

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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## **HAVE I BECOME YOUR ENEMY?**

The spiritual condition of the churches of Galatia was not very commendable. Paul marveled that they had so soon been removed from the truth. (Galatians 1:6-9). He accused them of being bewitched that they should not obey the truth. (Galatians 3:1). These Galatians had become desirous of again keeping the ordinances of the Law of Moses. Paul showed the error of such by stating that justification was not by the works of the law (Galatians 2:16); that the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24) and that the law was a yoke of bondage – liberty was in Christ. (Galatians 5:1). Their fickle conduct prompted him to say that he was afraid of them. He feared that his labor in teaching them had been in vain and that they would look upon him as their enemy because he told them the truth in these matters. (Galatians 4:8-16).

To be considered an enemy is usually because one is set to do another harm. An enemy is one who usually is intent upon doing harm to another. However, there are times when we are mistaken as to just who is our friend or enemy. The drunk might deem one

his enemy who takes the bottle from him and refuses to let him drink more. Isn't such a one trying to help rather than injure the drunk? At the time it would be difficult for the drunk to be aware that he was being befriended! We recall the account of a very strong man riding in the wagon and forcing a woman of frail stature to follow along attempting to catch hold of the wagon. The weather was freezing! The scene was cruel! How could a man be so inconsiderate and heartless as to permit a woman to run along behind the wagon while he rode and drove? A viewer doubtlessly would classify the man as the woman's enemy, but that was not the truth. In love for the woman and cognizant of her condition, he was forcing her to exert herself to keep the circulation as it should be in her body less she freeze to death. He actually was jeopardizing his life for her preservation. Who are our friends? Who are our enemies? Think! Consider the end in view before we jump at improper conclusions.

Many times when the truth is presented, people consider the one presenting the truth as their enemy. Religious truth affects people this way more than in other fields. Ahab had this attitude toward Elijah. (I Kings 21:18-20). The same Ahab said of Micaiah "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" The Jewish leaders looked upon Jesus as their enemy.. "they tried to stone him" (John 8:59) (John 10:31). We have modern Ahabs today! People who look upon truth speakers as enemies. Some are very complimentary of lessons until their religious sins are exposed. Then they become "modern Ahabs" viewing the speaker as an enemy. Members of the church have been known to adopt such attitudes. As long as others agree with them, they speak well of the speaker, but when they disagree or differ, they brand them an enemy. The truth hurts, but what profit

is there for us to brand the truth bearer as our enemy. Nature is not all roses and lilies. Nettles and thorns also exist. In the realm of spiritual truth, there are things unpleasant that need to be spoken. John the Baptist preached unpleasant truth to Herod. (Matthew 14). The doctor who diagnoses must speak about terrible diseases. The truth speaker is our best friend. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” (Proverbs 27:6).

**THINGS THAT FOLLOW** are indicated when we consider the truth speaker as our enemy:

**Implies a grave departure from the truth.** The pain shows there is something wrong within. The Galatians were spiritually diseased. The truth would have us appreciate those who speak it rather than hold them in contempt.

**Shows one to be foolish.** Truth is not the less truth because we are blind to it. The revelation of its existence is not the creating of it. We can't stop the hurricane by becoming angry at the barometer. Paul called the Galatians foolish. (Galatians 3:1).

**Proves one to be unjust.** If we are what we should be, why do we object to the truth being spoken? The only way to be justified before God is by obeying and loving the truth. When one becomes angry at truth and brands the truth speaker an enemy, it is a definite evidence of a lack of justice in his life. The faithful servant, like his master, will wish nothing but good to those whose guilt he denounces.

**Shows one to be ungenerous.** It is always a thankless task to tell unpleasant truth. It would have been much more pleasant for Paul to have retained his popularity at the expense of the

churches welfare. His soul's welfare and their spiritual welfare were far greater than a desire for pleasantness. How about you? Do you count one an enemy who tells you the truth?

- Bobby K. Thompson

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## **Living Water (John 4:1-15)**

After Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (John 3), He left Judea, and traveled through Samaria on His way back to Galilee. Many took a circuitous route between the two regions to avoid the Samaritans, who were despised by the Jews. However, Jesus determined to cross through Samaria, and immediately struck up a conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in the city of Sychar.

Jesus' disciples had departed into the city to buy food, and upon their return (vs. 27) marveled that he had talked with the woman. Jesus' actions, and the content of the conversation itself, made clear that His purpose in coming to earth was to save all men, not just the Jews.

The beginning of the conversation supplies for us a wonderful application regarding the work of evangelism. Jesus used a mundane request, "Give Me a drink," (vs. 7), to introduce Himself to the woman as the Messiah. But first, he had to deal with the woman's perception of Jews. She wondered why he was talking with her, because, as she said, "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (vs. 9). Instead of directly answering the question, which was most probably an expression of her animosity, He intimated that He was the Messiah. He said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (vs. 10).

The phrase "gift of God" is a bit obscure, as it could refer to the giving of Jesus himself (cf. John 3:16), or perhaps the gift of salvation. The phrase "living water" was likewise obscure, at least to the woman, as she made the same mistake as Nicodemus, assuming that Jesus was talking about the physical rather than the spiritual. However, Jesus' manner obviously disarmed and intrigued her, and allowed Jesus an opportunity to teach her important truths relative to her redemption.

Jesus' words caused her to first ask, "Are you greater than our father Jacob?" (vs. 12), then to proclaim, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet." (vs. 19). Finally, after their conversation was finished, she showed her growing faith by asking her countrymen, "Could this be the Christ?" (vs. 29). To the honest of heart, the words and works of Jesus clearly showed Him to be someone special, (cf. John 3:3), for He "taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22).

The woman was first confused, as she thought Jesus was referring to the water in the well. The well was deep, and Jesus had no container to use to draw the water. Even after further clarification, she still thought Jesus was referring to actual water, perhaps from another location, that would forever slake her physical need (vs. 15).

Jesus, of course, was referring to the spiritual rather than physical. As Dan King puts it in his commentary on John,

It is easy for us to see in these words an allusion to the quenching of the spiritual thirst wrought by the gospel in the hearts of men. But this was a truth which the Samaritan woman could not yet hope to grasp. Her thoughts are upon physical needs and the relief which He might give her from the daily toil associated with visiting the well and drawing water from its depths. (pg.

76-77)

We should not be too harsh in our estimation of this woman, as she has many companions. Nicodemus was already mentioned, asking, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3:4). The multitude in John 6 misunderstood Jesus' reference to the bread of God, saying, "Lord, give us this bread always" (vs. 34). Even his own disciples often misunderstood His spiritual references to his death, resurrection and reign as the Christ.

Of greater importance is the promise itself, "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (vs. 14).

What Christ offers us sustains us for an eternity. While we will always get thirsty again, no matter how much we may drink, this spiritual water supplied by Christ quenches our spiritual needs forever. We have a better understanding of Jesus' words than did the woman at the well, but our request should be the same, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst..." (vs. 15).

- Stan Cox

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Characteristics of Truth!*" (text: John 8:31-32); Sunday evening: "*Preaching: Powerful or Perverse?*" (text: Micah 3:5-12).