

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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HONESTY IN RELIGION

The pressures of our society and temptations to sin are tremendous. Even in high places that should be citadels of honor and respectability, the corrupting forces of evil and the deceitfulness of sin have made dishonesty an accepted way of life. The fact that it is so widespread accentuates the character of that segment of mankind, the honorable men and women, who resist the pressures and enticements to be dishonest. And there are many people in various walks of life who would not think of stooping so low as to lie, cheat or steal. They are the backbone of civilization and are worthy of commendation

But there is another kind of honesty that is even rarer and nobler. It embraces all of the qualities of what we might term social and business honesty, but then it transcends this realm of mundane matters and challenges the very depths of the heart -- religious prejudice and pride. It is a strange and bizarre fact that many people have a kind of honesty that scrupulously refuses to cheat, lie, steal or defraud, but then casually (as though it was a small thing) turn around and disobey God while professing faithfulness to Him. Such is dishonesty.

Genuine honesty requires one to deal fairly with God's word and to walk according to his studied understanding of what is truth. The word honest means to be "frank, sincere, according to truth," and "upright, just, fair in dealing," according to Webster. So any closing of the eyes or disregard for plain Bible statements is a breach of integrity -- honesty seeks truth, not self-justification!

This is not to say that whenever a man is wrong he is dishonest. It is entirely possible that he is simply ignorant. But he must be either ignorant or dishonest when wrong. There is no other alternative. There is no right way to be wrong.

The Scriptures emphasize how easy it is for man to deceive himself to the point of becoming religiously dishonest. The lack of a deep love for truth, sometimes manifest by an unwillingness to question the traditions of one's religious heritage and faith, endangers one to the "deceitfulness of unrighteousness ... because they received not the love of the truth" (2 Thess. 2:10). God gives us the power to "believe a lie" if we do not have the proper love of the truth. That is, if we want to justify a certain doctrine or system of "theology" more than we want to be right, we can do it. This is one of the reasons we should study the Bible, not to prove a point or doctrine, but to find out what God wants us to believe. If we read the Bible with the idea of simply justifying something, we are in great danger. We must approach God's word with the right attitude if we would not deceive ourselves, and that is to let it be the source of what we believe, and not a sort of proof for what we already believe.

Anyone who does not love truth to the point of being willing to accept as faith only that which the Scriptures contain, and to repudiate the doctrines of

men, is either ignorant or dishonest. Honesty takes great character -- especially religious honesty.

-Jere E. Frost, via The Greggton Guide, March 29, 1981.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

- #1 — "You shall have no other gods before me," Exod. 20:3.
- Taught in the New Testament: Acts 14:8-18; 1 Cor. 8:4-6
- #2— "You shall not make for yourself an idol..." Exod. 20:4-6.
- Taught in the New Testament: 1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 17:24-28
- #3— "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,"
Exod. 20:7.
- Taught in the New Testament: Matt. 6:9; Eph. 4:29; Matt. 5:33
- #4— "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," Exod. 20:8-11.
- Not required in the New Testament: Col. 2:14-17
- #5— "Honor your father and mother..." Exod. 20:12.
- Taught in the New Testament: Eph. 6:1-3
- #6— "You shall not murder," Exod. 20:13.
- Taught in the New Testament: Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Pet. 4:15; Rev. 21:8
- #7— "You shall not commit adultery," Exod. 20:14.
- Taught in the New Testament: Rom. 13:9; 1 Cor. 6:9
- #8— "You shall not steal," Exod. 20:15.

- Taught in the New Testament: Rom. 13:9; Eph.4:28

#9— "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor,"
Exod. 20:16.

- Taught in the New Testament: Rom. 13:9; Col. 3:9

10— "You shall not covet..." Exod. 20:17

- Taught in the New Testament: Rom. 13:9; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Col. 3:5

SPRINKLING, POURING, OR IMMERSION, WHICH?

Today is a day that many a man does that which is right in his own eyes. Every man becomes a law unto himself, disregarding any determination to please God in their religious pursuits. Should every man decide for himself what is right with little or no regard for what God has said in His word? Does thinking that a thing is right make it right?

When the Lord commanded people to be baptized, He must have wanted them to do just exactly that. When the Lord and His apostles used the term "baptize" it meant to dip, to immerse, to submerge, to plunge, to bury. This is exactly what people understood the word to mean when they were commanded to be baptized. This is demonstrated by what they did. They "went down into the water" (Acts 8:38), were baptized, then "came up

out of the water" (Acts 8:39; cf. Matt. 3:16). When one has water sprinkled or poured upon him, this is not the case. Neither could such be called a "burial" (Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:4).

Most historians agree, and the New Testament reveals, that immersion was the doctrine of the apostles. Whence cometh sprinkling and pouring? The first recorded case of such was in 251 A.D., upon Novatian as he lay in bed sick. By that date in history, some church leaders had little regard for strict adherence to what the Lord commanded. They **SUBSTITUTED** pouring small amounts of water on the subject's head for New Testament baptism. They even called it "baptism," which in itself was a misnomer. CALLING SPRINKLING "BAPTISM" DOES NOT MAKE IT BAPTISM! At first, sprinkling was only administered to invalids, but as time went on it became a commonly accepted practice. In 1311 A.D. the Council of Ravenna (a group of uninspired men) legalized sprinkling as valid baptism in the Roman Catholic Church. When the Protestant Denominations likewise substitute sprinkling or pouring for immersion, they too are usurping the authority of Christ by going beyond what is written (I John 9-11). Today religious teachers are giving men a choice as to how they want to be "baptized": sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. Did the apostles' doctrine allow men to choose? "But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:9). No person who has had water sprinkled or poured upon him has obeyed the Lord's command to be baptized.

Let us contemplate a parallel, which has certain limitations, but nevertheless would be useful in illustrating the point. The Lord

and His apostles commanded all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). This is a requirement for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19). We can know what people understood this command to mean by observing what they did to comply with it. Repentance was a change of mind, or will, regarding sin. It is produced by godly sorrow for sin and results in reformation of life (Matt. 3:8; 12:41; 21:28-29; Luke 13:3-5; 15:17-20; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 2 Pet. 3:9,11,14). Those in New Testament times who did this obeyed the Lord's command to repent.

What if two-hundred years after this doctrine had been established by the apostles of Christ as they were led by the Holy Spirit, some religious leaders decided that they wanted to initiate a more "convenient" way for certain sinners to repent. Say, for example, they decided that certain sinners could repent by just "walking down the aisle" while an invitation song was being sung. What if, later, they decided, for "convenience" sake, that certain "invalids" who wanted to repent could just "sign a card" in place of "walking down the aisle." Further, suppose that one-thousand and fifty years later an uninspired "religious council" met and legalized "walking down the aisle" and "signing a card" as valid repentance, and most Protestant Denominations adopted this practice. **WOULD THIS BE RIGHT?** Upon hearing the Lord's command to repent, could some obey by completely changing their will regarding sin, and others obey by "walking down the aisle," and others obey by "signing a card"? Would men have a God-given right to choose how they wanted to repent? Would they be fulfilling the Lord's command by substituting the meaning of the word used to convey the Lord's will?

Dear reader, surely you can see that during the days of the apostles, baptism was immersion, as repentance was a change of mind, or will, regarding sin. Certainly you can see that today it is different -- AND HOW VERY DIFFERENT IT IS! Friend, who made it different? Did the Lord? Did man make it different out of dissatisfaction with the Lord's way? If so, by what authority does he presume to do it? Where did the Lord reveal that he would be pleased with the decisions of "religious councils" hundreds of years after the entire will of God was revealed? (For some insight read Acts 20:29-32; Rom. 16:17-18; I Cor. 1:10; 4:6; Gal. 1:6-10; I Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2; I John 4:1; Rev. 22:18-19.)

The Lord is NOT PLEASED when men substitute something else for what he originally commanded. Those who have never been immersed have never obeyed the Lord's command to be baptized. Friend, why not obey the Lord today? May we assist you?

- GFS

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Attitudes From the Conversion of Cornelius!"* (text: Acts 10:1-5); Sunday evening: *"ZEPHANIAH: Ripe for the Day of Doom!"*