

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

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They Walked No More with Him!

"From this time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him" (John 6:66). Whatever opportunity they might have had for sharing His suffering, they forfeited. Whatever blessing might have come to them as a result of following Him, they gave up. Their materialistic minds could not grasp the meaning of His teaching concerning the bread of life; their faith in Him was not strong enough to overcome their ignorance until they might be taught the meaning of what He had said. So, they turned away. And I think it is significant that the Bible says, "they walked no more with him." Here is an air of finality. They never came back. But this is the way it happens more often than not. How many people have you ever known who walked with the Lord, enjoyed the forgiveness of sins, felt the protecting arm of love about them, and then turned back to walk in sin and indifference, who ever came back to stay? I am not referring to the person who is temporarily overcome by some weakness of the flesh. This happens to most people sometime in their Christian life. I am referring to the man or woman who knowing the truth turns back to the weak and beggarly elements of the world because he prefers the world to the company of Christ and His people. They seldom come back to stay. They may make a feeble effort or two, but generally they will grow more and more indifferent and cynical, until they simply cannot be touched. This is the person the Hebrew writer refers to when he said, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance . . ." (Heb. 6:4-6). Paul does not say that it is impossible for them to repent - but that it is impossible to get them to repent - that is, to bring them to the frame of mind required in one who repents.

You know, the Bible says that repentance is brought about by godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). "Godly sorrow worketh repentance . . ." Until a person is brought to a realization of the nature of his sins against Almighty God, and finds in his heart a genuine regret and sorrow for those sins, he has not repented. A man might have any number of reasons to be sorry for the way he has lived, but that is not the sorrow that leads to repentance. When I was

preaching at one of the churches in a certain area, a hypocrite came to me and told me a pitiful tale of his sordid past. He was grieved, but he was grieved because his good wife had found out what a cheap imitation she had for a husband and was about to walk out on him. He didn't want to lose her and his boy. He went through all the maneuvers of a man who had repented. He even took me with him to witness the fact that he had dropped the other woman. He got his marital affairs straightened out, and then he was through with me and the church. This fellow was sorry in more ways than one, but he never repented. Repentance is not something you do when it is convenient. Repentance is born in a human heart only when that person is convicted of the damning, blighting, ugliness of sin in his life, and when this conviction produces a sorrow so deep and real that he determines to forsake sin and place his aching and bleeding heart in the hands of a merciful Savior.

The person who thinks he can live in sin and plan to repent at some future date either does not know what repentance is, or he thinks that God is a fool. Consider the presumption of a man who says, "I am having so much fun living in sin now, that I simply will not give it up; but some day in the future I will decide to be deeply sorry for what I am now doing." The man who sets a future date to repent will find when that time comes that "there is no place in his heart for repentance." And this applies to the man in the world who has not obeyed the gospel as well as the one who is a backslider. God is not a lackey that He should stand and wait for you to eat your fill at the devil's table and throw Him the scraps.

- Luther Blackmon, via *Truth Magazine*, 01/06/77

Did A Close Friend Ever Rebuke You?

A common idea among people today is that our friends will never say or do anything to hurt us. If a person "Wounds us," we think he is an enemy. Very much contrary to this opinion, we learn who true friends are, many times, by the way they save us from danger. A Christian knows the danger that a sinner is in and makes an attempt to save him from that peril by teaching him the way of salvation, but the person often takes this as an insult. We are not ignorant of the fact that there are some who are completely tactless and are always "wounding" others. These are not people that we call friends. Our friends are those who "wound" because it is best for us. The man who is always throwing 'love and kisses' upon us may be the worst enemy we have, for he will not warn us of our peril.

Remember the act that betrayed Jesus. It was the apparent action of a friend. The wise writer in the Old Testament teaches what I have stated, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of any enemy are profuse." (Proverbs 27:6)

- Ferrell Jenkins

OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

It is observed "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

It is observed "decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

It is observed in remembrance of Christ's sacrifice (Luke 22:19).

It is observed in anticipation of Christ's return (1 Corinthians 11:26).

It is observed on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7).

It is observed upon self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28).

It is observed to proclaim Christ as the Savior of men (1 Corinthians 11:26).

- Author Unknown

What Happens When I Read My Bible?

The word works effectually in me (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

The word teaches, reproves, corrects me (2 Timothy 3:16).

The word cleanses me (Ephesians 5:26).

The word strengthens me (1 John 2:14; Acts 20:32).

The word gives me faith (Romans 10:17).

The word gives me joy (Jeremiah 15:16).

The word gives me heavenly life (John 6:63).

- Author Unknown

Do Not Allow Criticism to Defeat Your Faithfulness!

Many of us grow up in circumstances where we come to believe that other people cannot offer us any comment that exposes a weakness, or observation that suggests the possibility of potential improvement within us. Maybe we are not convinced of their sympathetic understanding or their pure motives. Maybe we cannot perceive their love or kindness in their criticisms. However, we should teach ourselves that, regardless of the skill level of the one offering criticism, if it can help us, improve us, lift us to greater service to God and man, we should not resent it. It can benefit us greatly.

However, there is another type of criticism that every successful person receives, and we should teach ourselves to be strong in the face of it. Unjust, unwarranted criticism, unrighteous disparagement and belittling remarks made from impure motives will be offered to achievers. Envy, jealousy, and selfish desires prompt this type of criticism, and only the strong and steadfast can endure it patiently. Unfortunately, many have fallen

before this tool of the devil and allowed this to diminish their zeal. Many Christians have allowed themselves to be paralyzed by it. Many men with great ability in the Lord's church have ceased to be active leaders because of unjust criticism. If Jesus had surrendered to His critics, where would we be? And the saints should ask themselves, "who will labor in the kingdom of God if we all permit critics to destroy our zeal and excitement for the gospel?" So, let us teach ourselves to "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong." (1 Cor. 16:13).

Constructive criticism is beneficial in God's kingdom, but it must be offered with the proper preparations already in place. It must proceed from genuine love, real understanding and empathetic kindness; not from pride. The recipient must feel that we have walked a mile in his shoes. The recipient will have confidence in our motives if he knows that we render "righteous judgment" (John 7:24) that is not superficial nor unstudied. One should always use divine rather than human standards (John 8:15). Christians whose genuineness is apparent are led by the word of God. These have removed the beam from their own eyes before seeking to take the speck from a brother's eye (Matt. 7:1-5). Above all, it must proceed from the very highest love, as described in 1 Cor. 13:4-7. Others will listen and profit from the advice of this kind of critic. "Listen to counsel and accept discipline, That you may be wise the rest of your days." (Prov. 19:20).

- Gary Smalley

- > "A good attitude is much like a pure motive; one is no good without the other!"
 - > "When the wages of sin are paid, some people may get time and a half for overtime!"
 - > "We cannot control the evil tongues of others, but a good life enables us to disregard them!"
 - > "The most destructive acid in the world is found in a sour disposition!"
 - > "The most powerful person is the one who has himself under his own power!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Homicide in The Heart!*" (Text: Matt. 5:21-26); Sunday evening: "*Pool of Bethesda!*" (John 5:1-18).