

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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We Have the Present

In one year the small child changes much in his progress toward maturity, and the older man rushes toward the end of his stay in the flesh. Time does not stop, but fortunately we do always have the present. What we have done does not suffice if we still have strength and the present. What we plan to do does not yet count among our store of treasures laid up in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). What we are at the time of death will follow us to the judgment, but what we had been planning to do sometime will not count for much.

We can look back and see mistakes and deeds that were out of step with good judgment and the will of God. Unless there is plenty of diligence, seeking, studying, searching, and vigilance we make poor use of the present, which so soon becomes the past and is beyond recall. The past is gone forever, but its scars may haunt us on and on. We may often wish our foresight were as good as our hindsight. What does the future hold? Do you know? The present is that precious moment that is crowded in that little

space between the past and the future, but it is all that we can use today; so let us be up and doing.

A decade brings many changes, and two decades bring many more. So many of those that encouraged me when I began going out from home to preach are dead, but many of the memories live on to bless. In looking back it is also evident that there were serious failures in some of my efforts that were put forth with all sincerity and zeal. Some of the churches that began from my feeble and faltering efforts would not now endure sound doctrine, nor would they allow one to warn them of their digression. In their days of beginning they could have been taught and warned of dangers ahead, but they were not. This is not a pleasant thought. Their weakness came from malnutrition. Some important elements were left out of their spiritual diet in those beginning days. In later years these churches had no resistance to the prevailing influences of human wisdom. They were not able to resist the fiery darts thrown by cunning craftiness and sleight of men who were ready to offer them human wisdom borrowed from the denominational world rather than a "thus saith the Lord."

We may know better than to leave out some essential elements of the spiritual diet that were left out twenty years ago, but we are found lacking in knowledge as to what should be done with the present in 1978 [or 2015 – GFS]. The bitter hatred and turmoil of the 1950's came bringing permanent division to churches of Christ. Church support of large central agencies in the field of evangelism, benevolence, and edification has come to stay. Church support of entertainment came hard on the heels of institutionalism, and the Lord only knows how fast sensationalism,

emotionalism, and even modernism will take the place of gospel preaching. Every unscriptural practice came from conforming to the world. Our erring brethren have originated some new names, and they have slightly modified some denominational customs; but they cannot claim to have come up with one new doctrine, practice, or argument in favor of the perversions.

The hatred of the 1950's has to a great extent and in many cases passed, and those of us who opposed the innovations are courteously invited into the homes and assured that we are at liberty to claim our local autonomy so that the church is free to do its own work and make its own decisions. Many are ready to say that we are right, and they only ask that we say that they are also right in their emotionalism, support of institutions, and the social gospel. We cannot comply with their requests because these things are unscriptural.

What does the future hold? Will many come out of the churches that are slowly or rapidly moving away from the Bible and back to denominationalism? Will those who fought to conserve the old paths weaken and grant that all are right? With fear and trembling, with open Bibles, with hope and love, with firmness and gentleness, and with outstretched arms those who have walked by faith should continue to do so and to reprove, rebuke, exhort, warn, and pray. They should always wear the breastplate of righteousness.

— Irvan Lee (1914-1991)

Children of God Can Fall from Grace

In discussing this subject, the security or safety of the faithful Christian is not involved. Faithful Christians are kept by the power of God through their faith (1 Pet. 1:3-5); Jesus will not forsake them (Heb. 13:5); God will not cast them off (Ps. 94:14); Jesus will in no wise cast them out (John 6:37); no man can pluck them from God's hand. (John 10: 27-29).

But what about the child of God who turns to drunkenness, adultery, or other sins? What about the one who lacks the qualities of 2 Peter 1:5-9? Will he not fall? (Read verse 10 – “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:”) The Bible teaches that he must remember from whence he has fallen (Rev. 2:5), repent and confess his sins to God in prayer (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). The "cannot-fall-from-grace" doctrine says he will be saved even if he never remembers, never repents, never confesses to God in prayer. This doctrine is wholly false.

It is faith that saves, but:

1. Some have erred concerning the faith (1 Tim. 6:21).
2. Some depart from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).
3. Some turn aside from the faith (1 Tim. 1:5,6).
4. Some cast off their faith (1 Tim. 5:12).
5. Some have their faith overthrown (2 Tim. 2:18).
6. Some have their faith shipwrecked (1 Tim. 1:19).
7. Some deny their faith (1 Tim. 5:8).

Question: Can one err concerning the faith, depart from the faith, turn aside from the faith, cast off his faith, have his faith overthrown, have his faith shipwrecked, deny the faith, and still be

saved by faith? Paul said those who cast off their first faith had damnation, and that those who deny the faith by unfaithfulness are worse than infidels (1 Tim. 5:8-12)! Can one who is worse than an infidel, and one who has damnation be saved in heaven?

Dear friends, to belong to a church that teaches false doctrine as a Christian cannot fall from grace is to partake of the sin involved in the teaching of it (2 John 9-11). You must leave it or be lost.

- Earl Fly

People Do Change

Yes, people change, but they don't often change churches. They change from one make of automobile to another. They change their place of residence. Many change husbands or wives. Many change jobs. But there seems to be a kind of stigma against changing churches. One lady said that she was thinking of visiting the services of a certain congregation. She had an idea that one would think it strange for her to visit.

People will readily change with churches — that is, when they become more liberal. They don't seem to change so readily with a church if its change is toward a more conservative stance, or a more strict adherence to the Scriptures. People are ten times more afraid of being "narrow" than they are of being unscriptural. They are more afraid of being out of step with the crowds than of being out of step with Christ.

The one thing that should cause dissatisfaction with a church is its departure from the Scriptures. The best reason for making a change is to be with one that studies the Scriptures and strives in all of its phases to follow them. A church should be Scriptural in name, doctrine, government, worship, and work.

Jesus convinced some people who would not change. "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42, 43.) Joseph of Arimathaea was a secret disciple. (John 19:38.) He kept his discipleship secret for fear of the Jews.

Some people have said, "I would leave here and move to a church I believe is right, but I don't like to be a turncoat." I don't believe God will accept that explanation. The Samaritans, Lydia, the jailor, the Ethiopian eunuch, and thousands of others changed their religion in New Testament times. They saw they were in error, so they had the honesty and the desire to please God, so they changed.

I realize that changing often requires courage; but every great cause needs men of courage. Cowards and weaklings don't add much strength even when they do become members of a church. God wants people who are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." (Eph. 6:10.) He wants people of conviction who will "contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3.)

- Gardner S. Hall

Glorifying God

To glorify God means to make His superiority manifest. God is thus glorified in numerous ways, for His superiority is manifested in many ways. He is glorified in His creation. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork." (Ps. 19:1.) He is glorified in the church. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) One of the most wonderful ways in which God is glorified is expressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. "Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16.) When men apply God's Word in the right way it is soon obvious to the world that God's way is the best for man, both now and in eternity.

— Bob Waldron

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Healthy Heart!*" (Text: Psa. 51:9-10); Sunday evening: "*They Made Light of It!*" (Text: Matt. 22:1-14).

GOSPEL MEETING 2015: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 19-24, with Jerry Crolius, of Conway, AR, preaching.