

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Until We Have Ears

Men seldom see things alike. It's not that reality wears so many faces; it's just that men choose to look at things differently. Some people in Jesus' day were sure that He was the Son of God, but they were in the minority. Many very religious people thought He kept the wrong company—prostitutes, well-known extortioners, notorious people. And, after all, "a man is known by the company he keeps." He said He spent His time with sinners because they needed Him (Luke 5:31).

But most people thought that was a likely story. Some thought they had never heard a man speak with the wisdom and clarity that Jesus did (John 7:45). Others laughed at the idea that a man of such little learning and background—a nobody—could be thought wise, except perhaps by the ignorant and irreligious (Mark 6:3; John 7:47-49). Jesus said that His teaching came from God and that those who wanted to do God's will would be able to recognize that (John 7:15-17). Many, however, still complained that His teaching was vague (John 10:24) and often preposterous (John 6:42, 52).

Jesus did not come to a very good end. It is said that men die as they have lived—and Jesus' death was scandalous. He was charged with high crimes by the rulers of His people and executed in the company of two notorious thieves. Many thought it absolutely ludicrous that such a weak, pathetic figure should claim to be the Son of God, the King of kings, and they said so (Matthew 27:39-44). The truth is that even His disciples who had believed in Him were deeply shaken by the cross (Matthew 26:56). Jesus said He had to die to save others from their sins (Matthew 26:28). Still, the most learned Jews likely continued to repeat what the law clearly said, that a man hanged on a tree was accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

From every worldly-wise and fleshly point of view Jesus of Nazareth could not have been the Christ of God (1 Corinthians 1:23). That was how most folk felt about it. This is not surprising since most folk have usually been worldly-wise and practical-minded. In 2 Corinthians 5:16, Paul says that he at one time saw Jesus just this way—"after the

flesh"—a man who got just what was coming to Him. This is not really so remarkable. Isaiah had long before announced that God's Servant would be "despised and rejected of men," and they would "esteem him smitten of God" because of His own great wickedness (Isaiah 53:3-4). He had earlier described Him as "a stone of stumbling and ... a rock of offense" (Isaiah 8:14). But Paul did not go on looking at Jesus in this hardheaded, practical-minded, worldly—wise, "common sense" sort of way (2 Corinthians 5:16). He came to understand that not just the Gentiles but the Jews as well, all men, were hopelessly ensnared by sin (Romans 3:23). He saw why Jesus had to come into the world (1 Timothy 1:15) and why He had to die in our stead (Galatians 1:4). He became a new man in Christ with a new set of values and a new way of looking at things (2 Corinthians 5:17). He learned to walk by faith in God rather than by human wisdom (2 Corinthians 5:7).

The gospel does not deny that Jesus' death was shameful. Apostolic preachers did not reject the Old Testament edict that a man hanged on a tree was accursed of God. They swallowed whole the disgrace and shame of the cross (Galatians 3:13b) and moved to the more critical question of "Why?" Why was the Christ of God brought to such degradation? Why was He made to suffer such contempt? And then they gave the answer that we all so dread to hear. It was not for His own sins but for ours that He was accursed (Galatians 3:13a). "God laid upon him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). "He who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf ... that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We, too, may first look at the cross and imagine that we are seeing a scandalous man dying a scandalous death—but if we look long enough, and honestly enough, we will finally realize that the scandal is that of our own sinfulness and the glory is that of His great love. Whether that happens to us or not depends on the kind of spirit we bring to the cross. A proud man will find it incomprehensible and unacceptable. The humble man will find it altogether believable and desirable. As Jesus Himself said, no one can hear the message until he has ears to hear it (Luke 8:8). The choice between pride and humility is clearly ours.

- Paul Earnhart, via *Christianity Magazine*, January, 1984

CONSISTENCY-MODERN STYLE

A man argued with me thirty minutes that it is wrong to debate.

A lady told me that it doesn't make any difference what a man believes, and then tried to enroll me in a program to fight Communism.

Some parents told me that they liked to let their children make up their own minds about going to church service, but whipped them because they didn't want to go to school.

A member argued with his neighbor that the church of Christ is right because it observes the Lord's supper every Sunday, but he missed the next Sunday himself and went fishing.

A family, figuring income tax, showed a 10% deduction as contribution to the church, and when the collection plate came around on Sunday they dropped in a total of one dollar and a dime.

A man, opening a fresh pack of cigarettes, explained to me that he didn't have money to buy his mother some badly needed medicine.

An individual griped because the sermon was so long, then went out in the cold the next night and spent two and one-half hours on the hard bleachers watching a ball game.

A member didn't come to services Sunday morning because it looked like rain, and then waded out to his neck in ice water the next morning before dawn duck hunting.

A lady stayed at home Sunday morning with a pain in her left ear, and went to work Monday morning with a pain in both ears.

The whole family had to stay at home with the sick child on Sunday, then left the child alone and went their respective ways on Monday morning.

A member gossips to the preacher's back about the preacher not having the "spirit of Christ."

Some members want the WHOLE gospel preached until you start preaching on church cooperation, the work of the church, the all-sufficiency of the local congregation, the evils of the social gospel, the danger of the pastor system, the importance of speaking as the oracles of God, the unscriptural nature of man-made religious fraternities, the importance of giving as prospered, worldliness, discipline, bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Oh yes, and steer clear of the marriage question. What's left to preach to the members of the church? Why, BAPTISM, of course. I've never seen a "baptism Christian" yet whose religion didn't remind me of WATER - weak, shallow, and stagnated.

People resent the preacher trying to tell them how to run their business or office, but at the same time try to tell the preacher how to run his.

Are You Satisfied?

By being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, Christians endeavor to imitate Jesus Christ and those who follow Him in the area of offering them the gospel of Christ. The Apostle Paul referred to his work as a “ministry of reconciliation,” entreating men to be reconciled to God in the forgiveness of their trespasses (2 Cor. 5:18-20). He said, “Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men ...” (2 Cor. 5:11). Many times, our own attempt to persuade men is met with, “I’m *satisfied* with my own beliefs.”

Let the “satisfied” consider this:

(1) Thousands of years ago, wise King Solomon wrote: “There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death.” (Prov. 14:12). Would you agree that a man is “satisfied” by what “seems right” to him? Would you think he would be “satisfied” upon the final realization that he had chosen death?

(2) Jesus spoke of a rich man that was very “satisfied” with his riches, his productive land, his eating, drinking and merry-making, but God called him a “fool” and required his soul from him (Luke 12:16-21).

(3) Jesus told of a Pharisee who was satisfied with his righteousness as he went to the temple to pray, and even boasted of his being satisfied that he was not like other sinners. But Jesus said that a tax collector who humbly viewed himself as a sinner in need of mercy was the one who left the temple justified, not the satisfied and self-righteous Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14).

(4) The church in Laodicea was satisfied, saying, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.” But the Lord said to them, “you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,” (Rev. 3:14-22). How “satisfied” do you think they were when the Lord commanded them to repent?

(5) Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that they were once “satisfied” in their former lifestyle, living as “fornicators ... idolaters ... adulterers ... effeminate ... homosexuals ... thieves ... the covetous ... drunkards ... revilers ... [and] swindlers,” but realizing that the result would be that they would not inherit the kingdom of God living with that satisfaction, they left it to become “washed, ... sanctified, ... justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” (1 Cor. 6).

Friend, have you seen how wrong a “satisfied” person can be? Is it enough for you to be satisfied? Don’t you agree that the one who must be satisfied is Jesus Christ, in whom God was “satisfied” in the offering of Himself for our sins (Isa. 53:10-11)?

- Gary Smalley

YOU CAN'T FOOL GOD!

You can fool the hapless public,
You can be a subtle fraud,
You can hide your little meanness,
But you can't fool God.

You can advertise your virtues,
You can self-achievement laud,
You can load yourself with riches,
But you can't fool God.

You can criticize the Bible,
You can be a selfish clod,
You can lie, swear, drink, and gamble,
But you can't fool God.

You can magnify your talents,
You can hear the world applaud,
You can boast yourself somebody,
But you can't fool God.

- Grenville Kleiser

- > “After all is said and done, there is really more said than done!”
- > “A love that will not bear all, care all and share all, is not love at all!”
- > “If you are too busy to be kind, you are too busy!”
- > “The diamond cannot be polished without friction, nor can man be perfected without trials!”
- > “Whatever is to be done at God's command may be accomplished in His strength!”

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Are Your Relatives Hindering You?"* (Text: Matt. 10:34-39); Sunday evening: *"Is This The Christ?"* (John 7:25-36).