

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

*841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305*

February 19, 2012

Volume 32, # 08

Painless Religion

The unpleasant hurting sensation sometimes experienced in the physical body can have beneficial effects. Without the symptoms of chest or stomach pains, for instance, one may be unaware of serious ailments needing immediate attention. The prospects of a comfortable coronary or a painless appendicitis may sound appealing, but the end thereof could well be death. Physical hurting is not only an informer, it is also a reminder and protector. Even the sore toe can convey an attention getting message by hurt saying, Hey! Remember to take care of me!. The point is, hurt is a necessary and often helpful part of our physical existence.

Furthermore, I'm not so sure that hurt doesn't occupy a somewhat similar role in the spiritual realm as well. Take the hurt of Godly sorrow, for instance. Without it repentance is impossible for godly sorrow worketh repentance... (2 Cor. 7:10). You can see it in the repentance of the Pentecostians who were pricked in their heart (Acts 2:37). I think we see it in

Peter who, in realizing his sin against Jesus, went out, and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75). Who are the blessed mourners of Matt. 5:4 if not those who are hurt by sin? Such hurt is actually an essential part of gaining spiritual health. But, as with the physical body, there are different kinds of hurting.

Another sort is that which comes with the sting of rebuke. Whether administered publicly or privately, there are times when the rod of verbal chastisement is necessary. Paul used it with Peter and threatened more of it with the Corinthians (Gal. 2:11; 1 Cor. 4:21). Timothy is told to use it (1Tim. 4:2). Actually, it involves a double hurt in that it affects the rebuker as well. Paul was sorry for having to make the Corinthians sorry (1 Cor. 7:8), though it later brought joy. No doubt, their putting away the fornicator from among them was a painful experience too, but the church could not be healthy without it.

Since hurt, therefore, is so vitally related to spiritual health, why do so many seem so set on taking all the hurt out of religion? **Why the demand for an ouchless religion?** Many appear obsessed with the fear that someone may get their feelings hurt! Others want to spare themselves the pain and unpleasantness of saying what needs to be said to lost souls (preachers and elders included). Could it be that we have become more concerned about removing the hurt than about removing the sin? That is something like a doctor administering a strong pain-killer for severe stomach pains without treating what caused the pains. Obviously, he has not removed the problem; only the patients awareness of it. Neither do we remove the problem by removing the pain. True, we have manufactured lots of tranquilizers in our quest for a painless religion. Many, though dying in sin, have been made to feel good under the sedation of false teaching, good intentions and excuses. The pain may be gone, but not the problem.

Speaking the truth in love is good medicine — good for those who speak it and hear it — and hurt!

- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, December, 1976

Can We Understand the Bible?

You say, "Yes, we can understand it, but we cannot understand it alike." I beg to differ with you. I maintain that if we can understand it, we can understand it alike. The problem is not our understanding the Bible alike, but our understanding it.

When you say we cannot understand the Bible "alike," you are saying that God has given us a book that will mean most anything one wants it to and that causes confusion. In 1 Cor. 14:33, we read, "For God is not the author of confusion." If God gave us a book to go by that we cannot understand "alike," then God would be the author of confusion.

Again, in John 17:20-21, Jesus prayed, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." If we cannot understand the Bible "alike", then Christ sinned when he prayed this prayer because he prayed for something that he knew was impossible. Yet, 1 Peter 2:22 says he did no sin.

In 1 Cor. 1:10, we read, "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." If we cannot understand the Bible alike, then it would be impossible to speak the same thing, and to be of the same mind and judgment.

There are many passages that bear out this point, but I believe these few will suffice for you to see that the problem is our understanding the Bible and not our understanding it alike. If we understand it, we will be alike.

Now to the question: CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE? The Bible will be a part of that by which we are judged. (See John 12:48; Rev. 22:12). I hardly think God gave us a Book to go by here that we cannot understand and then condemn us into hell because we didn't do what it says.

The Bible itself declares that it can be understood. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." Psalms 119:130. Also in Eph. 1:4, Paul says, "Whereby when ye read, ye may understand."

You say, well there are some things in the Bible that I don't understand. The fact that you don't understand them does not mean that you cannot understand them. We must continue studying the Bible. Some passages are "hard to be understood," but not impossible (2 Pet. 3:16).

One might also say, well there are some things in Revelation that I don't understand. That's right and you are not by yourself. Some things have not been revealed. In Deut. 29:29, Moses said, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children forever, that we may do the words of this law."

We can understand how to be saved, how to worship and how to live and all that God intends for us to understand. We can understand the Bible and those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness" will (Matthew 5:6).

> Nothing confirms evil men in their course like the backsliding of the righteous.

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Know Your Bible!"* (text: 2 Pet. 1:1-3); Sunday evening: *"Go Down To The Potter's House!"* (Jer. 18:1-6).