

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Right Attitude for Unity

Not only must one believe the right thing to have unity, but one must also have the right attitude and disposition of heart to have unity. Having the truth is no justification for having a haughty disposition. We must have lowliness and meekness with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.

Of Diotrephes, the beloved John wrote:

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church (III John 9-10).

The sin that John charges against Diotrephes is that he loves to have the preeminence. The word here employed by John is a very rare one and means “fond of being first.”

Years ago, A. T. Robertson wrote an article on Diotrephes. He set him forth as “a church regulator,” “a short-horn deacon.” He of course, never knew all the results of the article. But one thing he did learn: twenty-five subscribers to the paper in which the article appeared, asked that their subscription be cancelled immediately. They did this as a protest against the personal attack that they thought had been made upon them. These twenty-five men recognized themselves in the picture of Diotrephes which the writer had painted. The shoe fit; the hit dog howled; the guilty conscience saw its owner in such a setting.

The church does not need men like Diotrephes. We do not need men who seek to rally parties about them. We need people who will follow Jesus and preachers who point people to Jesus and not themselves. Men heard John the Baptist preach and they followed Jesus. This was great preaching. John was a great preacher. He was no

Diotrephes. He said Jesus must increase but that he himself must decrease. He could gracefully grant the preeminence to Christ, where it belongs, in all things.

Paul did not want the brethren at Corinth divided into parties with each following their favorite preacher. That is the wrong attitude. The glory in the church is not to go to the preacher who plants or the preacher who waters but to God who gives the increase (I Corinthians 3:1-9). We should step out of selfishness and into the service of God. With the proper attitude among brethren, all of the small things vanish away.

- J. Noel Meredith

Use the Tide

An old gentleman states that when he was a small boy, he lived on the coast. One morning after a great storm he saw an old ship stranded. The storm had blown her in, and she was badly damaged and deserted by her crew. He said that sometimes, when the tide would come in strongly and surround the old ship, she would almost be loosed from her moorings and go out. He stated that often he would go and stand by her and hope she would go out. He would say, "Go out, old ship; go out with the tide." But she never did. Finally, one morning after a severe storm he went down to look at the old ship, but the storm had blown her to pieces. Only the floating pieces of the old wreck were to be seen. She had many an opportunity, but she never went out.

How like many a backslider! The tide of opportunity to repent has risen for many and it was hoped they would go out from their sinful ways, but they settled back and never went out. If we are not living as we should, we had better take advantage of the opportunity to repent while the "tide is in." Jesus said: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Remember: "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2). Now is the only time we are guaranteed— for the "tide may soon be out."

- Unknown

Apology...A Sign of Weakness?

Webster defines apology to be: "2: an admission of error or discourtesy accompanied by an expression of regret." The word "apology" does not appear in any translation of the Bible of which I am acquainted. The nearest thing to an apology that I encounter in the New Testament scriptures is that offered by Paul in Acts 23:1-5:

"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. And the high priest, Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest Thou to judge me after the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

Regardless of what Ananias, the high priest, had done, it appears that when Paul was informed that he was the high priest, he was apologetic of what he had said. He respected the office of the high priest, and was apologetic in saying what he had said on this occasion.

You might not agree with me in my evaluation of this being an apology. There might be other instances which come to your mind, which would be more definite as examples of apologies in the scriptures. In the movie, "She wore a Yellow Ribbon", Captain Nathan Brittles, the character played by John Wayne relates to individuals, in more than one occasion, that they are not to apologize, for it is a sign of weakness. I am fond of the parts which John Wayne plays in the movies, and in most instances agree with the dialogue which he makes known; however, this is one statement he makes in which I find it difficult to accept as truth.

It could be our problem lies in understanding what standard we are using in determining when a person is weak or strong. Paul wrote, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Corinthians 12:10). Wasn't he saying that by the world's standard, I appear weak, but in the sight of God, and His standard, I am strong? According to man's criteria and standard, it may appear a sign of weakness to apologize for a wrong that has been committed, but how does it appear in the sight of God?

Rather than being weak, men are strong before God when they have the courage and convictions of heart to admit their wrongs, and apologize to others for the wrong which they have committed. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16). Confession goes even deeper than apology in obeying God's will, and being strong in the sight of God.

We need to think of the value which apologies have in our affairs of life. An Apology Can Be Valuable In:

Saving marriages and homes. There is never a marriage but what at times some friction and difficulties arise. The smallest of instances can develop into greater things, which really affect the harmony of the home. Some of these instances have grown until they led to divorces. All of this might have been prevented had someone been strong enough to say "I'm sorry. Please forgive me of my failure." However, many perhaps believe with the Captain played by John Wayne, that apology is a sign of weakness, and they are not going to be WEAK. Their conception of strength continues on to the destruction of their marriage and home, which possibly could have been saved with an humble, sincere apology. Was it worth it? Was it worth contending that an apology is a sign of weakness, when the lack of it has destroyed your marriage and home? "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Colossians 3:11-12). An apology can go a long way in preserving the things which are worthwhile in life.

An Apology Can Be Worthwhile In: **Preventing problems in the church.** Serious problems have arisen in congregations, which began over some minor incident among brethren that a simple apology could have eliminated. However, brethren held the John Wayne theory that it is a sign of weakness to apologize, and the church had to suffer from such a false conception. The humble are those who are strong in the sight of the Lord, and the humble are those who are ready to apologize when such is needed.

Congregations have had to suffer because some brethren have been so proud and head strong that they have forgotten what it is to be humble in the sight of God. "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder, Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (I Peter 5:6).

It may not be easy to apologize when an apology is needed, but rather than it being a sign of weakness, it is a sign of strength in the sight of God. We should never apologize for the truth, and always be strong in following the will of God.

- Bobby K. Thompson [edited]

> "A small leak will sink a great ship!"

> "True greatness consists in being great in little things!"

- > "Remember, every time you open your mouth to talk, your mind walks out and parades the words up and down!"
 - > "Too many of us hear without heeding, read without responding, confess without changing, profess without practicing, worship without witnessing, and seek without sharing!"
 - > "Let me never fancy that I have zeal until my heart overflows with love to every human being!" - Henry Martyn
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Let's Put Christ Back Into Christmas?"*
(Text: Matt. 15:1-3); Sunday evening: *"Words That Are Spirit And Life!"* (John 6:60-65).