

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
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oldhickorycofc.com

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Does My Attitude Profess Godliness?

God commands us in Romans 12:10 to be “kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” It is often difficult to obey this command when others, even brethren wrong us in some way. Regardless of what another man may do, does my attitude towards him profess godliness? In Luke 6:27, Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and do good to them. He repeats this statement in verse 35, emphasizing its importance. Jesus exhibited this himself while on the cross. After years of teaching, performing miracles, and forgiving men of their sins, he was denied by his own apostle, Peter, and denied by all other men. Even Pilate himself could find no just cause to crucify Jesus based on the charges against him. Through all the agony and mocking, in Luke 23:34 Jesus prayed, “Father forgive them.” We must also have the attitude of Jesus.

It is equally important not to harbor bitterness. Hebrews 12:15 speaks of the “root of bitterness.” Roots feed something. When this root is bitterness, it may grow larger and overtake the Christian values God requires of us. It can inflate conflict, impose jealousy or develop hatred. None of these is a quality God wants us to have. He teaches in Romans 12:18, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men,” which includes the foolish disputes spoken of in Titus 3:8. This requires effort on our part, beginning with forgiveness. Stephen, in Acts 8:59-60 is an example for us. He stood before the council and told them they were responsible for killing Jesus. This pricked the hearts of the council and they became angry and took Stephen out of the city and stoned him. Stephen did not curse these men, but as he was dying implored the Lord not to hold them accountable for this sin. Likewise, Paul in 2 Timothy 4:16, while in prison, states he was forsaken but requested that this charge not be placed on those who forsook him.

Romans 12:19-21 teaches us to not return evil to the one gave it to us, but rather do good, “. . . for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.” The cliché “kill them with kindness” parallels this verse. Being kind and not returning the wrongdoing will be more effective than any harm or punishment we may devise. Titus 2:8 says to speak with

“sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” Do we speak with words of love, even when we are compelled not to, offer hospitality to those who have spoken perverse words of us, or encourage those who are busybodies as described in 1 Peter 4:15? This will be more impressive on the persecutor because the guilt of his actions will be on his conscience when he realizes we maintain an attitude that parallels Jesus’. Those who are not Christians may be provoked by our actions to inquire why we handle ourselves the way we do. This will provide an opportunity to teach them Jesus’ commands for us, and it will plant a seed which could lead to their own salvation.

In the midst of persecution, Jesus says in Hebrews 13:6 “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?” Man will disappoint, inflict pain, and persecute, but Deuteronomy 4:31 says God will not forsake us. Those who are faithful and do the will of the Father will receive their reward of Heaven in the end. Matthew 6:14-15 says that God will not forgive us of our sins if we do not forgive others. It is our responsibility to maintain the right attitude, forgiving those who require our forgiveness.

- Kesa Whitley, via *Truth Magazine* — January 5, 2006

“Of Your Father The Devil”

Jesus said of some, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” (John 8:44). That is, since they displayed his character and conduct, the devil was their spiritual father. This is how one becomes a son or daughter of Abraham and Sara— “whose daughters ye are” means that one is “of” them in that he manifests their spirit and their life in his attitudes and attributes (Rom. 4; 1 Pet. 3:6). If one is a child of Abraham, he will do the works of Abraham (John 8:39).

This is also how “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20). Christ does not personally indwell my body, but He lives in me as I live according to His will, after the example of His life (Col. 2:6; 1 John 2:6).

To walk in the Spirit is to walk in accordance with the Spirit’s law, or rule, the gospel; it is to be subject to the Spirit’s law (Rom. 8:2, 6; Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18; Phil. 1:9-11; 3:16-19; Col. 1:9-11; 3:16; 1 John 3:24; 4:1). Those who walk as God directs in His word are the children of God; they are of their Father, born of Him. Those who walk after the flesh, after the appetites and desires of their own will, are of their father, the devil.

When we say of a child, “You can see his daddy in him,” what do we mean? We mean that he has his father’s ways, his mannerisms, that he “acts just like his daddy.” So, it is

of the children of God and the children of the devil. When we show a life of love toward others, God dwells in us, and we dwell in Him. How? "Because as he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:16, 17). On the other hand, when we exhibit the traits of unbelief and bitterness toward the truth, the devil dwells in us and we in him. How? "Because as he (the devil) is, so are we in this world" (John 8:38-44).

- Larry Ray Hafley

What's Your Standard?

What is the standard by which you measure your life and conduct? Too many folk, I fear, are like the little boy who came running into the house and very excitedly shouted, "Mother, Mother, I am nine feet tall!" His mother tried vainly to tell him that he was exaggerating and talking nonsense. He responded that he knew for a fact that he was nine feet tall.

"What makes you think so?", she asked. "Because I measured myself," he replied. "How did you measure yourself?", she inquired. "I took off my shoe," the little boy said, "and measured myself with that. My shoes are the same size as my feet, and I'm really nine feet tall."

Well now, such reasoning we understand in the mind of a child, for his comprehension is limited. The little feet on which they walk may be what they picture when they think of something being so many "feet" by measure. A little child sees a parent picking the spent blooms of a plant and discarding them so as to generate more blooms. Later that child is picking blossoms from plants and throwing them on the ground; and when scolded for it must be terribly confused, for after all that is what it appears the parent was doing. A little child will often be involved in some mischief for which he is rebuked or punished but the standard by which he/she was measuring his behavior was a playmate who did the same thing. Now surely we can recognize the difference between such children and persons who are much older and more mature using such childish imagining to create a standard for measuring or judging their conduct. That is a little bit much, won't you agree? Let's illustrate.

The standard by which some measure their conduct is what others in society are doing. Modern society approves of gambling, drinking of alcohol, premarital sex and extra marital affairs, divorce for most any cause, ad infinitum, ad nauseam. So, too frequently, instead of Christians being the light and salt (Matt. 5:13-14) to a society that is groping in darkness

and rotting from corruption within, they drink at society's wells. Instead of lifting society to a higher plane of behavior, they allow themselves to be dragged into a pit.

Your standard of measurement for your conduct and behavior is the will of Christ. Paul's admonition to the Ephesians was, ". . . you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles (society) walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ" (Eph. 4:17-20). "Walk as children of light," he further counseled (Eph. 5:8). Phillip's rendering of Romans 12:1-2 is clear. "With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, go give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity." Verse 9b, he translates, "Let us have a genuine break with evil and a real devotion to good."

God's intent is that we "be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). As "His own special people" who have been "called from darkness to light," Christians are challenged to "as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles (society)" with a view to leading them to "glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:9-12).

God's children have a much higher standard by which to measure their conduct than simply the norms of a decadent society, or even their own feelings and imaginings. It is God's word.

- Norman E. Fultz

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- > "When a fellow is kicking, he has only one leg to stand on!"
 - > "The gospel is not something only to go to worship to hear - but to go from worship to tell!"
 - > "If you must whisper in the assembly, whisper a prayer!"
 - > "The quality of a man's life is in direct proportion to his commitment to excellence!"

> "Remember: 7 days without prayer makes one weak!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"If Jesus Were To Pray For Me!"* (Text: Heb. 4:14-16); Sunday evening: *"Believing Is Seeing!"* (John 9:1-12).