

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### LOVE PRETENDED OR PRACTICED?

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10)

The Bible contains much teaching about love. The necessity for genuine love for God, for brethren, and for our fellowman is clearly taught. Without such love we cannot please God. Hence, there is continued need for teaching what the Bible says about love.

There is also the need for the PRACTICE of the love taught in the Bible. Mere teaching, talking and singing about love will not suffice. There are some who seem to think that their talking and singing about love will excuse their failure to practice it. How deceived they are!

One may CLAIM that he loves God - and the brethren - when his actions DENY it. Love is not something that is merely expressed by the lips, it is something which is manifested by what one DOES. One may claim to love the Lord, but if he does not keep the commandments of the Lord, and if he does not love the brethren, his claim is false. (See John 14:15; 15:14; 1 John 4:20, 21; 5:2, 3; etc.) He may claim to love his brother, but if he does not ACT toward him as love demands (cf. 1 Cor. 13:4-7; 1 John 3:14-18), his claim is not true.

Love does not ignore, condone, "cover-up" or "whitewash" sins. Apparently, some think you do not love them UNLESS you are willing for them to slander you, backbite, undermine, revile, and do anything they want to harm you and others - without your seeming to notice that they have done anything wrong. If you oppose their ungodly conduct, expose their sins, and try to bring them to repentance, they try to make it appear that you do not LOVE them. It is true that we should love even our enemies and pray for them that despitefully use us (Matt. 5:44), but if we love them we will not CONDONE nor IGNORE their sins. Sins are not hidden by ignoring them - nor by "whitewashing" them.

Sins are hidden by CONVERTING the sinner - causing him to turn "from the error of his way." (James 5:19, 20). Jesus opposed, exposed and condemned the Pharisees of His day - using plain, piercing language in so doing (See Matthew 23) - but this did not mean that He did not love them. Rather, it was done because He did love them - He tasted "death for every man." Paul found it necessary to rebuke the brethren at Corinth, not because he did not love them, but because he did. (2 Cor. 6:11; 7:2, 3; 11:11; 12:15, etc.) Love does not condone sin but seeks the salvation of those who have fallen into its clutches.

Paul said, "Let love be without dissimulation (hypocrisy)." Evidently such teaching is needed! Just as the old spiritual song says, "Everybody talkin' 'bout heav'n ain't goin' there," so it is that everybody talking about love does not practice it! Paul indicates as much by his statement in Romans 12:9. Pretend love is hypocrisy. Remember: It was with a KISS that Judas betrayed the Lord. Love should be unfeigned, un-pretended (1 Peter 1 :22). The love of brethren, which God teaches, consists not merely in "lip service," but is to be manifested in what we DO. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." (1 John 4:18).

Yes, we need to set forth the Bible teaching on love - we need to study about it, sing about it and talk about it. And surely, we need to PRACTICE the love taught in the Bible. All the preaching, praying, and singing about love that may be done will not substitute for our failure to practice it. Hence, let each of us study the scriptures (1 Corinthians 13, for example) to learn how love will cause us to act, and let each give himself to the sincere effort to cultivate its practice in our day-to-day living and in our relationships with one another. To this end may God bless us - each and all.

- Paul C. Keller, via *Pause-Ponder-Profit*, October, 1981 [edited]

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## Worship or Entertainment?

In our entertainment-oriented culture, many churches find themselves trying to 'out do' themselves with more and more elaborate additions to worship. What began as special music by a choir becomes a full orchestra with professional soloists. A dramatic reading necessitates a full Broadway stage production. And as long as those who come to worship enjoy what is offered, anything goes. The expectation is that sermons will be shorter, wittier, and more uplifting. Anything in worship that cannot be 'jazzed up' must be abandoned as boring - and there is nothing worse than being boring, we are led to believe.

The problem with this entertainment orientation is that the very object of worship is forgotten. God is the 'audience' in worship. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that ignorant worship was unacceptable to God, even though it may have been sincere or enjoyable. 'God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' (John 4:24). To worship God in spirit and truth means that worship must be from the heart, not

just outward acts, and that it must be done in exact obedience to God's commands. The worship must be directed to Him, not to the whims of the worshipers.

God's regulations for worship as set out in the New Testament are neither boring nor out of date. They are God-centered, while entertainment is man-centered. There is nothing wrong with the worshiper enjoying worship. God intended worship to bless His children. But when worship is merely window dressing for an entertainment performance, it cannot please God. The apostle warned, 'Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God' (2 John 1:9). Paul condemned things that 'have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship' (Colossians 2:23). 'Will worship' is that worship fashioned after man's desires.

- Bob Prichard

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## All Things Pertaining to Life

Much of what we write, preach, and teach falls short of any practical help to the Christian on a day to day basis. It is a good man who can translate words on paper or words taken from the air into profitable godly living. Ultimately, all scripture must find practical application in the life of the Christian. "All scripture is given ...that the man of God might be complete, throughly furnished unto every good work." It is not enough just to "know" the word of God the way we know the multiplication tables or American history. Scripture is "profitable" for debating, for teaching, for rebuking sin, but God's word is first for us to change our lives and personalities into the image of Christ's.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom.12:2). "When ye received the word of God ...ye received it ...as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ . . . that he would grant you . . . strength with might by his spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . . and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19).

We can see the practicalities of our Lord's teaching time and again. Matthew 5, often called the Sermon on the Mount, deals in practical application of God's word. Even the beatitudes, which to many merely seem to be pious sayings, begin with the word "blessed" or "happy." Jesus is proclaiming that only the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart can ever be truly happy. Only those who hunger and thirst after what is right will ever receive any fulfillment and lasting peace of soul. In a world (and a church) torn with hatred, misery, and depression, these words of our Lord must find practical meaning (5:1-16).

Jesus took the truth and brought it into the living of those he taught. "It is not good enough to be just as good as the Scribes and the Pharisees," Jesus intimated. "You have to be complete and balanced in truth as God is perfect or you have no part in the Kingdom." It is not enough to be free from the charge of premeditated murder. There is no merit before God for never having killed a man. Godliness is to be free from the hatred, evil and hurtful intent, and the contempt that gives seed to the fruit of murder. The man who hates in his heart is a murderer in the eyes of God (5:17-22).

One may feel justified before God because of his faithful and religious attendance to duty. But, if the relationship of the Christian and his brother is severed because of sin, and no effort is put forth towards reconciliation, our real duty goes wanting. Man's relationship with God is predicated in part on man's relationship with his fellow man (Matt. 5:23-26; Jas. 3:9-18).

The ship of faith, from "stem to stern," gives us answers in how to live, how to think, how to respond to a hostile world. A man may have unlimited talents, intellectual attainments and accomplishments, comeliness and grace before men, power and influence, but if he is lacking in the fundamental ability to make a God-like response to each problem, trial, and temptation - his life is vanity (1 Cor.13). This is basically what is wrong with the man who is a scholar before he is a disciple. Scholarship is only a means to an end. With the "knowing" must come the ability to relate the knowledge to living. As Solomon put it, "let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom. Get understanding: forget it not" (Prov.4:4,5).

Take a look at your life. Are you miserable as a Christian? Something is wrong that needs to and can be corrected. Do you feel like you are in constant competition with your brethren? Something needs to change. Are you always depressed, hemmed in by hurt, suspicious and resentful of others, or the victim of an "unconquerable" sin? The Lord has the answer for you, if you have the trust in him to take it.

- Jeffery Kingry

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- > "Real prayer always does one of two things ... it either frees us from the trouble we fear ... or else it gives us the strength and courage to meet the trouble when it comes!"
  - > "Many parents are finding out that a pat on the back helps develop character — if given often enough, early enough, and low enough!"
  - > "You cannot keep trouble from coming, but you need not give it a chair to sit in!"

- > "The narrow way of which the Bible speaks is broad enough for any man who is not given to wobbling!"
  - > "Plenty in the purse cannot prevent starvation in the soul!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Hidden Flames of Desire!*" (Text: Matt. 5:27-30); Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*