

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## ***Old Hickory Church of Christ***

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## **The Lord Looks On The Heart**

"For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7). In speaking of Christ it was said, "He needeth not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man" (John 2:25). There are some soul searching questions one might consider because God is not mocked. He knows our thoughts and motives, and He judges according to what He sees inside.

It is better that man not be left to handle this matter of trying to settle the question as to each man's destiny. He would make many mistakes. Two older men were talking about whether it was best to withdraw from a certain man. They did not agree as to the guilt of the man in question. One said, "I would hate for one who was considered a member in good standing with this church to die and go to hell." The other said, "I would hate for one who dies and goes to heaven to be one from whom we had just withdrawn." Men should be very careful in obeying the command to withdraw from the disorderly (2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17, 18). Patience, love, and wisdom should be there to help us when we seek to use righteous judgment (John 7:24).

The hypocritical Pharisees and the unbelieving Sadducees did condemn the Christ and many saints to harsh persecution and death. When Stephen

and other such people were condemned, their eternal destiny was not endangered. Heaven's court is the supreme court and makes the final decisions. In our generation many of the supporters of institutionalism and church support of recreation have considered those who walked in the safe way to be unworthy of fellowship. I am glad that these bitter digressive preachers are not the ones to determine our final destiny.

For what will Christ, the great Judge, be looking when He separates the sheep from the goats? He will be looking for genuine love for God and men. The two greatest commandments are evidently very important \* He will look for the love that will bring about obedience (read John 14:15, 21, 23; 1 John 2:4; 5:3). He will also look for the love that will properly regulate man's behavior to his fellow man (Rom. 13:10; James 2). A little touch of emotionalism will not suffice as a substitute for loving obedience.

The Judge will be looking for those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. (See Matt. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Tim. 2:15, 16; Heb. 5: 12-14.) People perish through lack of knowledge. We speak as the oracles of God and we walk by faith. It is very important for us to be able to discern between good and evil. We are to be able to give a reason for the hope within us. We are to be apt to teach and to stop the mouths of gainsayers. Is the lack of knowledge and the lack of desire to learn about the greatest dangers facing us now? It is a noble spirit that searches the Scriptures daily to see what is true.

The Judge looks for those who grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. We never learn all there is to know, but we can grow in this precious knowledge. We are to go on unto perfection. We are to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling (2 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 6: 1; Phil. 3:14).

All men everywhere are commanded to repent. If we ever decide that we have graduated with the class that knows everything and has added all the faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love that can be added we are unprepared for judgment. We all will need to find mercy even when we have done our best.

That man who works out his salvation with fear and trembling and gives diligence to make his calling and election sure is the best man I can picture in my mind. That devout person who is in his Father's kingdom contending for the faith needs to study and press on toward perfection, confessing his sins and his need of mercy along the way. This servant will make it to heaven, but only by grace. Christ died that people like this may enter in through the gate into the city. Now, at this time, if we truly set our affections on things above we may lay hold of the hope set before us.

The Philippian jailer and his family were babes in Christ the morning after they were baptized as penitent believers, but their sins had been washed away. If they lived for years but never walked in newness of life they would surely be lost. The Lord handles the final judgment as one who knows what is in man and He knows His Father's will. Each will be judged fairly according to the deeds done in his body.

A first grade pupil at school may have high marks on his report card even though his big brother knows more than he does. The graduate student should know much more than that one in the first grade. The assignments given the graduate student will be much more difficult than that which is expected of the beginner. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

- Irven Lee, 1987

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## **What About Narrow Preachers?**

I don't know about you, but I get a little weary of hearing the word "narrow" used as a slur against preachers who adhere to the Bible in

their preaching. Sure, they are "narrow", but so are factory workers, surgeons, druggists and teachers.

The factory worker is so "narrow" that he uses micrometers and measures to the thousandth of an inch the bores and pistons of engines, electronic components and balancing wheels in timepieces.

The surgeon is so "narrow" that he insists on ultra-technical laboratory analysis, meticulously sterilized instruments of special design. Why, he is so picky narrow that he makes his assistants wear masks over their faces!

The druggist is so "narrow" that he just has to have a prescription before he will let you have certain drugs. He says he has to be narrow because government regulations are narrow, and even thinks it is for good!

As you think about it, it's a blessing that somebody is narrow-minded. And however much we need to be "narrow" about vital material matters, we must be infinitely more careful and exact about spiritual laws. God will not be mocked.

- Unknown

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## Unfair Criticism

The following story has been around for many years. I do not know who the original author is. It well illustrates what most of us have experienced from time to time. You simply cannot please everyone. It is not reasonable to try. Our time and energy are best spent in trying to do what is right. If some critic can help us to better understand what is right, then it is reasonable to

follow such suggestions. But changing what we are doing or not doing to try to please unfair critics is absolutely futile.

A man and his grandson went on a journey, walking and leading a donkey. Soon they met a passerby who said, "How foolish for both of you to be walking. One should be riding the donkey." So the man put his grandson on the animal. The next person they met frowned and said, "How dreadful for a strong boy to be riding while an old man walks." So the boy climbed off the donkey and his grandfather climbed on. The next traveler down the road said, "I just can't believe that a grown man would ride and make a poor little boy walk." So the man pulled the little boy up and they rode on together.

This seemed to be the solution, until they met the next fellow who cried out, "I never thought I would see anything so cruel in all my life -- two intelligent human beings riding one poor defenseless donkey." Down the road a piece, they met a couple of men traveling together. When they passed, one said to the other, "Did you ever see two dummies carrying a donkey before?"

Soon after I began preaching I was confronted by a critic who believed that there was something wrong with preparing notes for sermons. At the time I was using extensive outlines in the pulpit that I had prepared in my studies during the week. The critic said, "A real preacher can stand up and preach a sermon on any subject in the Bible right now without using notes!" Over time I developed the practice of using fewer and fewer notes while preaching expository sermons over passages of scripture. I eventually got a wide margin Bible and now do most of my preaching from the text of the Bible and the notes that I have made in the margin. This takes more work in the study but it seems to be the most effective way to preach the word of God for me at this time. I was not surprised to hear another critic point out that "real preaching cannot be done from a few notes scribbled in the margin of a Bible."

Such criticism comes from a variety of sources. Job's "friends" came to him without knowledge of what was actually going on and made criticisms concerning things about which they were ignorant. They could have come with open minds. They could have listened and learned. Instead they came attempting to instruct Job.

The Sadducees were a proud people in **Matthew 22** where it is recorded that they came to Jesus attempting to "show Him up". Jesus "put them to silence" (**verse 22**). Before doing so he showed them where they had gone wrong; "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (**verse 29**). Even though their criticism was put forth in the form of a question, it was a loaded question that blew up in their faces. They should have learned from the reasonable answer to their question. Instead, it appears that they went quietly back to looking for opportunities to bring Jesus down a peg or two.

In **Joshua 22** we read of an incident in which the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh went back to the other side of Jordan. They built an altar to God. Their brethren in Israel heard about it and assumed that it was an altar to an idol. Based upon their assumption they prepared to go to battle against them and kill them. According to **verse 16** the whole congregation believed it! All of Israel was stirred up and "red-hot mad" because they had failed to investigate before acting. They nearly killed faithful brethren because of unfair criticism.

Before you criticize ask questions and learn facts. If you must criticize try to help and not hurt. Look first at yourself. Some of the most bitter criticism seems to come from those who have the least knowledge of and interest in spiritual things.

Let us also be prepared to at least hear those criticisms from brethren with open Bibles and loving spirits. We should be ready and willing to repent if we have done wrong (**Psalms 51**).

- Tim Nichols

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- > "That which we obtain too easily, we esteem too lightly."
  - > "Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us."
  - > "Character is much easier kept than recovered."
  - > "A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right."

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Before I Die ...!"* (text: Heb. 9:27); Sunday evening: *"Conflicts: The Story of Daniel!"* (Dan. 1-6).

**SCHEDULE:** Our Gospel Meeting will be July 28 – Aug. 2, Sun. regularly scheduled times, M-F at 7:00 p.m., with Tanner Campbell, of Piggott, AR.