

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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GOD IS NOT MAD AT YOU NO MATTER WHAT! REALLY?

Many churches these days put inspirational messages on their signs by the road. Occasionally these are uplifting. Often they inspire laughter more than godly living. Sometimes, however, they are simply wrong. In this city, on University Drive West, Impact Ministries has a sign which reads, "God is not mad at you no matter what." Whoever decided to put that on the sign must have been reading a different Bible than what I have.

What would Nadab and Abihu say if they saw this sign? These two sons of Aaron had experienced events the likes of which the world had never seen nor will see. They had seen the might of God in plaguing Egypt and parting the Red Sea. They had been given water, food, and protection by God in the wilderness. They saw God's glory on Mount Sinai and ate and drank before Him (Exo. 24:9-11). In Leviticus 8-9, they were consecrated as the first priests of Israel. What amazing experiences these men had! Even more amazing was their act of disobedience in chapter 10 of Leviticus. For this error God destroyed them by fire. Take the time to read the first seven verses of this chapter. Again, I ask, what would they say about this church's sign?

What would Moses say? Moses truly was one of the greatest men ever to have lived. He knew God more closely than perhaps any other human being. He spoke with God at the burning bush and later spent over a month on Mount Sinai talking with God. Due to his request, God allowed Moses to see some form of His glory pass by. God rebuked Miriam and Aaron, noting how He spoke with Moses "face to face." (Num. 12:1-8.) But we read in chapter 20 of the book of Numbers that God punished Moses severely for disobedience. Despite all this man did to lead Israel from Egypt to Canaan, because of his sin he was not allowed to enter the Promised Land he had been dreaming of his entire life. As he later said, "The Lord was angry with me...and swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the Lord your God is giving you

as an inheritance.” (Deut. 4:21.) God was angry with Moses! Imagine if he had an opportunity to speak with this church!

What would Uzza say if he saw this sign? This man lived in the days of king David. The ark of the covenant was being brought into Jerusalem with great honor and celebration. One thing was wrong: they weren’t transporting the ark as God commanded. He had given strict instructions on how to carry the ark. It was made with rings on the four corners and was to be transported by two rods inserted through the rings on either side. These people, however, were moving it on a cart. When the ox stumbled, Uzza touched the ark to steady it. Instantly, he was dead. “Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzza...” (1 Chron. 13:10.)

What would Ananias and Sapphira say if they saw this sign? This married couple were among the first Christians to be converted. The church had been planned in the mind of God before time began. He exerted His power and providence throughout all history to bring about the church. Just to think that Ananias and Sapphira were among the first to become God’s spiritual people! They were among the first people to truly enjoy the grace and forgiveness of the Lord. However, we read in Acts 5:1-11 of their pride and how they lied to God. For this sin they were instantly struck dead. Oh, if they could speak to the Impact Ministry of Huntsville!

In the New Testament, we read of a day that is coming on which God will execute His fierce, righteous wrath against all sin and ungodliness (2 Thess. 1:6-10). More and more Scriptures could be examined to show that God, at times, is clearly angry with sin. The error of this church’s sign has been exposed. But there is more under the surface.

You see, this sign is not just the result of inexcusable ignorance of the book of God, but an indication of what many people want to believe. More and more these days God is seen as a kind, doting, grandfather who just wants you to climb up in his lap for story time and would never do anything to punish you. This is an example of perverting what the Bible says about God, and making Him what we want Him to be. Life is easier with no guilt or fear or punishment. This is not what the Scriptures teach and is a lie of our Adversary.

God warns us of this deception: “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived...” (1 Cor. 6:9.) And again, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” (Eph. 5:5-6.) The idea that one can live his or her own sinful lifestyle and not be punished is false.

God is merciful and loving. All you have to do is read through the Old Testament to see that. Many times Israel deserved to be annihilated, but God repeatedly displayed His mercy and love. But we cannot blind ourselves to His justice. God is merciful, God is just. Love and fear Him. “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.” (Rom. 11:22.)

- Jonathan Reeder

The Young People

More and more we hear folks deciding to attend a certain ‘church’ because “there are lots of good activities for the young people.” Often it is the sole basis for making this important determination. ‘Programs’, ‘activities’, and ‘groups’ for the young people – that’s the drawing card.

And, what activities are these folks searching for? Are we talking here about carefully arranged Bible classes that seek to instill an understanding of God’s word in the hearts of our young people? Is it sound teaching from the pulpit and scriptural practice in the way the church does its business so that the young folks can learn respect for Bible authority? Is it love between brethren that manifests itself by each individual demonstrating “hospitality one to another” (1 Pet. 4:9)?

Sadly, the answer is no. Instead, the activities that are desired “for the young people” are fun and games – ‘youth groups’ that sponsor parties, retreats, outings, camps, softball and basketball leagues, etc. The bigger the better and the more the merrier seem to be the rule.

Lest anyone misunderstand, let it be known that we love basketball, baseball, camping, parties . . . and fun and food in general! We strongly favor such things being provided as an avenue of ‘good, clean fun’ for our young folks. But we insist that there is no authority in the Bible for the church to provide such. Let parents who really care see to it that the kids have these needed diversions, and let the church keep to its important authorized work. There’s nothing better for our young people than this.

- Greg Gwin

What Does the Pure Gospel Produce?

In the parable of the sower, Jesus explains that “the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Different soils on which the seed fell represent different reactions to the gospel.

When the apostles preached the pure gospel (the word or “seed”) as recorded in the book of Acts, “honest and good” hearted people (Luke 8:15) who responded by believing, repenting and being baptized (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38) became Christians (Acts 11:26). Groups of these Christians working and worshiping together in various places were known as local churches of Christ (see Romans 16:16; Acts 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:2). Therefore, the pure gospel produces genuine Christians and local churches.

Just as practically everything genuine has its counterfeit, the same is true with the gospel. Counterfeits confuse people. Paul warned even during the first century of counterfeit gospels (Gal. 1:1-9). Genuine Christians do not blow up abortion clinics, lead military “crusades” against “heretics,” live immoral lives or continue in drunkenness (Rom. 12:17-21; John 18:36; Gal. 5:19-21). People may call themselves Christians and do the above, but the true gospel does not produce such.

Genuine Christians understand they are not perfect (1 John 1:8-9), but they strive for the ideal and noble life the pure gospel sets as the standard, respecting the authority of the Scripture in all matters of faith and practice. We strive to do this, and our hope and prayer is that you will strive for the same.

- Phillip Owens

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- > “To err is human, but when the eraser wears out before the pencil, you’re over doing it!”
 - > “Compromise is always wrong when it means to sacrifice a principle of truth!”
 - > “The law of love is quite harmonious with the love of law!”
 - > “Faith must have adequate evidence or else it is mere superstition!”
 - > “Most of the shadows of this life are caused by standing in one’s own sunshine!”
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THIS WEEK’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: Guest Speaker: Matthew Middlebrooks; Sunday evening: “*Obed-Edom: Blessed by God!*” (Text: 2 Sam. 6:1-11).