

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Choosing Between Christ and Kin

Jesus, the Lord of Glory, came to this earth, lived a sinless life and died a shameful death. He did it for you and me "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8). Surely, we do not feel ourselves worthy of such a sacrifice. But Jesus came into the world to "save sinners," even the "chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). To our Lord, the souls of sinners have value -- something that makes them *worthy* of His saving sacrifice.

Considering this, our Lord's statement in Matthew 10:37-38 is quite astounding, for here Jesus tells us that there are some who are "not worthy" of Him!

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not

worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me."

Every follower of Christ has a cross to carry and a burden to bear. For many Christians, and "wanna be" Christians, one burden to be born involves a choice between a close family member and the Lord. This choice may present itself in several different ways, but it always boils down to this question: Whom do I love more, Christ or family?

WHOM DO I LOVE MORE, when there is...

- 1. A choice between God's plan of salvation (i.e. Acts 2:38), and the one followed by parents or grandparents?**
- 2. A choice between following God's instructions for discipline within the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 5:9-13) and "maintaining family ties"?**
- 3. A choice between the truth of God on a moral issue (e.g. marriage and divorce, Matthew 19:9), and twisting God's truth to try to justify the behavior of a family member?**

If we love the family more, we are not worthy of Christ. Are you worthy?

- Steve Klein

Our Feelings

It was late one evening as I worked; a deadline to meet was fast approaching and we were having problems with our computer. It was malfunctioning because improper information (we learned later) was being fed in. It seemed that every few minutes my supervisors were breathing down my neck. I, in turn, was demanding more speed and accuracy from those in my charge. The deadline came and went right on by and I, out of frustration, "kicked that dumb computer." The computer still did not function and was unaware of the "kick" but I, rather, my foot was aware of the computer.

The most obvious difference in the mind of man and the computers' which man creates is that man has emotions or what we call feelings. Computers have none, man does, especially in the toes.

The apostle Paul writes about feelings, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye, and above all things, put on charity which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:12-14). Notice, every one of the qualities we are to put on as Christians mentioned in this verse relates to feelings.

Some over-zealous religious people allow their feelings to become extreme and also authoritarian. They fail to realize that feelings have limits. Some have reacted to this by subduing and denying their feelings to the opposite extreme.

Many Christians equate quietness with reverence, or outward polish as inward praise. The old joke about the man who was saying "Praise the Lord, Hallelujah and Amen" during the sermon was told by the preacher, "Look fellow, this is the church of Christ and we don't praise the Lord here," may apply too well to the average assembly of the saints. In our doing away with all the "shouts of joy" and verbal "hallelujahs" and "Amens" because they are associated with the "Pentecostals," our silence may become an obvious counterbalance to their extreme noise. However, both extremes, when artificial, are vain.

Feeling good does not make us good. Feeling right does not make us right. Truth is of God and He revealed it, not through our feelings but by His revelation (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Yet, on the other hand, there is no or very little virtue in not feeling anything.

Feelings do not make truth, or confirm it. A good conscience is often misleading (Acts 23:1), as many who are still lost "feel right." Feelings do not lead, they follow. They do not act, they react! So when truth is known through evidence, feelings should surround, embrace and accept the truth. "And they went on their way rejoicing," is recorded or implied again and again as a result of conversion (Acts 8:39; 16:34). The reaction of almost every person I've baptized; has been that of joy and thanksgiving and a feeling of relief as they are raised out of the waters of baptism. It is "by grace through faith" in Christ that we can "praise God." We often have them in the right order but somewhere along the way we sometimes neglect to praise God.

When the eunuch from Ethiopia went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39), it was because he had reason to rejoice. He had believed and had been baptized therefore, his rejoicing followed his obedience of faith that led him through the waters of baptism. None of us rejoices in dying, and the

house of death is hardly the place for "shouts of joy," but, the resurrection (figuratively in our baptism, and for real when Jesus does come), the beginning of life, that is where the rejoicing begins and continues.

Our knowing the truth, believing the truth, obeying the truth brings out within each of us that "gut feeling" (bowels of mercies) and knows no other way of expressing itself other than to "praise God" in our every waking moment.

Remember, saying, "Praise God, Praise Jesus, or Praise the Lord," does not necessarily constitute true praise to God. Sometimes they are just empty words without feelings. We can praise God by being quiet, too. It is a matter of attitude and truth, just as Jesus told the woman at the well, "Worship of God must be in Spirit and Truth" (John 4:24).

We cannot worship God and it be acceptable to Him without our feelings being involved. I am afraid that some may be like the computer: no spiritual or physical feelings. How do you feel as you worship and serve God? Are you just going through the motions without any real emotions or feelings?

- Luther Bolenbarker

Coming Clean With the Lord

Jason had misbehaved, so his mother sent him to his room. A short time later, he came out and said to his mother, "I've been thinking about what I did and I said a prayer." His mother, pleased with his attitude, encouraged his behavior. "That's wonderful. If you ask God to make you good, I know He will help you." "But I didn't ask Him to help me be good," Jason said, "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Prayers like Jason's are not uncommon. We don't like to admit that we may be to blame for the problem, so we petition the Lord to change other people or our circumstances. In doing so, we focus on secondary problems and avoid the heart of the matter - our own heart. Praying about our circumstances is effective only when we come clean with the Lord about our own sin. In David's prayer in Psalm 51, he first asked for mercy (v.1). Then he acknowledged his sin (v.3), asked for a clean heart (v.10), and asked for a restoration of the joy of his salvation (v.12). When David confessed the shameful deeds of adultery and murder (II Samuel 11), he made no excuses.

God wants nothing less than our total honesty when we talk with Him. We may have to struggle with ourselves - that kind of praying is not always comfortable - but it's most profitable.

- Dennis J. De Haan

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"At The Feet of Jesus!"* (text: Matt. 15:29-31); Sunday evening: *"The Price of Faithfulness!"* (text: Ezra 9-10).