

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Some Things to Know

[Editor's note: This article was written in December, 2008.]

The world certainly seems to be in a mess. Financial institutions are crumbling all around us. Layoffs seem to dominate the news. Many people are watching their hard earned retirement income disappear before their eyes. Few new years have brought such trepidation in a long time. 2009 doesn't look to start out very promising at all.

That is the good thing about being a Christian. Our retirement is not in the stock market, but in heaven. Our rock is not a bank, but the Rock of Ages. Our confidence in the future is not based on the Federal Reserve, but on the Lord Jesus. That is why I love the first letter of John, because the "beloved disciple" reminds us of some things we can know. These things will make your new year joyous and hopeful.

"And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). There is no better way to start a new year, especially one that looks daunting, than to determine in your heart to obey the Lord. This is what gives us assurance. We have confidence we know the Lord because we

have done what He asked of us. Make it your resolution to weather the economic storm by making your life conform to the will of the Lord in every way. Obedience may be an old fashioned concept, but it will help you and those you love face the uncertainties of life.

"See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. He loved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. **We know** that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:1-2). If you are a child of God, you really have little to worry about. **We know** that when the Lord returns, this year, next year, tomorrow, that we will be like Him. As He has overcome death and sin, so shall we. As He is beyond corruption and sorrow, so shall we be beyond them as well. As we enter a year that looks gloomy, isn't it wonderful to know that one day, maybe soon, we will be like Him.

"And this is the confidence we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if **we know** that He hears us in whatever we ask, **we know** that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15). In a world that seems to be full of panic, it is exciting to realize that we can take our problems to the One who is bigger than financial markets, politics, and even history. Along with millions of others, Christians may face tough times in the coming months. But we have access to the Father and the assurance that He will hear us and answer us according to His will.

I realize a few short comments will not chase away all the doubts and fears that hard times can create. But, as you go into 2009, don't be afraid. As John reminds us there are many things we can **know for sure**. Knowing these things will reassure us. We can

make a renewed commitment to serve God obediently. We can be joyous, knowing that we have a hope, a promise that all the turmoil in the world cannot shake. And, when things look bleak, when times reach their worst low, we can speak to the Father of all creation and get His help. As Christians, let's face 2009 with joy, with confidence and with hope because of the God we serve and His Son, Jesus, the Christ!

-DAVID THURMAN Gospel Minutes 12/26/08

Words of a cynic

"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it' " (Luke 9:23-24).

In a recent conversation, the observation was made about the conduct of many: "Well, folks usually do what they want to do." One misses a worship assembly on Sunday morning for a golf game, another refuses to change the lifestyle and friends that leads to worldliness, or another chooses a career path that will obviously put serving the Lord in jeopardy, another takes a job that will occupy so much of his time that he has no time for family or the Lord, parents will choose activities for their children that will take time away from Bible study. Am I cynical? It is true: "Most people do what they want to do." Now let me add a couple thoughts that should frighten us!

First, most people will do what they want to do and think they can still be the Lord's disciple. The above passage points to the contrary. Notice Jesus says: "let him deny himself." Serving the Lord is not about what I want but about what Jesus wants! Christianity is not a religion of convenience but conviction. It is not self-serving but about self-sacrifice! Here Jesus speaks of the conditions of discipleship - "if anyone desires to come after me." Thus, the conclusion: many who think they are the Lord's disciples are not!

Second, Jesus said: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Only a few will find the narrow way and many will find the broad

gate. Perhaps I'm not cynical after all. Even Jesus said "most folks will do what they want to do"! Only a few are willing to make the sacrifice to serve Him.

Finally, I want to end with a positive tone. The reality is that anyone who desires can change. We can make the personal choices that will prioritize their lives and make Jesus first. It is all up to you and me! It all depends upon our "want"!

- George Slover, *Moment with the Master*, 10-11-05

"HELPERS"

And God has appointed in the church...helpers. 1 Corinthians 12:28

God appointed in the church some very impressive folks. Just go down the list and see for yourself: apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, administrators, and speakers in various kinds of tongues. There's a certain glamour and sheen to be found in each of these words. They are folks to be looked up to and respected because of the gifts God has given them.

But right in the middle of such distinguished company the Lord saw the need for "helpers." And maybe that's where I can fit in. If so, I will be rubbing shoulders with some very elite folks in God's scheme of things.

I think of some helpers in the first century: There was Dorcas who sewed and ministered to practical human needs. There were four men who let the paralytic down through the roof of a house so that Jesus might heal him. And there were those who held the rope so Paul could slide down the outside of the city wall in a basket and escape those seeking to kill him. Apollos is said to have greatly helped those who through grace had believed. Timothy and Erastus are both called helpers of the apostle Paul. And Paul says of Phoebe that she was a helper of many, and of himself as well. I even read of some who helped by

praying (surely something all of us can do). And who can forget those ladies who worked side by side with Paul "whose names are in the book of life"?

There's a place in the Kingdom for you and for me. We can all belong to the "Honorable Order of Helpers!" Remember the words of Paul to Titus, "And let our people learn to apply themselves to good deeds, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not to be unfruitful" (Titus 3:14).

- John Gipson, 11/7/08

> Christ doesn't want a few shares of your life, He wants controlling interest.

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Struggle for a Good Conscience!"* (text: 1 Tim. 1:5, 18-19); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing.*

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting will be July 29-Aug. 3, with Aaron Andrews.