

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

*841 Old Hickory Blvd.  
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## **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, *Plain Talk*, Dec., 1976

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## SALVATION AND CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Frequently, one asks, *"Do you think one has to be a member of the church of Christ to be saved?"* The question is raised by many people

who have devoted the greater part of their attention to preachers, rather than the Bible.

Many think of the church as an all-encompassing religious body consisting of vastly different and smaller bodies, functioning according to differing organizational orders, with different beliefs, traditions and doctrines. Evaluation of such a concept is made in much the same way as one would consider the value, importance and condition of civic organizations: should one be in the Lions Club, the Rotary Club or the Civitan Club? Often such choices are made from personal preference or family tradition. In such circumstances it becomes foolish to argue that the Civitan Club is the right organization for one to be a member of, to the exclusion of others. Many times this is the conceptual basis that exists with regard to how people think of the church: you be a member of the one you desire and I will be a member of the other one that I desire, and we each believe what we choose about God. Similarly, I will support the New York Giants, you will support the Tennessee Titans, and we both love football. But is this the God-approved concept for our understanding of the New Testament church?

The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12) which was purchased with His blood (Acts 10:28) and belongs to Him (Matt. 16:18-19). The church is people who belong to the Lord. This “belonging” is not determined by race or nationality, nor is it a matter of “card carrying” membership in some club or party. Those belonging to the Lord are a *kind* or *quality* of people, and heavenly language describes them in a lofty way: “partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.” (2 Pet. 1:1-4). God’s people have gladly received His word (Acts 2:41), rendering obedience to it (Matt. 7:21) and allowing it to shape and mold their character into what God desires to see in their hearts (Mark 12:30). The way is narrow and restricted, and few qualify (Matt. 7:14). God’s people are products of submission to His will (Rom. 6:17). He saves them as a result (Acts 2:47; Heb. 5:9).

What, then, of church membership: does one have to be a member of the church of Christ to be saved? Having a “club” or “party” concept of the church would prompt one to charge me with bigotry when I answer, “Yes!” However, a more appropriate question might be, “What does the Lord consider me when I meet His conditions for salvation?” The truth of the matter is that church membership and salvation are concurrent circumstances (taking place and existing at the same time). One cannot be saved without being in the church that belongs to the Son of God, and one cannot belong to Christ without being saved. One might as well ask, “*Must I be saved in order to be saved?*” Membership in His church is obtained in the exact same way that salvation (remission of sins past) is obtained. When those in the first century obeyed the gospel they were saved! At that point, the Lord added them to His church (Acts 2, esp. vs. 47). If you are saved, you are a member of the Lord's church.

As a saved member of His body, it is required that I continue to live in such a way that would please God and glorify Him (1 Cor. 6:20). One such feature of that new life is an intimate association with others of like precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1), those who also continue as the early Christians did, “continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer,” (Acts 2:42) wherein, “all those who had believed were together” (Acts 2:44). These saved believers (Christians - nothing more, nothing less) maintain their fellowship with God and one another (1 John 1). That demands dedication (Phil. 2:12).

Salvation comes to everyone who obeys the gospel of Christ and lives a life that is faithful to Christ and pleasing to God. Membership cards in one's pocket amount to nothing. Keeping His commandments, knowing Him and walking in Him avails (1 John 2:3-6). The Lord is the one who deals with “memberships” when His will is performed. He adds the saved to His body. That is where I want to be; what about you? May we assist you?

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## THERE'S A VAST DIFFERENCE:

1. Between being sorry for sin and being sorry you are "caught!"
2. Between confessing your sins and confessing some other man's.
3. Between seeing your own faults and seeing some other person's.
4. Between being led by the Holy Spirit and led by your own imagination.
5. Between being persecuted for "righteousness sake" and being persecuted for "foolishness sake."
6. Between "contending for the faith" and striving for your own opinion.

- via The Instructor, 1974

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- > The devil is an artist. He paints sin in very attractive colors.
  - > The abundant life too often is smothered in the abundance of things.
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**SUNDAY'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"A Closer Walk with God: Good Works!"* (text: Eph. 2:8-10); Sunday evening: *"1 Samuel: The Kingdom Established!"*

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