

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"One Thing I Do Know"

"Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see". — John 9:25 NASB.

One does not have to know all about a matter to be sure about some things. The formerly-blind man admitted that he might not know all about Jesus but still declared "one thing I do know." Ignorance on a subject does not have to cancel out knowledge. The idea that since one cannot supply ALL the answers a critic might raise, he must not be definite about ANY answers is foolish and spiritually fatal.

I am not embarrassed in admitting that there is a lot about God I do not know. I would like to find the answers to many questions often raised. But, based on the evidence, I do believe in God. I know that I must respect and obey Him. The fact that one might raise some questions about His nature and mind that I cannot satisfactorily answer does not keep me from confidently affirming what I do know about Him.

Must one wait until he has all the answers worked out before forming definite conclusions and convictions about some of the answers? Must the first grader wait until he has mastered algebra before he can be sure that simple arithmetic is dependable? Must a writer wait until he can spell every word in the dictionary before defending his spelling of any word?

Friend, if one can give evidence that your definite conclusions about a matter is in error - be man enough to change your conclusions! But do not allow a perpetual questioner to shake your faith in your convictions simply because he raises some questions you cannot answer yet!

There are some questions about baptism that I have not solved. But, "one thing I do know": God commanded it in order to be saved or "for the remission of sins" (Mk. 16:16;

Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Why did God choose to save in this way? I do not know. Why did he choose water as the element? I do not know. But, this does not keep me from confidently preaching that "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). It would be terrible for me to reason that since I cannot supply all the answers that I will simply ignore the subject and leave it to each person to "do his own thing" without any prodding from me.

Whom should a Christian include in his fellowship? This is a lively topic these days. Most brethren with whom I have talked admit problems with the matter. Since there are some unsolved problems in the minds of many of us -- should we then just solve all the unsolved problems by simply letting the gap down and fellowshiping every professed believer in the lordship of Christ. Some apparently think so. Certain young turks, encouraged by a few older perennial mavericks, are reasoning thusly: "Can we say that we know (understand) everything the Bible might say?" Of course, only a rank egotist would answer affirmatively! "Ah, ha", reasons the querist, "Then how can we be so sure about those things that we make a test of fellowship?" I believe this reasoning is rooted in despair and agnosticism so characteristic of this age. It has become fashionable to be a "don't-know-it-all" intellectual. About the only thing these folks know is that we can't know anything for sure! The Bible surely teaches that there are lines of fellowship to be drawn! (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3; Rom. 16:17, 18; Gal. 2:4-5; 2 John 9). The circle is not large enough to include all who profess acceptance of the lordship of Christ. The fact that I may be imperfect in knowledge and application on the fellowship matter does not keep me from trying to apply the principles that I do know. The fact I do not know ALL does not mean that I know NOTHING. My ignorance and weakness may cause me to be inconsistent at times, but I must try!

The fact that I am unable to know the exact moment that a child becomes accountable does not keep me from baptizing young people, nor does it keep me from refusing to baptize babies or children who are *obviously* too young! If I wait until I can say for sure the "exact moment" that one passes from an "improper subject" to "proper subject" of baptism to act, then I would probably never act. I might reason that since I cannot know EXACTLY when each person becomes accountable that I simply will not baptize anyone, or that I will baptize everyone coming or brought to me for baptism. Surely no thinking brother would recommend either course. Yet, some brethren would try to tie our hands similarly on other subjects.

Since it is difficult to tell the exact point that dress passes from the modest to the immodest, brethren seem to think that we have no right to condemn any dress practice as immodest. "Specifically at what point does a dress cease to be modestly long and become immodestly short?", we are asked. Or, "just how tight is too tight?" "Just at what

point do clothing styles pass from the masculine to the feminine and vice versa?" It may come as a shock to those who have heard me preach and read things I have written, to know that I do not know the answer to these questions! Nor do I know the exact point that hair ceases to be short and begins to be "long". Now that I have admitted my ignorance, what should I do? Should I just dismiss the whole matter by saying that since I do not have the answers to these questions that you should wear any clothing (or no clothing) that pleases you and wear your hair at any length and that I would have no right to criticize you? Or, if I should see you in clothing that is obviously too short or too tight or obviously designed for the opposite sex or with hair that is obviously longer (on men) or shorter (on women) than it should be -- then shouldn't I as your brother point it out to you? Since you are unable to determine the exact dividing line in these things doesn't it make sense for one who really wants to please God to stay a safe distance from where the dividing line might be by dressing in a way that is unmistakably modest, unmistakably befitting one's sex and keep the hair at a length that could leave no doubt about his desire to obey God in the matter? (see 1 Cor. 11:14, 15).

This "one thing I do know": I do not have to know everything to know some things.

- Edward O. Bragwell, Sr., via The Reflector, June, 1975

QUESTION: "What is the 'Sin unto death' in 1 John 5:16?"

ANSWER: The passage reads, "If any man see his brother sinning a sin unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request."

One of the approaches to studying "difficult" passages of Scripture is to consider first what we know they DO NOT teach. I think we can, with certainty, conclude that this sin is not "The Unpardonable Sin", or "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" referred to in Mark 3:22-30. In that case, some people had seen a miracle performed (which they could not deny) and attributed the power by which it was worked to the devil. This is clearly not what John has under consideration in our text.

Another thing to always consider in dealing with "difficult" passages is that the meaning of such must be in harmony with the context. This, I believe, will greatly assist in the exegesis of our text. Consider what John says in verses seven and nine of the first of this epistle. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus, his son cleanseth us from ALL sin... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness." From those Scriptures I would conclude that since the blood of Christ CAN cleanse ALL sins, but that the sinner must ACKNOWLEDGE his sins if he would be

forgiven, the sin which is "unto death" and for which we are not to pray is ANY sin which the sinner WILL NOT ACKNOWLEDGE.

To have forgiveness of ANY sin, one must meet God's conditions. If His prerequisites are not met, there is no forgiveness! The child of God who sins is privileged to pray unto God for forgiveness; as well as having others pray for him (Acts 8:22-24; Jas. 5:16). But all manner of prayers will not bring pardon of sin which one will not acknowledge and repent of. No one, neither the sinner, nor his brethren, is to pray for the forgiveness of sins where the sinner is unwilling to acknowledge and turn from them. Such praying would be in vain! If one goes on through life guilty of sins which he will either not acknowledge or not repent of, then such is "unto death"! This is what I believe John has under consideration in 1 John 5:16.

- Charles G. Maples

The Gospel has been handed down to us like a ripened fruit is passed from the picker to the gatherer. The fruit was ripened at the hands of God and given to man to share and eat. As a fruit, it is the fruit of life that blesses all who eat it. And, as a fruit, it has no value if we let it rot in the basket. Read the Bible and let its truths consume you. You will not regret it!

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- > "Exposure to the Son may prevent burning!"
 - > "God and children hate divorce. Do you?"
 - > "Eternity is a long time to think about what you should have done!"
 - > "Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop!"
 - > "You can trust a Man who died for you!"
 - > "When praying, don't give God instructions - just report for duty!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"I Remembered The Word Of The Lord!"* (Text: Acts 11:13-18); Sunday evening: *"Reviewing Our Past!"* (Acts 20:17-27).