

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Speak, Do Not Keep Silent

“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, “Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.” And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.” (Acts 18:9-11)

Listen! We can still hear Jesus saying, “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life; that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” (John 4:35-37)

“Arise! The Master calls for thee; the harvest days are here! No longer sit with folded hands; but gather far and near. The noble ranks of volunteers are daily growing everywhere; but still there’s work for millions more! Then for the field prepare.” (HFW, P 404)

Opportunities come up in our lives where we would be doing wrong if we failed to speak up. Very much like the watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem, we are to “never hold our peace day or night; we must not keep silent.” (Isa 62:6) We who name the name of the Lord must, “preach the Word of God urgently at all times, whenever you get the

chance; in season and out; when it is convenient and when it is not; correct and rebuke your people when they need it; encourage them to do right; and all the time be feeding them patiently with God's Word." (2 Tim 4:2, TLB)

Sinners all around us are in frantic need of the word of life. Throw out the life line! Hold forth the word of life. (Phil. 2:16) We must tell them the good news of salvation. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4) Co-workers or friends speak and do ungodly things in our presence; we must remain loyal to Christ and confess his teachings unto them. (Matt. 10:32-33) If a brother or sister in Christ is involved in sin and refuses to repent, they need to be admonished and rebuked. (Rev. 3:19; Gal. 6:1) When a gospel preacher begins to teach a false doctrine, (Rom. 16:17) we cannot afford to remain silent. (Titus 1:10-11)

Too many Christians today remain silent when their voice needs to be heard.

May our God grant us the wisdom to discern those times when we should say nothing; and those times when we must refuse to keep silent!

- Phillip Shumake

Popularity Without Principle

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets." (Luke 6:26, KJ) "You are in trouble when everyone says good things about you. That is what your own people said about those prophets who told lies." (Luke 6:26, NIV)

People do not characteristically want unpleasant truths. They prefer comforting lies. The false prophet understands this, and like his political counterpart he seeks out that message he believes most people will approve. Politicians do it by polls. They actually pay people to take samples of what positions and platitudes people most want to hear, and then they go out and say those very things. It is shallow in substance but profound in effect. Preachers do the same thing, except that they do not need polls. Truth unsettles us. We may be comfortable and satisfied, and then truth rebukes us and "unsettles" us. A man of conscience will repent and change his life. But sin-loving, self-willed men will oppose that truth. However, they want to appear to love truth, so they seek out preachers who will preach what they like. As Paul said:

".. [A]fter their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." (2 Tim. 4:3b)

It is a "self-feeding" process. There are plenty of preachers and politicians who want to say what people want to hear, and there are plenty of people who will reward the preachers and politicians who do it. So the reality of it is that they are actually looking for each other! It is therefore no compliment to a preacher or politician to be particularly popular, and certainly such should never be the goal. Consider Jeremiah's comment about his generation:

"The prophets prophesy falsely and my people love to have it so .." (Jeremiah 5:31)

The empowerment and credibility of the false prophet (and politician) is in the fact of his popularity. "Look at his following!" they say. "That many people cannot be wrong!" "He must surely be doing something, or a lot of things, right!" So it goes! It is once again a "self-feeding" situation where preacher, politician and people make each other feel good, all kinds of sin, corruption and abuses notwithstanding.

But do not altogether blame the preacher or the politician. It could not happen if the people did not "love to have it so." Or if it was not for the fact, as Jesus said, that "men love darkness rather than light." (John 3:19)

Whatever else is true, popularity is more of a sign of desertion of duty than a rendering of right. Remember, Jesus said, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

- by Jere Frost

A BOOK EACH DAY I READ

There is a book each day I read
Upon its pages of wisdom I feed
It's more than life and bread to me
It has purged my soul and set it free
It's a fortress of strength whenever I am weak
In an angry world it's the peace I seek
It comforts me whenever my heart's in fear
In the middle of the night it's always near
Its truth is older than time itself
Its place in the world is not on a shelve

From its open pages I've learned of love
For my fellow brethren and God above
In a library of books it has no rival
This book I read, the Holy Bible

- JON BARKER

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*A Secluded Place!*" (text: Mark 6:30-32); Sunday evening: "*What Is Your Price For Serving God?*" (text: Job 1:6-12).