

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Should I Leave My Father's Religion?

The Apostle Paul was not always a follower of Christ. In fact, he testified that he imprisoned and beat them that believed on the Lord and he consented to the slaying of one of the Lord's disciples named Stephen (Acts 22:19-20). He described himself before his conversion as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious (1 Tim. 1:13). He was one who "persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it" (Gal. 1:13). But later, a different life emerged: he preached the faith of which he once made havoc (Gal. 1:23). In doing so, Paul left his parents' religion.

Concerning his former religion he said, "My manner of life then from my youth up, which was from the beginning among mine own nation and at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; having knowledge of me from the first, if they be willing to testify, that after the straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." (Acts 26:4-5). Further: "For ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and made havoc of it: and I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own age among my

countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." (Gal. 1:13-14). The fact is clear that Paul was a religious man, yet it was necessary for him to forsake his father's religion. Why?

As a Jew, Paul was called upon to persecute Christians (Acts 9, 22, 26) and to do "many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts 26:9). But since he had seen the Lord, heard a voice from His mouth and learned His will (Acts 22:14), he knew that he must either change his religion or continue to walk in darkness, in sin and under the power of Satan (Acts 22:16; 26:18). Henceforth, his message to all Jews and Gentiles alike was to "repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." (Acts 26:20). When he left his father's religion, he left sin (Acts 22:16; 1 Tim. 1:13), he left ignorance and unbelief (1 Tim. 1:13), and he left opposition to Jesus Christ. Although the Jewish religion taught some truth, it was still necessary for Paul to leave it because of error that was taught and sin that was practiced in the name of religion. He left the Jewish religion, even though, while in it, he thought he was right (Acts 26:9), he lived in good conscience before God (Acts 23:1) and he was zealously religious (Gal. 1:14). He could not serve God acceptably in both religions at the same time. Of his former religion he said: "Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by

faith:" (Phil. 3:7-9). Paul needed to be converted to Christ. He was when he yielded his will and obeyed the Lord.

Many of our neighbors in other religions feel that we are wrong in asking them to leave their father's religion in order to be converted only to Christ. Sadly such people have never made a personal application of the lessons for us that are revealed in Paul's conversion. When we ask people to change religions we are not saying that they are not presently religious, or zealous, or serving God as best they know how, or living in good conscience, or believing and practicing some truth. We are not asking them to leave one party, sect, or denomination for another. We are not asking anyone to give up anything that is right and based upon God's word. We are asking people to give up only that which displeases God and is contrary to His will.

Invariably, some will say, "I'm good enough as I am." Friend, are you as good as Cornelius was? He was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." (Acts 10:2). He was "a righteous man and one that feared God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews" (Acts 10:22). Few men on earth are as good as Cornelius was, yet all his goodness did not make him acceptable unto God. He still needed to hear words, whereby he could be saved (Acts 11:14). If all of his goodness was not enough to save him, why should we think that our goodness is sufficient enough to save us?

The word of God does not teach that it is a sin to forsake the religion of one's family. In fact, Jesus said: "Think not that I came

to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:34-37).

Friend, God does not want us to leave anything that is according to His will. We must "prove all things; hold fast that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thess. 5:21-22). If you believe or practice that which is wrong, forsake it now! Jesus taught that the false teachings of men would be rooted up (Matt. 15:13). Feelings, traditions, conscience and doctrines of men cannot help us decide if we are serving God acceptably. Only the word of God can help us to know that. Is your religion the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you in the body that he promised to save? If not, you should seriously consider changing your religion. May we assist you in becoming a Christian?

- Gary Smalley

"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life." (Luke 18:29-30).

The Reason Why One is Baptized is Important

Imagine these scenarios:

- A boy is dating a girl that he is absolutely 'crazy' about. She is a Christian, and he knows that he can 'make some points' with her if he is baptize
- A teenage girl has lots of friends at a summer camp. One night at the camp several of those friends are baptized. She wants to be 'accepted' by her peers, so she decides to be baptized, too . . .
- A man works for a company owned and operated by a man who is a strong Christian. He begins attending church services to impress his boss. He knows that being baptized would be a very 'big deal' to the owner of the company, so he decides to do it . . .
- A fella who needs money - maybe a place to live - and other material considerations, visits a church. He finds out pretty quickly that these are good people who are generous and helpful. He figures that if he is baptized even more 'goodies' will come his way, so he 'goes forward' to be baptized . . .

In all of these cases we would strongly argue that the baptism is not right; that the results of such baptism are not effective to the saving of the soul; that such a person – if and when they are truly convicted – should be baptized again. The root of the problem being, of course, the improper motivation of their initial baptism.

Paul commended the Romans because they had “obeyed from the heart” (6:17). It is interesting that the obedience in view in that context is baptism (6:3-5). From this we correctly argue that true and effective baptism must be for the right reason.

Now, one more scenario: A man attends a denominational church that teaches baptism is not necessary for salvation. They claim that one is saved by ‘faith only’. Yes, they practice baptism, but their teaching is that it is done at some point after one is saved as ‘an outward sign of an inward grace’. In other words, a person is baptized ‘because’ he has been saved, not ‘in order to be’ saved. Many passages teach the error of this doctrine (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16; etc.).

This man learns the truth on the subject and realizes that he was taught incorrectly and that he was baptized with the wrong motive of heart. What should he do? His situation is not essentially different from the ones cited earlier. He has not obeyed from the heart because – in his heart – he did not understand what he was doing or why he was doing it. He should be baptized again “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Think!

- Greg Gwin

I Had a Drug Problem as a Child

I was drug to Sunday School and Worship every Sunday morning;

I was drug back to church every Sunday and Wednesday night;

I was drug to Vacation Bible School and Gospel Meetings;

Sometimes I was drug to the woodshed.

Those drugs are still in my veins. They are stronger than heroine or crack.

If we all had this drug problem, the world would be a better place.

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Learning Personal Work from Naaman!"* (Text: 2 Kings 5:1-14); Sunday evening: *"Never Give Up!"* (Micah 7:8a).

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