

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Commitment

Our society is plagued with the general problem of “Non-commitment”. It is seen: in the tragic breakup of marriages where one or both spouses have not kept their vows they once made to each other; doing just enough on the job to just get by rather than doing the best one can; hiding in the shadows waiting while someone else does what we had the ability and opportunity to do; etc., etc. Far too many have the attitude of “Well, I’ll try” or “If it is convenient I’ll do it” rather than a stepping up to the plate and saying, “I’ll do it and you can put that in the bank!”

The dictionary defines the word “COMMITMENT” as: “To place in trust or charge; consign, entrust.” In the spiritual sense, the word “COMMITMENT” is best described in 1 Pet 2:23 and 1 Pet 4:19. These scriptures talk about Christ and Christians having complete confidence in God. A confident assurance that God will keep His promises and do what He says He will do. There is absolutely no doubt about God’s fidelity and integrity. Consequently, the child of God trusts God will be true to His promises to him.

When we become children of God, we are saying to God, “We are committed to doing that which pleases You and there is no doubt about it.” In essence, we are saying to God, “You can trust me to do the very best that I can to serve you faithfully all the days of my life. I will be like Isaiah when he said, ‘Here am I, send me’” (Isa 6:8). “I will be like Jesus, my Savior when He said, ‘Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; nevertheless, not My will be done, but Yours be done’” (Luke 22:42).

In both cases cited above we see Isaiah saying, “God, I’ll do it and you can trust me (committed) to carry out what You want done” and Jesus saying, “Father, if there is another way to have man’s sins forgiven other than my painful death, then please use that means, however, if that can only be achieved by My death, then ‘Your will be done’”. There was no hesitation on their part; they demonstrated by their behavior that God could trust them in carrying out His will.

We need to do a heart check to determine if we are acting in the manner we indicated we would when we became Christians. Is our life demonstrating to God that He can trust us to abide by our vows of faithfulness to the keeping of His will? Is the kingdom of God and His will our first priority in life (Matt 6:33)? Is our service to God “lip service” or “heart service” (Matt 15:8)? Am I quick to volunteer to do spiritual service to another when I have the ability and opportunity, or do I lurk in the shadows waiting for someone else to do what I should be doing (Gal 6:10)? Am I consistent in my attendance and giving as God commands (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor 16:2), etc., etc.? Is my daily life saying to God, “Look Father, I committed myself to You and promised You can have confidence and trust in me that no matter what circumstances befall me in life, ‘I WILL DO YOUR WILL’”? Jesus said, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt 7:20). Let us all strive to bring forth fruits of repentance and COMMITMENT. Can God trust you to keep your promise?

- Dick Millwee

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## EPITAPHS

Epitaphs (defined as “a commemorative inscription on a tomb or mortuary monument) have always been of interest to me. Epitaphs often depict people’s attitude about life after death. They may say something kind about the person who has died, perhaps pointing out how sorely that the deceased will be missed. They may express something about hope beyond the grave or some other Biblical concept. In California, a man put, “A sense of loss is mine to bear / But hers a wondrous gain” on his wife’s headstone (Compare to Phil. 1:21).

Epitaphs are usually very serious, but sometimes they can be humorous, even revealing the cause of the person’s death. A person named Jonathan Blake is buried in Pennsylvania. On his stone it says, “Here lies the body of Jonathan Blake / Stepped on the gas pedal instead of the brake.” William Mansbridge is buried in New Hampshire. His epitaph, obviously concocted by his survivors, reads, “Stop reader, pray and read my gate / What caused my life to terminate / For thieves by night when in my bed / Broke in my house and shot me dead.” At a cemetery in Albany, New York is buried Harry Edsel Smith, and on his marker it says, “Looked up the elevator shaft to see if the car was on the way down / It was.” In New Mexico on the tombstone of a man named Johnny Yeast it says, “Here lies Johnny Yeast / Pardon me / For not rising. Consider this rather chilling message on a stone in California: “Remember friend, as you pass by; as you are now, so once was I. As I am now soon you will be; so prepare for death and follow me.” Later someone added a reply: “To follow you I’m not content, until I know which way you went!”

A member of a rock group which was popular in the 70's said that their philosophy was to "Live fast, die young, and leave a good corpse." Sadly, this statement could describe the life of many today.

When a person dies, usually, a lot of good things are said about that person. This is certainly appropriate as we reflect on the life of an individual. Sometimes, however, the good traits of the deceased are greatly exaggerated. At a funeral many years ago, the preacher was extolling the virtues of a man who had died. The more the preacher talked, the more he embellished the man's virtues. Finally, the widow, bewildered, turned to one of her sons and said, "Son, go and look in the casket and see if that is your dad; I think we're at the wrong funeral!"

In the Bible, there are various ones whose life and character are summarized in a few words. For example, it is said of Ahab that he "did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him" (1 Kings 16:33). In contrast, Hananiah, a ruler in Jerusalem after the return from captivity, is spoken of in a positive way. It is said of him in Nehemiah 7:2, "... for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many." These are just a few words, but they say much. Acts 11:24 describes Barnabas as a "good man." Many today cannot even be accurately described as a "good" person. Much could be said about Jesus our Savior. Consider, however, one of the things that Peter said about Him in Acts 10:38: He "went about doing good." Many people are like this today as their lives are full of good deeds toward others.

What can accurately be said about us after we die is certainly significant. Paul, near the end of his life, wrote 2 Timothy. In 2 Timothy 4:7 he said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." This is not recorded as an epitaph of Paul, but it could have been. On another occasion, in Philippians 1:21, he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Hopefully, after we die these ideas can be expressed about us: "He fought a good fight, he finished his course, and he kept the faith," or "For him to live was Christ, for him to die was gain." If these few words can accurately be said, it will mean that I have died as a faithful child of God.

- Mike Johnson

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*"My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute all my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I received from her."*

- George Washington

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# Which Way Do You Want to Go?

One of the major thoroughfares in our city is named Broad Street. It is a very popular place to be during rush hour. Not only does it take people to the places they desire to go, but also gives them plenty of room in which to travel. A narrow one-lane path would never do.

The Lord also spoke of a broad way. It is wide enough to accommodate as many as desire it. Its spacious lanes welcome as much baggage as we wish to take. It is the most popular way to travel. It requires nothing from us. We can “live it up” on this street without fear of cross-examination.

The only drawback is its destination. “For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat” (Matt. 7:13).

Fortunately, there is an alternative to this deceptive street: The straight and narrow path. This is a more difficult way to travel. Some effort is required just to enter this road. The way is narrow, requiring its travelers to be constantly on guard lest they fall. It is not a very popular way to journey. Few people even find this road. This is not because they are unwelcome, but because they are unwilling to pay its toll.

The advantage to this way is its destination. “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7: 14). Will your road take you where you want to go?

- Rick Duggin

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## BIBLE PREACHING

John the Baptist’s message from the wilderness was not “Smile — God loves you.” It was “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come.”

Jeremiah was not put into a miry pit for preaching, “I’m OK; you’re OK.” It was for crying against adultery, idolatry and other wickedness of his nation.

Noah’s message from the steps of the ark was not “Something good is going to happen to you!” He condemned the world and was a preacher of righteousness.

Jesus Christ was not crucified for saying, "Consider the lilies how they grow: but for saying "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...child of hell...fools and blind guides...whited sepulchers...generation of vipers."

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- > "A lot of kneeling will keep you in good standing!"
  - > "Don't put a question mark where God put a period!"
  - > "God grades on the cross, not the curve!"
  - > "God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage!"
  - > "He who is good at making excuses, is seldom good for anything else!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*What Kind of a Man is This ...?*" (Text: Matt. 8:23-27); Sunday evening: "*Who Would Teach God?*" (Rom. 9:20).