

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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## Monument to Masses

In the annals of history are recorded the infamous deeds of the masses. A monument should be erected to mark their works. An eternal epitaph should be chiseled to describe their deeds that when men are inclined to garnish the tombstone, the words should warn as do the sun-bleached bones beside the poisoned waterhole.

Eight righteous souls loved and served the Lord amongst the multitudes whose every imagination of the thoughts of their hearts were only evil continually. A preacher proclaimed Gods righteousness, but to no avail. There! There beneath the mire we see the mass of human flesh. With muddy finger inscribe for all to see: "Fallen man is lower than the beasts of the field."

And a righteous man's soul was vexed daily as men burned in their lust for men. We see a bargain made with God to spare the cities, but sin is heaped upon sin. With the stench of burning human flesh in our nostrils we gingerly lift a smoldering, charred stick from amongst the ashes and ashamedly write: "There were not even ten righteous souls here."

A leader temporarily departs and the mob which has murmured and complained against God clamors for gods which shall go before them. Submission to the masses means that a golden calf is born. Swords flash and blood is shed. Later, 23,000 died, and eventually only two of the original ones over the age of twenty enter into the promised land of rest. Their epitaph must be written with blood-stained sword in hand: "Rebellion, murmuring, idolatry, fornication, and unbelief."

Religious multitudes who shouted Hosanna to the son of David: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest," later cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Blood seeps from his wounds and an agonizing cry is wrenched from his lips — "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?" Will they not spare him? But with nail in hand we sadly write: "Murderers!"

But this righteous one is raised from the dead that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in his name. Surely the multitudes will believe and obey now, but apostles are beaten and told not to preach in his name. And when a preacher speaks plainly of their uncircumcised in heart and ears condition, they gnash on him with their teeth and beat his defenseless body to death. Mark it well with stone chisel: "As your fathers did, so do ye."

Man thinks of following the crowd and doing because others do it, but Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereto: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Here lie the masses beneath the epitaph of: "murmuring, immorality, idolatry, hate and murder," which have always characterized public opinion. We must not live as they lived; we dare not die as they died.

- J. R. Everett

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## TWO EPITAPHS

"Manasseh ... did evil in the sight of the LORD ..." (2 Chron. 33:1-2).

"Asa did good and right in the sight of the LORD his God," (2 Chron. 14:2).

Sprinkled throughout the historical books of Kings and Chronicles are statements similar to those above. They amount to a Divine estimate of the individual lives of those described. Like words over a boot-hill grave, these terse words are like an epitaph summing up, either in praise or condemnation, a life long since completed. Unlike the overly generous, and frequently false, epitaphs spoken over graves today, the Biblical descriptions of various characters are inspired and absolutely accurate descriptions.

The last page of the Holy Scriptures has long since been completed, and we need neither hope nor fear that future generations will read our names in the Living Word, followed by the statement: "He did that which was good/evil in the sight of the Lord." But, at the same time, we may be assured that the Lord is taking note of the lives we are living, and shall someday pronounce our deeds and conduct to be either good or evil. You will determine what kind of estimate God pronounces over you in that day.

If we think of those ancient characters of the Old Testament, such as Asa and Manasseh, as merely names on the sacred page, we will miss the impact of the Bible's summation of their lives. These were real men. They were, in many ways, just like us. They actually

lived. To them their world seemed as modern and advanced as ours does to us. They had the same kind of choice we have today: to do either good or evil in the sight of the Lord. But now they are dead, and would be forgotten by the world if it were not for the Biblical references to them.

In the light of Jesus' description in Luke chapter 16 of life after death, we are assured that these Old Testament characters are at this very moment experiencing either a merciful recompense or fearful punishment for their deeds. Neither the things of their world nor ours means anything to them now. Their happiness, both now and throughout eternity, is contingent upon whether they did evil or good in the sight of the Lord while living in the flesh.

In a few years we will join either Asa or Manasseh. All our worldly dreams, plans and treasures will mean nothing to us then. Our only wish will be for the heavenly Father to pronounce "Well done" over our trembling souls, and permit us to join faithful angels around heaven's throne to eternally praise our Redeemer. Whether we receive such an invitation will depend on whether or not we "do that which is good and right in the sight of the Lord." What kind of epitaph will angels whisper over your grave?

- David Watts

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## The Church Is Sufficient

Everywhere the apostle Paul went to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, provided he remained there long enough to make it humanly possible to do so, he preached "the whole purpose of God." (Acts 20:27). In his farewell address to the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul declared, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, ... For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. (Acts 20:18-27). This depth of teaching, "publicly and from house to house," enabled every recipient "to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:3). The teaching and guidance they received from Paul and other teachers (v. 11) "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." (vss. 12-13) provided and equipped them all that they needed to do anything that the Lord wanted done.

The local congregations of the saved were organized according to the Lord's plan of elders in every church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) that were given the responsibility to "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight ... proving to be examples to the flock." (1 Pet. 5:2-3), and to "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28). They were spiritually independent from every other man or group of men on earth. They were not authorized by the Lord to establish any other organization, conclave, synod, council, university, school or professorship to aid them or direct them in oversight for the carrying out of the Lord's commands among men. Such man-made organizations were not needed. God established no component larger than the local congregation to do His work. "The church of God which He purchased with His own blood" was and still is totally all-sufficient to accomplish the designs of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:15-16)!

- Gary Smalley

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## Blessings & Reverses

Every person has many blessings and at least a few misfortunes. The ones he reflects upon will either strengthen or weaken him. Our most necessary blessings are apt to be uncounted, because they are the most common: sunshine, rain, oxygen, soil, plants, animals, and a thousand other workings of nature.

The universality of so many blessings, however, does not lower their value. If this commonness tempts us to be ungrateful, let us ask: Where would we stand if the earth caved in? What would we breathe if the oxygen ran out? What would we do if the water dried up?

- Leroy Brownlow

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- > "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy is when men are afraid of the light!"
- > "Stay on your knees before God and on your feet before men!"
- > "It is not the happy people who are thankful; it is the thankful people who are happy!"

- > "Not many of us are material for greatness, according to the general acceptance of the term, but each has something to give to justify the gift of life. The humblest can become kindly and easy to live with!"
  - > "God's conquering days are when God's saints have given themselves to the mightiest prayer!" - E.M. Bounds
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*In The Days of Your Youth!*" (Text: Eccl. 12:1); Sunday evening: "*Attitudes Toward Christ!*" (John 6:66-71).