

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Our Duty To Ourselves

In Galatians 6:4-5, the apostle Paul writes: "But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another; for each one shall bear his own load." The greatest thing we can do for ourselves is to make sure that we are doing everything that we need to do to be pleasing to God. In order to do that, we must examine our own work, making sure that it is being done in accordance with God's directions.

Through the pages of the New Testament, individuals are instructed on how to live their lives according to righteousness. One thing that gets many people in hot water is thinking "too highly of themselves." Yet in Romans 12:3, we can read where it says: "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." God's Word says it, now we have to listen and obey. That is our Christian duty in this life.

The Christian who reads the Bible and then practices those things that are contained therein will gain respect from the brethren because they can see in that Christian that they are truly living their life in accordance with the Bible. But isn't that every Christian's responsibility? Sure it is. We are told in Jude 21 to keep ourselves in "God's love," and to remain "unspotted" (James 1:27). In I John 5:18, we are told to "keep ourselves from the evil one." Other duties include "denying ourselves" (Matt. 16:24), "controlling ourselves" (II Pet. 1:6), "humbling ourselves" (Matt. 18:4; 23:12), and to "guard ourselves" (I John 5:21). If we would read and understand what the Bible tells us to do in Galatians 6:4-5, then we will be able to "glorify God." Are we doing our duty for God?

- Richie Thetford

The Effect of the Gospel

The gospel of our Lord is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). It has been often observed that the word translated "power" comes from a Greek word which is similar to the sound of our word "dynamite."

No one can remain the same after exposed to God's dynamite - the gospel. If he believes it and applies it to his life in humble obedience, it will save him from sin and further advance him

along the road to spiritual life. On the other hand, if he rejects it, it will have a disastrous effect in his present life and in Eternity. It has been our unpleasant experience to see men who are horribly scarred and deformed by various kinds of explosions. But the effects upon the life of an individual who mishandles or rejects the gospel explosive are far more terrifying. These miserable souls are seen hobbling through life with shattered convictions, a heart insensible to love, a seared-over conscience, silent and un-accusing, and a will so accustomed to choosing evil that it seems incapable of any other choice.

So, you see, the gospel has a two-fold effect. The light that emanates from it can melt our hearts like wax. But at the same time, that light can harden a rebellious heart as the hardest clay. WE have heard the gospel. It has changed our lives - one way or the other! We need to ask ourselves: What effect has the gospel had on me?

- Bob West

Prayerful Holidays!

The happiness of the holidays brings to mind the very many blessings that are enjoyed, with a God-ward gratitude for loved ones, my brethren who love the Lord, good health, freedom in this country, and, above all, every spiritual blessing in Christ. Indeed, this is a wonderful life! But

consideration of these good things always prompts recollection of the conditions of others who are struggling with trials.

My heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones recently, who must, like it or not, go through the difficulty of adjusting their lives. I know also that hospitals do not close for the holidays, and filled waiting rooms will be anxious to hear of the condition of those sick and hurt. But I suppose my most fervent prayer is made on behalf of those whose lives Satan is destroying. I pray for repentance from those who are living their lives selfishly, making no effort to allow the will of God to rule their hearts. I pray that they will not foolishly and wrongfully blame God for all the pain and misery that they have brought upon themselves by rejecting Christ and the way of truth.

I pray for married people, especially the young and immature, who have not learned or appreciated the practical God-given instructions for marital happiness. I pray for the many materialistic Americans that measure everything in terms of dollars and have no desire or appreciation for the fruit of the Spirit. My prayer is for parents, that they will have natural affection for their children, that they will remember that their every action and every word before their children molds and shapes a life that will be abundantly fruitful or badly scarred. I pray for those children who must grow up in home conditions that are somewhat less than ideal; one parent may have deserted because one or both parents sinned against God; many lovely children live in constant fear of abuse; many are shuffled back and forth between father, mother, grandparents, babysitter, day care center, etc. until a type of permanent and damaging dizziness sets in.

I pray also for those sincere people who have been misled religiously by false teachers -- that they search the Scriptures with open minds to find God's will. I pray that they will have courageous determination to obey it. My prayer is for those everywhere who are not disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, that their opportunities to learn and obey may be multiplied. I know and am thankful that the Lord is longsuffering, "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9).

Reader, friend, are you enjoying true happiness and contentment? Have you all but destroyed your life by living after the dictates of the flesh and under the power of Satan? By submitting to Christ you can have an abundant life now (John 10:10; Gal. 5:22-24) and eternal life to come (John 3:36). Will you not choose Christ today? May we help you?

- GFS

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Noah's Boys and Lot's Girls!*" (text: 2 Pet. 2:4-10a); Sunday evening: "*Battlegrounds of the Righteous!*"