

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

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oldhickorycofc.com

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Peering In The Mirror

Hanging on the wall in the bathrooms and bedrooms of most Americans is a large mirror. When we wake up in the morning, one of the first things we do is to look into one of these mirrors. This can be a very frightening experience. It can be amazing how much change we undergo in our physical appearance while asleep. Almost immediately, we do something about our "rough" appearance. It would be ridiculous for someone to see his appearance needs attention, but walk away and do nothing about it. While we find this absurd with our physical appearance, we often do the same thing with our "rough" spiritual appearance.

James tells us that it is not enough to just hear the word of God. We have to make its application to our lives. He describes the man who hears and does not apply it as being "like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was" (James 1:23-24).

The word of God is a perfect mirror for our spiritual lives. God left us His word so his children could look into it and see where they stand before God. James continues to say, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25). When we look into His word and see there are changes that we ought to make, we cannot just casually walk away. Do not be deceived, just walking away fixes your spiritual appearance just as much as it fixes your physical appearance. This solves none of our problems; they are still there. It takes a sincere and humble heart to admit there are problems and to take action against them.

1 Peter 1:22-23 tells us that we are born again through the word of God which comes to us through His Spirit. It is the Spirit who has revealed God's word, our spiritual mirror, to us. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16). When we look into God's mirror we measure reflection against that which the Spirit reveals. His Spirit is thus bearing witness with our spirit. When this happens, do we reflect children of God? If so, we are told in verse 17 that we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ..."

We need to take a long look into the word of God and see where we are in our quest for becoming spiritually perfect. Do we see a man that needs to be "groomed?" We never reach a state of perfection while here on this earth, but it is certainly the goal toward which we must strive. There will always be something in our spiritual lives on which we need to work. Do we work on those

things or do we just walk away, forgetting what kind of person we are?

- Aaron Beard

Musings: The State of the Union

As I listened to the recent state of the union address, followed by the opposing party's response, I was reminded of my high-school days at the football games. Cheerleaders wore the blue and gold school colors, waved blue and gold pompoms, shouted into blue and gold megaphones, threw blue and gold souvenirs to the crowd, and yelled, "Go team, go!" At half-time, the visiting team's cheerleaders came before the home crowd wearing the red and white school colors, waving red and white pompoms, shouting into red and white megaphones, throwing red and white confetti into the air, and yelling, "Go team, go!" But as much as all of these strained their vocal chords yelling to their respective crowds, supporting the sentiments of all who wore their school's colors, they had little or no effect on what happened during four quarters on the football field and the resulting final score.

The debate continues to rage in our beloved country regarding the best way to fix problems and find solutions for our national concerns. But politicians are people who must deal with people, and God's view is that there is not one who escapes difficult challenges of a vast array of sins. Corruption, greed, self-serving attitudes, deception, immorality and hunger for power are the

common sins that plague every country in the world. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 10:23).

"As it is written, 'THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE. THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING, THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS; WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS; THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS, AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN. THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.'" (Rom. 10:10-18).

Obviously, saying what people want to hear is a sure-fire means of gathering votes on election day. No person has known as fully as Jesus Christ the vast difference between saying what people *want* to hear and saying what people *need* to hear. They needed to hear God speak among men (Matt. 1:23; John 14:9), but when He did (John 8:12), they sought to change His message (John 8:13). When that didn't work, they killed Him (Matt. 12:14; John 11:53). Why?

"This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God." (John 3:19-21).

How sorely we need God in our country! Belief in Him does not result in “business as usual” in one’s life, but “walk as children of Light” (Eph. 5:8). How desperately we need the Light that dispels all darkness! Light haters need to give up their evil deeds, truly changing from the inside (repentance), performing deeds that are “wrought in God.” The ranks of those who fight against God are growing every day. Unbelievers don’t know this, and they won’t find out until it is too late, but there will come a time when the God of heaven and earth sees the cup of wickedness overflowing and uses His wrath to eliminate it (cf. Gen. 6:5-7). But until that day, let Christians preach the gospel everywhere they can, looking for the honest and good heart that will hear the word of the Lord.

We can’t fix a government that is bent on practicing deeds of darkness, and that is not our mission in the world. We can teach the gospel to some individual who will give ear and watch as God’s power (Rom. 1:16) transforms his life! May our God use us to find those who will answer His call. Friend, may we help you?

- GFS

What Should Ants and Christians Have In Common?

There are times we can watch God's creation and learn important lessons. We can even learn valuable lessons from parts of the creation that are not so wonderful. A good example is the fire ant. Prov. 6:6-8. Even fire ants can teach us some things, especially things about the church of Jesus Christ.

FIRE ANTS PROTECT EACH OTHER: Fire ants are aggressive insects. Why all this aggression in fire ants? They are protecting their homes. 1 Cor. 12:4-7. Paul tells us we should act like fire ants. When God blesses one of us in any way, we are to use that gift for the common good. We should come to the defense and aid each other. We are all joined together into one body, one ant hill. We should protect each other.

FIRE ANTS DEFEND THE HELPLESS: When you disturb a fire ant nest, you will see hundreds of little white things. These are the eggs of future generations of fire ants. The ants will remove the eggs to safety. The ants seem to know that the future of the family depends on tending to and protecting the helpless members of the nest. 1 Cor. 12:22-25. Like the ants we should devote more time, attention, and bestow more honor on those who seem to be the weakest members. When these weaker parts of the body are bothered, the healthier members should come to the rescue and help them.

FIRE ANTS SACRIFICE FOR THE BODY: The fire ants who go out to do battle often get killed. They keep sacrificing themselves for the sake of the ant hill. 2 Cor. 4:7-12. Paul describes the hardships he had faced in order to bring the good news to the Corinthian believers. Instead attacking each other, we should be running to defend each other, sacrificing ourselves to help the church succeed.

EACH ANT HAS A JOB: If you watch an ant hill closely you will see that different ants have different jobs. But they have all have one goal: the well being of the body. Eph. 4:11-12. When He gave

us abilities, he did so to build up the body. Like ants we do not all perform the same function, but we all have one goal, the health of the church.

STORMS MAKE ANTS EASY TO SPOT: When heavy rains come, the fire ants build up their nests. The problems nature brings force the ants to come out into the open. When hard times come, the people around us should find it even easier to tell that we are Christians. 1 Peter 1:3-7. We have been given a great gift, salvation through Jesus Christ. We can rejoice in that, even while we are facing hard times. Like ants, difficult times should make us easier to spot as followers of Christ.

FIRE ANTS ARE HARD TO ERADICATE: No matter how hard you try to stop the fire ants, the more they keep coming back. Churches should be like this as well. Our task is to keep building up the body, even in the face of hard times, criticism, and attacks. Jesus promised we would have the victory. That is not an empty promise. Every time Satan seems to gain a foothold, let's take him on and build up the church so that his efforts must fail.

Christians can learn much from fire ants. May God help us learn these lessons, so we can at least be as smart as the ant.

- Unknown (submitted)

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Three Powerful Lessons From The Life Of Uzziah!"* (text: 2 Chron. 26:3-5); Sunday evening: *"MALACHI: The Futility of Spiritual Masquerade!"*