

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### WILL YOU BE SAVED?

The above is indeed a soul-searching question. It is a question with which we should be greatly concerned, because some day it will be too late to become concerned. When we stand before the judgment bar of God to answer for the deeds done in the body, how we have either used or abused the opportunities afforded us, it will then be too late to prepare for heaven - and *too late to become concerned!!* Regardless of how concerned we may be then, and how many opportunities we may recall that we have rejected (and wish we now had), and how we might yearn for only one - *just one* - still we must suffer the awful consequences of neglect, indifference, and delay!!

#### Comparison To Others Not The Standard

To be lost is something for which none of us wish and is also something that we all plan *not* to do; and yet there will be multitudes who have had intentions for good in life, who will not be saved - will be *lost forever!!* Too often we can see the danger in others neglecting their salvation, and often seek to justify our actions by what someone else has done or has not done. But, this will not be our greatest concern when we meet the Lord, the Great Judge of all the earth, face to face. Our greatest concern at that time will be *oneself* - have I done the will of God to the best of my ability? Even though others will be lost, we shall not then be comparing ourselves to them. We will then be facing the *facts* (something we should have done long before) - for *my* salvation depends upon what I have or have not done with my opportunities to obey God. And we will then realize that what really counts is whether or not I have done the will of God as written in His word - not have I followed my opinions, the precepts of men, or my feelings. Neither will we be concerned about have I done as much, or more, than someone else; or have I been as good, or better, than another. Such is not the standard then to be used, and by which I should have been preparing myself all along.

## God's Word The Standard

According to God's word, the day is coming "when all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28, 29), when all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10); and *I will be there!* Now is the day of grace, for the Lord "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9.) At that time the books will be opened, and another book, and we shall be "judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to" our works. (Rev. 20:12.)

The word of God being the standard means that it is also the standard by which we are to prepare for judgment. In it God has revealed His will unto men and has done so in language that we can understand, and with such commands that we can obey. It then becomes our duty to learn His will, believe and obey it, unto the salvation of our souls. This obedience is to be - *it must be* - from the heart (Rom. 6:17-18), and of the truth which makes men free from sin (John 8:32) when we obey it. (1 Pet. 1:22.) Indeed, I must appreciate the provisions of God for man to be saved, and I must accept His will. The gospel is the power of God to save the believer (Rom. 1:16); and those who "obey not the gospel" "shall be punished with everlasting destruction ..." (2 Thess. 1:7-9.)

*Will you be saved?* Ask yourself this question; answer it honestly. Your actions while you live here will determine where you live in eternity. *And it matters!!*

- Eugene Crawley

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## He Didn't Fit the Picture

The First Century Jew was one who was completely aware of the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. The "Law and the Prophets" were constantly being read in the public places. He would have undoubtedly been longing for the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of the world. With this in mind, it seems paradoxical that when Jesus came fulfilling all prophecies concerning the Messiah, that many Jewish people missed it or refused to accept Him. Why is that?

One of the reasons that stands out is that Jesus did not fit the "mental picture" they had of the Messiah. They had certain ideas and wishes of the Messiah that were not scriptural. For instance, the apostles were constantly looking for an earthly kingdom. This is evident at times such as when they had scruples over who would be the greatest in His kingdom (Mark 8:35-45). Some may have been looking for the Messiah to make some "spectacular entrance," be more concerned with worldly things, or to overthrow their current rulers.

Whatever the case was, He did not fit their preconceived mental images so they would not accept Him.

Many have the same problem today with His church that the Jews had with Jesus 2000 years ago. In spite of the Bible's descriptions of and instructions for the church, they have other preconceived desires for its organization, worship practices, and work. They seem to want its organization to be more complicated, fulfilling man's desire for offices. They want worship services to come across more spectacular, entertaining man's desires. They also want the church's work to go beyond the bounds that the Lord established so that it would appear that they are doing much more "good." Men go against the Lord's will when through their pride they insist on these "improvements."

Paul writes to Timothy and says, "... the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables ..." (2 Timothy 4:3-4). It does not matter how efficient it seems to make the church run, how entertaining it makes the services, or how much work seems to get done, if it is not done according to the word of God, it is not scriptural and must be stopped. One cannot perform certain "religious" practices because they sound good or satisfy any desire one might have.

There has been a great flow of people into the "Modern Mega Church Movement" as some have deemed it. These are churches that teach only what people want to hear. They build great structures that focus on entertaining man and feeding their stomachs. Their organization is complex with many offices and names not found in the Bible. People flock to these churches because they find them to be "fun and exciting." One does not have to ponder the situation very long to figure out why they are so large.

This is the picture that many people paint in their minds of the church, even though the one the Bible paints is nothing like it. The church that Jesus built was not designed to entertain or feed, in fact it was condemned at one point for this (1 Corinthians 11:17-22). The church Jesus built preached Jesus and drew in people with His gospel. Those who obeyed His will were added to the Lord, not some complex organization. Those people in turn went out and preached Jesus (Acts 11:19-26). The "power of God unto salvation" has never been such things that much of the modern religious practices endorse, but it is rather the "gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16). What a blessing it is when people put their pride and desires aside and are satisfied with enjoying serving God the way He has established.

- Aaron Beard

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# God's Commands Are Tests

The church at Corinth included a brother who was having an ongoing sexual relationship with his father's wife. For whatever reason, the rest of the brethren did nothing about it. When the Apostle Paul heard of the situation, he ordered bold action: "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Corinthians 5:13).

Withdrawing from the ungodly brother was essential, both for his benefit and theirs. Hopefully it would impress upon him the seriousness of his wrong and lead him to repentance (v. 5). Regardless, it would check the spreading influence of sin within the congregation (vv. 6-8).

In 2 Corinthians 2, Paul spoke of a brother whom the church had punished. Evidently this refers to the same case. If so, the disassociation had produced its desired result. The brother was now seeking forgiveness. Paul advised, "... forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore, I urge you to reaffirm your love for him" (2:7-8). Then he added, "For to this end also I wrote that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things" (2 Corinthians 2:9).

How did the instruction to cut off association from this brother test the Corinthians' obedience? Perhaps in several ways:

Since taking such action is anything but enjoyable, it was a test of whether they would obey commands of God that are unpleasant.

Some in our day question whether withdrawing is an effective way of dealing with brethren in sin. If any of the Corinthians felt the same way, it was a test of whether they would obey a divine command in which they saw little wisdom.

This brother may have been popular or influential. If so, it was a test of whether they would put God's will above personal relationships.

You may not often think of it this way, but every command God gives "puts you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things." Anyone will obey requirements that are pleasant, seem wise, and demand no hard choices. That says nothing about us. The real test of our obedience, and therefore the real test of our faith, comes when God's commands are otherwise. How well do you score on this exam?

- Frank Himmel

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> "Everybody is liable to make mistakes, but fools practice them!"

- > "Worry is like a rocking chair; no matter how much you rock, you get nowhere!"
  - > "Cooperation is doing with a smile what you have to do anyway!"
  - > "After death comes judgment, but before death there is hope for every man!"
  - > "Sometimes it is okay to put off until tomorrow, especially if you have already made enough mistakes for one day!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*The Influence of Your Life!*" (Text: Rev. 14:13); Sunday evening: "*Jesus Responds to Attack!*" (John 8:48-59).