

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

Jackson, TN 38305

oldhickorycofc.com

May 04, 2014

Volume 34, # 19

Grapes from Wheat Seeds?

If you plant wheat seeds, will they produce grapes? Wheat seeds contain the genetic information to produce only one kind of fruit. If only wheat seeds are planted, there is only one possible fruit — wheat. If you see some other kind of fruit, you know that some other kind of seed was planted.

In one of His parables, Jesus said, “The seed is the word of God” (Lk. 8:11). This seed contains the information that the followers of Christ were called “Christians.” “And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). King Agrippa told the apostle Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:28). The apostle Peter wrote, “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:16). The followers of Christ were also called by terms such as brethren, saints, members, and disciples. But “Christian” is the only name given to them.

If only the word of God is planted in a good and honest heart, what will it produce? There is only one possibility. That person will become a “Christian.”

If a person wears some other religious name, what kind of seed produced that name? There is only one possibility. It was produced by the word (teaching) of men.

Is “Christian” insufficient for the followers of Christ? Is there any name which is better than “Christian” for honoring Him who died for us?

Should people who believe in Christ wear different names? Wearing different religious names divides people into many groups calling themselves “this kind of Christian” and “that kind of Christian.” “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13). Did He give one section of His body one name, give another section a different name, and so on? Or did those different names come from men, not from Jesus? He prayed for all of His followers to be one — united (John 17:20-21). And the apostle Paul pleads with us, “... that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you...” (1 Cor. 1:10). Are we truly speaking the same thing and truly united if we do not all hold to the same name — the name which He gave in His New Testament?

You can be just a “Christian”! No person has a monopoly on that name. No group has a copyright on it. You can use your own Bible to study in the book of Acts about how people obeyed the gospel in the first century. From Acts and other verses in the New Testament, we learn that a sinner must believe the gospel, repent

of his sins, confess his faith in Christ, and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins. A sinner is saved by faith when he or she is baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38-41; 8:12-13, 35-39; 10:47-48; 16:15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16; 9:18; Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:3-5; Rom. 1:16; 6:3-5, 17-18; 10:10; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:21).

If you believe and obey only the word of God, you will then be a “Christian” only. You will be a member of the body of Christ, which is His church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4-6). You will be a part of the church which began in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost more than 1900 years ago. Then, to continue pleasing God, continue studying and obeying His written word, the Bible, rejecting all man-made religious teachings and practices (Matt. 15:9; 2 Jn. 9; Jude 3; Heb. 10:23-25; Rev. 2:10).

Wheat always produces wheat. The word of God, planted in good and honest hearts, always produces “Christians.” Why not obey the gospel of Christ today?

- Royce Frederick

THE PARABLE OF THE SEEDS ON THE SHELF

Tucked between the tool box and spare light bulbs on a shelf in the corner of a garage is a packet of wildflower seeds. Their owner received them a few years ago with the intention of sowing them in his flower bed and watching them grow and reproduce.

Due in equal part to neglect, disinterest and old-fashioned laziness, he has never gotten around to planting those seeds. "Maybe next year" seems to be a frequent apology in their presence. Sometimes he cleans up the garage and comes upon that packet of seeds, which are then arranged more prominently with the intention of sowing them soon. There they wait but never get any closer to the soil.

You can visit his front yard today, but you won't see any bluebonnets there. He never sowed the seed, so the plant never had a chance to grow.

Therefore, hear the parable of the seeds on the shelf. The packet of seeds is the gospel message, the good news of a risen savior, which James called "the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (1:21). That seed, when sown, has the power to change people's hearts, when those hearts are like good and receptive soil. The obstacles to hearty growth are many, but unless the seed is sown, it is certain nothing will grow.

The shelf is the tendency of too many Christians to neglect their duty before God to spread the gospel message. Opportunities abound when relatives complain of life's troubles, when neighbors complain about the world's moral decline, and when coworkers mentioned impending surgery or trouble at home. The seed could be sown by an offer to pray or by attributing moral decline to a lack of attention to the Bible, but the seed stays on the shelf. The "could-be" sower fears offending the soil with such a foreign

object as the gospel seed and so he mutters some secular words of comfort instead. No one is hurt? No one is helped.

Indeed it is God who gives the increase, but he requires men to plant and water (1 Cor. 3:5-8). Are you sowing the seed of the kingdom, brother?

- J.S. Smith

The Fundamentals

It's impossible to accomplish some things in life until we have mastered the fundamentals. Any sports coach will tell you that a great team has to first be grounded in the fundamentals. Teachers will tell you the same thing about successful students – and the same thing is true about Christians. The fundamentals – the “first principles” – are not always the most enjoyable part, but they are the most essential part of what we need to learn. If we don't, we may very well be characterized by these words – “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:12-14).

May we be well-grounded in the fundamentals so we can grow up to enjoy the “solid food” found in God’s word.

- Allen Smith

Working with Elders

Hebrews 13:17 says: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." When the writer mentions those "that have the rule over you," it is a clear reference to the elders. 1 Timothy 5:17 speaks of "elders that rule well." Now, what are we to do in respect to the elders? "Obey them ... and submit yourselves."

In what areas should we obey and submit to the elders? In matters of faith and doctrine? Absolutely not - at least not if they teach or instruct us in anything that is different from the word of God (Galatians 1:8,9). We should always "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). And so, our submission in matters of faith and doctrine is to the Lord, and not to any man (2 John 9-11).

It seems then that the only area where the elders have decision making power - to which we must submit - is in matters of judgment. In the work of any local congregation there will be many judgments to make about our collective work. Where? When? Who? And to some extent, How? These are all questions that must be decided. Now, the elders ought not to attempt to be "lords over God's heritage" (1 Peter 5:3). We would hope that they are constantly seeking the input of every faithful

member as such decisions are made. But when the final judgment is made - whether it was in agreement with our own personal judgment or not - we have a command: "Obey them ... and submit yourselves."

The next time you are tempted to question some decision of the elders, or to argue for your own point-of-view, think again about the instruction of Hebrews 13:17. If it is a matter of faith or doctrine, then be ready to stand firmly for what is right. But if it is an area of judgment, give in quickly to the decision that has been made, humbly submitting yourself.

- Greg Gwin

> "Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist, I've butt it as long as I've got a head, and I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old, fistless, footless, and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition." — Billy Sunday

> Whatsoever we ask of God, let us be willing to work for it.

> You will keep on getting what you always got if you keep on doing what you've always done.

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Remain Faithful!*" (text: Rev. 2:10); Sunday evening: "*The Value of the Kingdom!*" (text: Matt. 13:44-46).

OUR GOSPEL MEETING: July 27 – Aug. 1, Sunday through Friday, with Jeremy Paschall preaching. Sunday at our regularly scheduled times, and Monday through Friday at 7:00 p.m.