

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Keep Yourself Where God Will Keep You ***Jude 24,25***

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present your faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen.”
(Jude 24,25)

Who has the power? “God our Savior.” For me, there is the possibility of stumbling, I would even confess a probability. While I entertain no purpose or intent to stumble, I know I could and probably will. I may nourish a thought that is destructive. I may say something to someone in haste or anger. I may be tempted, and fall into sin in the use of my body. With me, I live with this awareness, this possibility of stumbling. “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body,” (Jas. 3:2).

Thus I am not the power holder. God is. He is able to keep me from stumbling. He has that power and in His use of that power, I

can be eventually presented “faultless, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” God has this power to save me. Proof of this is historical, documented by the cross of Christ.

My life as a Christian, therefore, doesn’t stand on my power, or my ability to correct my course and keep myself pure (though I must). God is my confidence. Christ is my Savior. Henceforth, deity is worthy of this praise: “To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen.”

How Does This Work? There may be some temptation to think – this works through some sort of automatic process, where I remain passive. This approach would be like, you do nothing; you are acted upon; God acts upon you to keep you from stumbling, in such an overpowering way . . . You do nothing – God does it all. Entire theological systems have been built of that premise. He keeps you from stumbling, through some sort of automatic process, that excludes your will; that requires no response; it just happens.

May I take us to another passage that teaches the same truth revealed here in Jude 24. It is 2 Peter 1:5. Same subject – the power of God keeps us; protects us. Here is 2 Pet. 1:5 - Christians are “kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” We are “kept by the power of God,” but this is not an automatic process where we are passive. To enjoy this benefit we must be very much active; for it says, we are “kept by the power of God through faith....” God does the keeping – I must do the believing. And of course, the belief commended in the New Testament is never passive; never disobedient - - always active; always obedient (see Jas. 2:14-26).

So – back to the problem. The problem is the reality of stumbling. The solution is to believe, to depend upon God, who says He will keep us. This dependence is active trust:

As our faith continues...

As our faith grows...

As our faith responds to the direction of God...

As our faith honors the Christ who died for us...

We are kept by the power of God. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory . . .

Years ago – when pedestrian traffic was common – at busy intersections, traffic engineers would build what was called A Safety Zone. As you were walking across the intersection, if you had to stop to let oncoming traffic pass – there was a little area you can occupy called a “Safety Zone.” These zones would sometimes be built inside of heavy steel barricades or bars. The theory was, as long as you stayed in the safety zone, you would not be hit by the passing vehicles. In order to enjoy that safety, you had to stay in this zone!!

In Christ, God has provided something like – a safety zone. As long as we stay where we ought to be – maintaining the activity of our faith; growing; repenting of sin; walking in the light . . . As long as we stay where we ought to be – in this place God, in His grace, has provided, we are kept by the power of God. But we must keep the faith; we must keep ourselves where we ought to be.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. (Jude 21)

- Warren E. Berkley

Baptism Comes Before Salvation

We have been accused of over emphasizing the part baptism plays in the salvation of sinners. In view of what the Bible teaches, this could not be possible. There are five passages in the New Testament which mention both baptism and salvation in the same verse:

1. Mark 16:16 contains two conditions for salvation: faith and baptism. It also contains the conditions for damnation: a lack of faith. If you want to know what you must do to be lost, it will tell you -- all that is necessary is a lack of faith. If you want to know what to do to be saved from your past sins -- it commands you to believe and be baptized.

2. In Acts 2:38 Peter told a group of believers to "repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Our Baptist friends often focus on the word "for" in this passage and insist it means "because of," even though it is never translated that way in any reputable translation of the Bible. We have to remind them that if baptism is "because of" the remission of sins, then so is repentance. Baptism and repentance are joined by the little word "and." Whatever one is "for" the other is "for."

3. After we are buried with Christ in baptism, we are raised to walk in a newness of life (Romans 6:1-4). This new life comes after baptism in water. Many preachers want to "bury" the "new man," since they claim the newness of life comes before our "burial."

4. Three days after the Lord appeared to Saul of Tarsus, Ananias told Saul to "arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins" (Acts 22:16). Many preachers today claim Saul was saved three days before Ananias

met him. Ananias must not have known it, for he told Saul how to "wash away" his sins. If Saul had been saved on the road as some preachers claim, he must have been the most miserable saved man in the Bible. Saul was blind and spent three days praying and fasting until Ananias arrived.

5. 1 Peter 3:21 states "baptism doth also now save us." However, baptism is not the only condition for the salvation of the alien sinner. Other requirements must be met, like faith, repentance and love. I do not know of anything "alone" that will save a sinner, not even faith (James 2:24).

In all of these passages, water baptism precedes the remission of sins. Do you know of a passage where the order is reversed?

- David Padfield

DETERMINING WHAT IS RIGHT

Every person who desires to please God is confronted with the multiplicity of differing religious groups, most of which claim to be right. This is certainly discouraging to the seeker of God. What can show us the right way? Is every person free to arrive at his own subjective moral standard? Or is there an objective, authoritative moral standard to which we may appeal for guidance in coming to an understanding of what is right and what is wrong? If you are seeking God, then the following points will be helpful to you.

1. THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD!

In reference to the Old Testament scriptures, Peter wrote, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no

prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Concerning the acceptance of the New Testament message by believers in Thessalonica, Paul wrote, "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe," (1 Thess. 2:13).

Hebrews 1:1-2 shows that God is the author of both the Old and New Testament scriptures: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds;".

2. THE BIBLE IS A COMPLETE GUIDE!

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17). "Inspired of God" literally means "God-breathed." The "God-breathed" scriptures are wholly and exclusively sufficient for the purpose of bringing man to a complete state of spiritual perfection. Since the scriptures are sufficient to bring about our spiritual perfection (completeness), NOTHING ELSE IS NEEDED. We do not need to be given any other religious directives such as manuals, disciplines, creeds, books of church order, articles of faith, catechisms, etc., etc. to better equip us for spiritual perfection. Such religious directives amount to something more than the word of God, or something less than the word of God, otherwise they would be an exact duplicate of the word of God. The word of God is totally and wholly adequate and sufficient to accomplish God's divine purpose for every man! Everything needed to produce life and godliness is found in the word of God (2 Peter 1:3), and we must "learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6; cf. 2 John 9-11). Those who teach a different gospel or pervert the gospel in any way are accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). Who dares add to or take from the gospel of Christ?

Jesus promised His apostles that they would be guided into “all truth” (John 16:13). Jude affirms that “the faith” has been “once for all delivered unto the saints,” that is, one time for all time to come (Jude 3). “The faith” was delivered to be complete, final and permanent just as Christ’s sacrifice for sin was complete, final and permanent (see Hebrews 7:27; 9:28; 10:10,26).

Since this was accomplished almost two-thousand years ago, we must not look for additional revelations today. Jesus fulfilled His promise to guide the apostles into all truth, therefore ALL TRUTH must have been delivered before the last apostle died. Any claims regarding “new revelations” after this time are false claims!

3. THE WORD OF GOD IS TRUTH!

Jesus declared this important truth in His prayer to the Father to sanctify believers: “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17). Any idea, statement or teaching that is contrary to truth is therefore false (error). Recognition of this involves common sense. Those through whom truth was revealed warned against false teachers and false doctrines (see Matt. 7:15; 15:8-9; Acts 20:29-30; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11).

4. ARE WE WILLING TO BE LED BY THE WORD OF GOD?

The answer to this question reveals where most people depart from God's way. Many claim to believe that the Bible is the word of God, and as such it is all we need to guide us, but they are unwilling to allow it to govern. When questions, problems and doubts arise we search for solutions every place except the Bible. Our beliefs consist of too many ideas that are not taught in the Bible. Why are we so unwilling to eliminate from our belief every concept that cannot be read in our Bibles and plainly understood? The faith that pleases God comes from hearing only the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Are we willing to be led by the word of God at all times, correcting our concepts when we learn more truth? Or will I be led by the Bible only so far

as it does not conflict with something I already believe, or does not require changes in my life, or does not indicate that my relatives were in error? Let us resolve to seek truth, to correct our false concepts, to love the word of God and to hate every false way. Is this not best?

- GFS

- When you make a mistake, don't look back at it long. Take the reason of the thing into your mind, and then look forward. Mistakes are lessons of wisdom. The past cannot be changed. The future is yet in your power.
- The plea of ignorance will never take away our responsibilities. - John Ruskin
- What happened in the past that was painful has a great deal to do with what we are today, but revisiting this painful past can contribute little or nothing to what we need to do now. - Dr. William Glasser

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Learning From Judas!*" (text: Acts 1:15-26); Sunday evening: "*The Valley of Dry Bones!*" (text: Ezek. 37:1-14).

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.