

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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While We Walk The Pilgrim Pathway

The people of God are called by many names in Scripture: saints, disciples, priests, and kings. But the same Bible uses another word to describe God's children: pilgrim. It's not one we use much to describe ourselves, perhaps because we are uncomfortable with the concept behind it. The fact is, you can't be a saint, disciple, priest, or king without a willingness to become a sojourner, stranger, foreigner, a pilgrim.

We certainly have no trouble thinking of Abraham that way, a man who left his home not knowing where God was going to take him. His whole life was a pilgrimage, dwelling in tents as an alien in the very land that was promised to him. Concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the writer of Hebrews says, "all these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). They never saw the fulfillment of the covenant, the mystery unfolded, the big picture revealed, but still they were pilgrims. How much more ought we, recipients of better promises, under a better covenant, be willing to be sojourners in this land because we know we're going to a better country?

I offer these suggestions to help us stay on the pilgrim's pathway:

Find Where You Fit In: -- It is just part of our nature to want to fit in, to blend in with our culture. No one wants to be a misfit, much less stay one. But when you lose your identity as a pilgrim, you lose your identity as a Christian. The commonality behind the words sojourner, stranger, alien and pilgrim is the fact that Christians don't fit in where they live. We have no business trying to belong in a world that is no our home. (My wife was a lover of birdhouses, she had many of them sitting in different places, in our house, especially in the living room. Among the many houses was one that was just a thick board cut in the shape of a birdhouse with a hole for the birds to fly into, but the saying on the front was "for birds just passing through". This reminds me of our state as Christians upon this earth, we are just passing through, we are pilgrims on a journey, we are traveling on the earth but our true home is in heaven, we are called citizens of the kingdom of God, JWS).

You're either apart from the world or you're a part of it. In making your choice, remember that Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Where is your citizenship? Finding where you fit involves finding where you don't fit.

Don't Be Afraid To Act Like A Foreigner, A Pilgrim: -- People who dress differently, talk differently, and act differently are going to be treated differently. Peter addressed the First Century Christians as "aliens and strangers" to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles" (1 Pet. 2:11,12). His solution was for them to keep doing what they'd been doing, to show the world where they belonged.

You prepare for the next world by living well in this world. Fleshly lusts have no place in the spiritual person, a pilgrim whose mind is somewhere else. Talking like a foreigner is no embarrassment to him whose true citizenship is in heaven. Dressing like a foreigner is no problem for a young lady who covets no attention for herself but wants peoples' eyes to be focused on her Master in heaven. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11:16). Let us, then, not be ashamed to be called His pilgrims.

Keep Looking For The City: Whose Builder And Maker Is God: -- The pilgrim's journey will eventually come to an end. Those who spent their whole lives wandering, dwelling as strangers and pilgrims, will finally reach their home and have a city to call their own. It is the city which has foundations that Abraham was looking for (Heb. 11:10), the inheritance Peter describes as being reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:4), the abode that John says is made ready as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2).

Heaven is a place, where the misfits, the pilgrims on the earth, will fit in and belong. That's because everyone will look like, talk like, and be like Christ Who brought them safely from the earth to the prepared city. (John 14:1-6).

So, stay on the pathway, pilgrim. For traveling days are few for us upon this earth. Let us redeem the time because the few days are evil.

-- Adapted from an article by Bubba Garner
via Gospel Power, Vol. 13, No. 24, June 11, 2006.

Proper and Improper Controversy

We should all recognize that a certain bit of controversy is inevitable if there is to be growth and if the church is to be kept pure. Faithful servants of the Lord are to go out into an unbelieving world and earnestly contend for the faith. Reproving and rebuking are in order when error in practice or in doctrine appear. Christ and the apostles fought a good

fight. They were worthy controversialists. They abhorred sin and opposed it, and so should we.

The church at Jerusalem was not destroyed when there was “much disputing” over the necessity of the Gentiles keeping the Jewish ordinances (Acts 15:7). Brethren then studied and taught calmly and avoided bitterness, so the serious question was resolved and unity that pleased the apostles and the whole church prevailed (Acts 15:22). Brethren, we should be able to differ without anger and malice as we study topics about which there are differences in understanding.

Avoiding foolish and unlearned questions would do much to avoid the envy and strife and the useless and improper controversy. This requires skill in discernment to separate truth from the error, and there should be special concern for the humble babe in Christ who does not understand.

It is a very significant danger signal when brethren begin to object to all study of subjects about which there is controversy. Truth can be tried in the fire of debate, but error thrives under the wet blanket of “no controversy allowed.” Heresy is brought in “privily” (2 Peter 2:1). Let some vigilant elder or preacher cry aloud when some perverse doctrine or practice is slipping into the family. Let us pray that we may come to learn by studying topics which are not understood by all rather than developing factions with closed minds and bitterness. There will, of course, always be different levels of understanding between the babes in Christ and the well taught giants among us. The “great plainness of speech” is used to help (2 Cor. 3:12). Please do not object to that which is necessary to the spiritual well-being of the church.

- Irven Lee, Things that Make For Peace, Pages 4, 5

One day a farmer’s donkey fell down into a well..

The animal cried piteously for hours (or whatever donkeys do when they fall into an old well) as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the donkey, but decided that the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway, it just wasn’t worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited all his neighbors to come over and help him. They each grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone’s amazement, he quieted down. A few shovel loads later, the farmer looked down the well, and was astonished at what he saw.

As every shovel of dirt hit his back, the donkey did something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up. As the farmer’s neighbors continued to shovel dirt on the top of

the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed, as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and trotted off!

The Moral ... Life is going to shovel dirt on you, all kinds of dirt. The trick to getting out of a hole is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping-stone. We can get out of the deepest holes just by not stopping, never giving up! Shake it off and take a step up.

- Unknown

TRUTH SHOULD BE APPRECIATED

Many people today would see the truth if it were not for their prejudice. Prejudice means "pre-judgment" or making up a mind concerning a thing so that the mind is closed to new teaching.

The golden opportunities of accepting the truth should be appreciated. The day and the hour may come when no opportunities will be given.

It is a fearful thing to reject the truth in any field of thought or endeavor. Such rejection of truth puts one at a disadvantage in accepting other truths.

- Unknown

- > "When Jesus chose His disciples, He selected busy men, but not too busy to put first things first!"
 - > "Perhaps one thing wrong with the 'Battle of Life' is that there are too many generals and not enough privates!"
 - > "We should use candid (but not candied) speech in teaching the truth!"
 - > "Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction - probably because few people have been introduced to it!"
 - > "The kind of ANCESTORS we have had is not nearly as important as the kind of DESCENDANTS our ancestors have!"
 - > "The man who can't get out of a rut these days will soon find it closing over him!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Home & Family!*" #5 (*Parents in the Home!*) (Text: Eph. 6:1-4); Sunday evening: "*A Medley of Matters!*"