and others. The strong men of faith so respected throughout the Bible never played the one-man role of being a spiritual “Superman.” Instead, they are more like “Batman”—always leaning on a “Robin” for encouragement and assistance.

The lesson for Christians today is the need to depend on one another. There is no place in the Lord's church for the Frank Sinatra do-it-my-way mentality. Instead the Bible emphasizes the need for companionship and mutual encouragement in order to sustain and survive as disciples while living on earth. This desperate need for spiritual companionship is the very reason given for assembling with the saints (Heb. 10:24–25). Jesus declared that spiritual fellowship and love for each other would even serve as the greatest quality the world would use to identify His disciples (John 13:34–35).

The spiritual fellowship and companionship of Christians is vital to the salvation of each one. Without it, you cannot enter the gates of heaven. All of which simply means we need one another. May God help us to lean on each other and be the spiritual family he expects us to be.

- Terry Francis

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"God's Crazy People!"* (text: Acts 26:22-29); Sunday evening: *"Bible 'Success!'"* (text: Joshua 1:1-9).

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