

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

*Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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## **THE OPEN DOOR!**

In the New Testament, the metaphor of an open door to represent men's admission to the blessings of the gospel was used by Christ. Jesus said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved" (John 10:9a; cf. 10:1, 2, 7). Paul also used the figure to describe his access as a preacher to the hearts of people: "praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, ..." (Col. 4:3a; cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12). At the close of Paul's first missionary journey, the "door" represented access to faith which had been opened to the Gentiles: "When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they *began* to report all things that God had done with them and how He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles." (Acts 14:27). This figure of speech suggesting likeness or similarity to a literal door is also found in Revelation 3:8, where the Lord said, "Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut."

**The door is the way.** The “door” illustrates the way that men must pass through in response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. When one examines the threefold exhortation of Christ in Matt. 7:7-8, this becomes apparent: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Of course one must perceive his need for what the Savior offers. If he does not, he will not petition by asking, he will not endeavor by seeking, and he will not persevere by knocking. What motivates men to seek entrance?

**The sin problem enslaves men.** Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” (John 8:34). The one who lives in sin has no freedom to escape from himself and the resulting consequences of sin. He has been overcome and held captive by a cruel taskmaster: sin. He cannot free himself. Why this is so terrible was stated by the Lord previously in this passage: “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come;” and “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:21, 24). Sin puts its prisoners in chains!

**The Lord has made a way to freedom.** The way of freedom is through Jesus Christ: “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36). The Lord said to those who believed in Him, “If you continue in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (John 8:31-32). The Lord indicates that the truth of His gospel is the means for men to be released from the bondage of sin. The conditional statement shows that responsibility rests upon His hearers, and that the action resulting in freedom comes from Him.

**The way to redemption is open to all.** Salvation in Christ was first offered to

the Jews (cf. Matt. 10:6; 15:24), but later to the Gentiles also (cf. Acts 13:46-48). When some Jews took issue with Peter for associating with and preaching to the Gentiles, Peter explained how he had been directed by God to do so. “When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life.’” (Acts 11:18). God’s plan for salvation from sin through the gospel of Christ had always been intended for all nations (cf. Acts 26:16-18; 26:22-23; 28:28).

**Men must cast off the shackles.** Paul asked, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16). Those who would be Christians must no longer put themselves at the disposal of sin, willing to submit to its mastery. They must put themselves at the disposal of Christ and His will, rendering obedience, which results in righteousness. “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” (Rom. 6:17-18). Notice the result of casting off the fetters of sin: “But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” (Rom. 6:22).

**The Lord provides confident assurance.** Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.” (Revelation 3:20). Here the Lord shows His willingness to open the way to His blessings. He will not obscure the way; He will not hinder the seeker. To the one who asks, “it will be given;” to the one who seeks, “you will find;” to the one who knocks, “it will be opened.” (Matt. 7:7-8).

**Have you sought the Lord?** Friend, what about you? The Lord points the

way. Some have their minds made up beforehand about what they want to do. Pleasing self is not the avenue that pleases the Lord. "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps." (Jer. 10:23). Be the one who inquires of the Lord with the desire to find and do His will (Matt. 7:24-27). We must hear His voice (John 10:3-4). May we help you find the open door today?

- GFS

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## What Is A Good Time Worth?

They were just out for a good time. Cruising around, as teenagers have done since the invention of the car, with "*no particular place to go.*" Two boys and a girl with only fun on their minds.

One of them got the idea that it would be fun to take down a stop sign. Stop signs, along with rural mailboxes, seem to be a popular means of entertainment for a few young people. Some shoot holes in them, some bend them over, others turn them around to face the other direction. These three decided to remove them completely.

It worked! They were enjoying themselves immensely. As a matter of fact, they derived so much pleasure from it that they removed 18 more that night. What fun! A good time was had by all!

All did not have a good time. You see, later that night three more teenagers, three boys who had gone bowling, came to one of the intersections where the stop sign had been removed. Seeing no reason to stop, the young driver proceeded across the crossroad. Their car was broadsided by a large truck. The

three boys were killed instantly. A good time, a lark, a silly prank had cost three innocent lives. What is a "good time" worth? Is it worth three lives? But the story is not over.

The three teens who removed those signs were arrested, tried and convicted on manslaughter charges. The judge determined there was no intent on their parts to kill anyone so he was lenient on them. They each were sentenced to 15 years in prison. In Florida, a convicted felon has to serve at least 85% of his sentence. In the case of these young people that amounts to 13 years. What is a "good time" worth? Well, in this instance the cost is now up to three lives and at least 39 years in prison.

We haven't even mentioned the parents. In essence, six sets of parents have lost children -- three to prison and three to death. The tearful remorse of the three guilty teens was little comfort to them. "I'm sorry" and "I didn't mean any harm" is little solace when such harmful consequences are the harsh reality of thoughtless actions. All for a "good time?" What is a "good time" worth?

Young people, youth is a time to be enjoyed. But please think before you act. Realize the tragic consequences that can follow thoughtless and, pardon the plainness of speech, stupid actions.

Before you do anything, even if it is for a "good time," think of what it might cost you and others.

The God of heaven also realizes that youth is to be enjoyed. As a matter of fact, He encourages you to enjoy it. In Ecclesiastes 11:9 He says, "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth."

Yes, youth is to be a happy, carefree time that you can enjoy before the difficulties, problems and obligations of adult life begin to mount up. But there is a difference between "carefree" and "careless." Youth is not a time for foolish and reckless behavior.

God continues in Ecclesiastes 11 by saying to the young, "Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" (Eccl. 11:9). Please understand, that a "good time" that causes you to do things contrary to the will of God can cost you your eternal soul.

Young people, all people, ask yourself before you thoughtlessly do something just for a "good time," "What will this cost me?" "What will it cost others?" "Will it make me live the rest of my life with regret and shame?" "Could it cost me my soul?"

What is a "good time" worth? Please think about it.

- Gene Taylor

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- > Spending more on the material will not enrich us; spending ourselves on the spiritual will.
  
- > The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. (Prov. 8:13)

- > A bird that you set free may be caught again, but a word that escapes your lips will not return."
  - > When you open a door, don't forget to close it. Treat your mouth accordingly."
  - > "Who finds a faithful friend, finds a treasure."
  - > Will the road you're on lead you to heaven?
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**SUNDAY'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Little By Little!*" (text: Exodus 23:29-30; Deut. 7:22); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *A Tomb For The Dead!* (Mark 15:42-47).