

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Avoiding Bitterness

Though it is seldom mentioned, bitterness is a real issue in the lives of many Christians. Those who harbor bitterness are:

1) disobeying God!

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:31,32)

2) hurting themselves and others!

"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled." (Hebrews 12:15 - NASV)

Past offenses (both real and imagined) can lead to this spiritually unhealthy condition. Here are some suggestions to help avoid bitterness:

a) Remember that, even though others may have done wrong, you are not perfect either. Would you want others to react to your faults the same way you are reacting to theirs? (Matthew 7:12)

b) Often bitterness results from thinking too highly of yourself. In truth, even when you have suffered minor slights and hurts, you still are receiving more and better things than you deserve (Romans 12:3). Instead of an inflated self-image, you should "in lowliness of mind . . . esteem others better than (your)self." (Philippians 2:3)

c) Your faithful friends and brethren are continually doing good for you. Concentrate on these positive things rather than the negative ones that produce bitterness in the heart.

d) Develop a more forgiving spirit. Never forget that your own forgiveness from God depends upon your willingness to forgive others (Matthew 6:14,15). Also, keep in mind how many times you have needed forgiveness – both by God and man.

- Greg Gwin

Hope is to be Found in Christ

"I wish I could think that I have come just a short distance toward being as prepared as he was," a woman said to me recently concerning a man who had died. Her statement was intended to be an expression of confidence in the deceased, and I shared her confidence, but the truth is: if that lady is living a faithful life in Christ, she is fully as prepared as any other person in Christ.

Entrance into heaven will not be based upon a long list of credentials built up accumulatively through the years (so many new converts, so many passages memorized, so many lives influenced, so many years in the service of the Lord, so many sermons preached, etc.), the person's chances of going to heaven being enhanced with each new credential. Entrance into heaven will be based on the merit of Christ's blood. One prepares for heaven by entering into Christ through faith, repentance, and baptism (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3); living a faithful life in Christ; and dying in Christ. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). This is the true basis for one's hope, whether he has been a faithful Christian for fifty years or is just rising from baptism in newness of life.

Now if the lady had said, "I wish I could think that I have come just a short distance toward being as Godlike as I believe he was," that would have been different. Here is the prevailing purpose of every Christian, to become more like God every day. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Regular worship, liberal giving, unceasing prayer, concerned benevolence, unfeigned love of the brethren, self-control, etc.--all of which are commanded of God--are a means to the end of becoming like Him, or as stated by Jesus, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:45). One who ignores these commands shows his contempt for God, becomes unfaithful, ceases to be like God, and loses his hope of heaven. On the other hand, one who does conscientiously obey the commands of God becomes more Godlike, and the person who has done so for fifty years will obviously have attained a greater degree of Godlikeness than one who has just begun the Christian life.

But while we recognize different levels in attainment toward becoming like God, all who are faithful, and are thus purifying themselves as He is pure, share equally the hope of heaven. None has earned his way to heaven. All are dependent on God's grace, and His grace is extended to all the faithful.

Let not the young in the faith, then, be intimidated by the attainments of the more mature in the faith. Let not the mature become proud and overconfident. All must be faithful. All must be growing. All must become more and more like God. And all must die in the Lord. And to all who do so, the Lord will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

- Bill Hall

Spiritual Procrastination

We've all done it—put off that paper or that long-term assignment until the last minute, staying up all night to finish just before it's due. Maybe we even miss the deadline and turn it in late. We receive the just penalty for our procrastination, and then move on to the next assignment, probably making ourselves promises to never do this again. However, I'm afraid that many of us have gotten into the habit of procrastination when it comes to spiritual things.

God has given us enough assignments on this earth to last a lifetime, and we're commanded to fill our lives with these things—we are to "take pains with these things; be absorbed in them, so that your progress will be evident to all" (1 Timothy 4:15). Unfortunately, it's incredibly easy to put off these spiritual tasks day after day, until we've become more or less useless in God's service. Perhaps this is because we're not thinking about the

deadline. No one except God Himself knows when that deadline will come (Matthew 24:36), and I'm afraid many times we scarcely even give thought to the fact that that today could be that deadline. So what now? We must get to work!

Honestly, if you have to stop reading this to go accomplish something that you know God wants you to do, do it now. Stop spiritually procrastinating—because God doesn't accept late work.

- Stephen Rouse

DANGERS CONFRONTING THE LORD'S CHURCH

Many years ago N. B. Hardeman was asked what dangers he saw confronting the church of his day. His reply was as follows:

- (1) A lack of Bible knowledge and a light regard with what it says,
- (2) A tendency to make the church a social club of entertainment,
- (3) A disposition to compromise the truth and to discourage sound preaching,
- (4) A love for the praise of men more than the praise of God, lest they should be put out of someone's social circle.

Consider these four things and note how well the growth of each of them is causing problems to the church in our day.

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Six Sad Things!"* (text: Neh. 2:1-3); Sunday evening: *"Is Not My Word Like Fire?"* (text: Jer. 23:21-32).

SCHEDULE: Our Gospel Meeting will be July 28 – Aug. 2, Sun. regularly scheduled times, M-F at 7:00 p.m., with Tanner Campbell, of Piggott, AR.