

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305

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February 07, 2016

Volume 36, # 06

"A Few Good Men"

Uncle Sam points a finger and says: "I want you." The Marines are looking for a "few good men." The Lord is too. The Lord is looking for men and women of faith who will stand in the gap, wield the sword of the Spirit effectively against Satan and sin, and contend for the purity and simplicity of the gospel. Consider the cry of David long ago as he asked for a few good men.

The twelfth Psalm, one of many by King David, pleads for a return to the Lord, as sin and rebellion were the order of the day. Much of what is spoken of in this chapter could very well fit today's society. The wickedness of our age should make every Christian cry out for a return to principles of godliness and decency. Friendship with the world spells disaster for the child of God. Any courting of that which is against God will cause us to be lost.

David said, "Help Lord, for the godly man ceases to be" (Psa. 12:1). Yes, the number of godly men and women seems to be diminishing. Many are running toward destruction in the mad pursuit of life (Phil. 3:19). There is a great need for people who will love the Lord and His word and will dedicate themselves to living according to truth and honor. The influences of the world are hardly subtle. Without shame, sin is flaunted on television, in the movies, and in advertising (for almost every product). Christians are constantly bombarded with the message that says, "If you think it is right, then it is right." Godly men and women must cry out as faithful watchmen

(Ezek. 33:1-ff). A constant diet of filth will adversely affect anyone who does not take steps to counterbalance such influences (1 Cor. 15:33).

David said concerning the children of men: "They speak falsehood everyone with his neighbor" (Psa. 12:2). There is no longer a premium on honesty. Too many people "speak false-hood." Liars abound in the government, in business, and sometimes even among brethren. If that possibility does not exist, why did Paul warn against it (Eph. 4:25)? Falsehood and dishonesty will bring about the downfall of our nation (Prov. 14:34). Liars should fear the eternal torment awaiting them (Rev. 21:8).

Psalm 12:6 says: "The words of the Lord are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times." Precious metals must be refined by fire to rid them of dross. The words of the Lord are always true and pure. Cursing and using God's name in vain is simply a way of life for many. The speech of the Christian must edify rather than tear down (Eph. 5:4). We need to be careful what we say and how we say it. This is true in our dealings with people in the world and especially true with our families and brethren.

Psalm 12:8 says: "The wicked strut about on every side, When vileness is exalted among the sons of men." The wicked seem to delight in their debauchery. Jeremiah lived in a world that had forgotten how to blush (6:15). Sin has become such a way of life that nothing is thought about it anymore. This mind-set spills over into the church. The Corinthians (Christians) were blasé about the sin among them. Paul exhorted them to correct the matter and they eventually did. Refusing to do so weakened them spiritually. The same is true of us today. "Vileness" might be exalted by the world, but it must never be condoned by God's people. Clear teaching needs to be done that extols God's will concerning the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-24). Application to things such as dancing, principles of modesty, and social drinking need to be made. Let us cry out for truth and righteousness and be sure we live lives of conformity to God's will rather than the world's (Rom. 12:1-2).

Yes, the Lord wants men and women who will do his will. Let us purify ourselves by his word and remember that the Lord will preserve those who seek the way of truth.

- Randy Harshbarger, via Guardian of Truth, 11/2/1995

The Urge to Worship

The urge to worship is an inherent inclination to show reverence and respect. Sometimes it has nothing to do with anything biblical, like God. Since man has existed he has worshipped something – his ancestors, plants, the moon, stars, sun, trees, fire and even himself.

When men turn from God, Paul said they “exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever” (Rom. 1:25). The creation of images and idols is known as idolatry – condemned severely in scripture (1 John 5:21).

Christians worship God alone (Matt. 4:10; John 4:23-24). Because the Bible has the only true information about God, the way Christians worship must be dictated by the truth of God’s word. That worship is not the result of inward impulse, but conformity to what God himself has allowed in his word.

But still there is an inward urge to worship. When trouble strikes, the urge to turn to God is natural. It is wrong to limit to troublesome times. Jeremiah rebuked the idolatrous Jews as those who, “say to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth: for they have turned their back unto me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us” (Jer. 2:27).

Whether it be idolatry or infidelity, it satisfies only in tranquil and prosperous times. No sooner does trouble come, than the deep conviction of the existence of a God, which is the witness for Him in our heart, resumes its authority, and man prays.

Christians also have an impulse to worship when their hearts are filled with joy. The Psalmist expressed it thus: “Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy . . .” (Ps 43:4).

Today we assemble to offer to God the praise of worship so justly due to him. Whether it is from the burden of hurt we feel or the joy experienced, let us benefit from the greatest privilege ever offered to a rational being – an opportunity to worship and praise our God.

- Dudley Ross Spears

Opportunity for Encouragement and Edification

Edification is the promotion of spiritual growth, the building up toward maturity. That is why we all should “pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another” (Rom. 14:19). In 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Paul urged the church in Thessalonica to “encourage one another and build up one another.” We all need to help one another grow spiritually. Every Christian has the responsibility to “encourage” and help in “building up” the local body of which he is a member, so that all may attain spiritual maturity. Members of the local church should not fail in their duty to one another. To ignore this responsibility is to refuse the Lord.

No greater source of encouragement and edification can be found than the word of God. This is the reason Paul commends us “to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build *you* up and to give *you* the inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). The word of God is taught at Bible study and worship assemblies and you will be encouraged and edified by your attendance. Hearing the word is not for the sole purpose of our agreeing with it. We must hear the word for the purpose of retaining it that we will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2), to build up and encourage brethren.

- Gary Smalley

Paul Was No Pansy

When converted, "straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (Acts 9: 20). He "increased in strength, and confounded the Jews" (v. 22); so they sought to kill him (v.23). How's that for a beginning?

He and Barnabas "had no small dissention and disputation" with Judaizing teachers (15:2); and when he went to Jerusalem about this matter he stood his ground against "those who seemed to be somewhat" (Gal. 2:1-10). Shortly thereafter he "withstood (Peter) to the face, because he was to be blamed" (v. 11). In a matter of judgment his contention with Barnabas about John Mark was so sharp "they departed asunder" (Acts 15:37-f), although this did not hinder his regard for them both as saints (1 Cor. 9:6; 2 Tim. 4:11). There's a man for you. His spirit was "stirred" by idolatry, and he "disputed" with his adversaries (Acts 17:16-17). Yet, he retained a sense of propriety, and at times he ceased to plea, saying, "Your blood be upon your own heads" (18:6; 28:24-28). He shows us one may be intent and firm without losing balance. Paul was an independent man with a strong sense of justice. He refused to leave prison quietly, but said, "They have beaten us openly uncondemned ... let them ... fetch us out" (Acts 16:37). He labored with his own hands to support himself (20:33), yet strongly argued his right to be supported by others (1 Cor. 9:6-f). He did not hesitate to claim and use legal protection (Acts 22:25; 25:9-11), and spoke sharply against an abuse of law (23:3), while showing respect for the "office" of dignities (23:5). On one occasion he seems to have used a "debate" trick to divide the opposition (23:6); but later acknowledges this may have been out of line (24:20-21). He spoke the truth without compromise or fear, as is seen from his sermon before Felix (Acts 24:24-f). Paul comes through as a rugged individual, with strong convictions and deep sense of purpose. But he leaned on a source of strength greater than his own. "Be not afraid, but speak;" "My grace is sufficient for thee" (18: 9-11; 2 Cor. 12:7-9). If the apostle Paul needed these encouragements, Oh Lord, in thy way, what about me??

- Robert F. Turner, via *Plain Talk*, March, 1978

- "The way to break a bad habit is to drop it!"
 - "You can make the world better by improving yourself!"
 - "I would rather fail in a cause that will ultimately succeed than succeed in a cause that will ultimately fail!"
 - "A wise man is like a pin; his head keeps him from going too far!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"What Parents Owe Their Children!"* (Text: Prov. 22:6); Sunday evening: *"He Leads Me Beside Quiet Waters!"* (Psa. 23:2).