

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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INCENTIVE FOR LIVING

For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain. This is a statement of a beloved brother in Christ (Phil. 1:21). He lived so that Christ might be magnified in his body. His aim was not: (1) that he might enjoy all of this world he could, and (2) then, HOPE God would receive him into heaven. He had one hope - with this hope - to LIVE was Christ; to die was gain. At the close he could say, "I have FOUGHT a good FIGHT, I have FINISHED my COURSE, I have KEPT the FAITH." (2 Tim.4:7).

Life in Christ is a fight; it is a race. We must BELIEVE unto the saving of our souls. If we draw back (are unfaithful to our charge) it will be unto perdition (Heb. 10:39).

Paul made a living too. He made tents. It is true that he did receive support from others, including churches. The church at Philippi sent to him once and again while preaching at Thessalonica. No other church, however, helped him at this time (Phil. 4:13-18). At Corinth, several churches helped him (2 Cor. 11:8). While he was in Corinth he also made tents to supply his needs (Acts 18:3). Later, as he wrote Corinth, he was working with his hands (1 Cor. 4:12). I do not suggest that we should give up as much as did Paul, but I am suggesting that one can sustain the right relationship to things of this life, and still fight, run, and keep the faith. When fighting, running and keeping the faith are hindered by THINGS here, we need to change our attitude toward the things.

The Christian can rejoice. His real joy is not playing a prank, winning a game, catching a fish, etc. The Christian's joy is deeper, more meaningful than this. It is lasting. His joy is worth laboring for, sacrificing for, suffering persecution for. He can REJOICE when God is praised and His Name honored. He rejoices when sinners become Christians, and when babes become mature. He rejoices when honest hearts approach the study of the Bible on any subject to know what it teaches (and not to make it mean what they already believe).

Persecution and tribulation are painful, but they enlarge one's capacity to appreciate Christ. Compromising for our own convenience and comradeship is wrong. Living for Christ now must be our greatest concern (Mat. 6:19-34). If it is not, living with Christ will not be our joy in eternity.

What gives you your greatest joy? To answer this honestly will probably show your true incentive for living.

- Raymond E. Harville, gospel preacher (1932-2010)

Brotherly Love

"Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). In some places, this passage cannot be obeyed. It must be preceded by admonitions to "let brotherly love begin," for it obviously cannot "continue" where it has not yet begun!

Is this such a place? God forbid! However, all the bickering, backbiting, all the strife and division, in some places tells us that "brotherly love" is in short supply or is on back order. (1) Envy and jealousy are at the root of much of the contention that exists among God's people. When men resent the money, honor, talent, ability, or success of another, bitter gossip will soon begin. (2) Pride kindles the fires of ungodly, unloving words and deeds. Pretentious, proud men feel imaginary slights and are wounded by arrows that have never been shot. Such men cannot be reasoned with, for every earnest appeal is regarded as another "attack." (3) Laziness and indifference is the mother of hateful attitudes and the father of slanders. Those who do the least, gripe and grumble the most. They do nothing to advance the cause of Christ. They teach no one. They encourage no one. They invite no one. They assist no one. Their idleness gives rise to negative thoughts, to whining words of complaint, and to vicious deeds which will undermine peace, unity, and love.

In every church that is torn apart by a lack of brotherly love, look around, and you will see envy, jealousy, pride, laziness and indifference. They are the agents of confusion and contention. Brotherly love cannot begin, nor will it continue, where these things abound. They are poison to the soul and destroyers of all that is good and pure and true. Only by ridding ourselves of these things can we "Let brotherly love continue."

- Larry Ray Hafley

Blindness

An old blues song proclaims, "No one's blinder than he who just won't see." That is especially true regarding God and His word. The person who fails to believe in scripture, though he may think his vision is perfect, will discover, hopefully before it is too late, that he has been blind and is in need of healing.

It is a theme which runs through the New Testament. Jesus healed a blind man in John 9, and in the process created a stir among Jewish leaders. As the story closes, Jesus says "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind" (v. 39).

Although the healing of the blind man was a true miracle, it served as a greater metaphor for those who could not see in the spiritual sense, for Jesus ability to give them sight is a far better gift, because it is this sight which will produce eternal life. Still, the Pharisees questioned Jesus, saying, "We are not blind too, are we?" (v. 40). Their inability to see themselves in such a way magnified their blindness.

With Saul, he had to experience physical blindness in order to realize his spiritual blindness (Acts 9:1-18). When he was blinded, he began to see his sin in persecuting Jesus. It could be said that he was more blind when his physical eyes had sight, than when he was actually blind. Surely, he later saw himself far more clearly, as he was able to say, "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.

Finally, there is the blindness of the church at Laodicea. In Revelation 3, Jesus writes to this myopic band of Christians, and He criticizes their attitude: "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (v. 17). Their spiritual blindness had caused them to be unable to see their horrible condition before God. They had let themselves become a poverty-stricken, filthy, destitute lot by their unwillingness to actually see themselves as God saw them.

Fortunately, there is a cure for spiritual blindness. Jesus told the Laodiceans, "I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see" (v. 18).

The church at Laodicea could regain their sight, if only they were willing to look at themselves as God saw them. So too, when we are willing to see ourselves through God's eyes, we are better prepared to serve God and live by His word.

We are only blind when we refuse to see ourselves as sinners in need of God's help. When we can see that, we make the first steps toward seeing clearly again.

- Rusty Miller

10 Reasons to Study the Bible

1. The Bible yields sweet fruits to him that reads. Its depths are unfathomable, and its riches are unlimited (Romans 11:33).
2. A knowledge of Gospel truth is necessary before we can be made free from sin (John 8:32).
3. We cannot make clear to unsaved people what is not clear to ourselves. "The disciple is not above his teacher." The blind must not lead the blind (Luke 6:39; Romans 2:19; 2 Peter 1:9).
4. The possession of a working knowledge of the Bible arms one for the warfare of life. "And take unto ourselves the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).
5. A working knowledge of the Bible "furnishes the man of God to every good work." There is a Bible message to cover every condition and problem of every human being. It can be used in every emergency from the cradle to the grave (2 Timothy 3:13-17).
6. The knowledge of the Bible enables one to be comforted and offers help to discouraged and distressed brethren. "Comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).
7. Only by a knowledge of the Word of God can you feed your soul. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).
8. A lack of Bible knowledge will make you a workman that needs to be ashamed, because you do not know how to handle aright the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).
9. A knowledge of the Bible is the only safeguard against fatal error. "...Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?" (Mark 12:24).

10. We cannot be the parents we ought to be without nurturing our children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

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- > "When we have to swallow our own medicine, the spoon seems too large!"
 - > "A smaller percentage of your income with God as your partner will go much further than one hundred percent without God!"
 - > "The life one lives speaks more loudly than the words one utters!"
 - > "A great deal of talent is lost in this world for the lack of courage!"
 - > "Too busy for all that is holy on earth beneath the sky,
Too busy to serve the Master, but—not too busy to die!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Power of Personal Influence!*" (Text: Matt. 5:13-16); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!* (theme: forgiveness).