

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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FOLLOWING THE BIBLE

Our claim to a unique position in the religious world is our determination to follow the Bible. But when this claim is made, the usual response is "All churches follow the Bible." This raises an obvious question: "If all churches follow the Bible, why the variety of doctrines and practices?"

Unacceptable Explanations

Some say the Bible cannot be understood sufficiently well enough to allow for unity. This questions God's wisdom, for God intended for us to understand. "Be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17). Was God incapable of providing a book that men could understand?

Others insist that the Bible actually teaches many different things. Denominationalists have been claiming this for years. More recently, we even heard a preacher among churches of Christ say that the Bible can be used to justify different kinds of church government. Sometimes it is said, "You can prove anything by the Bible." This questions God's integrity. It is insulting to say of a man: "You can prove anything by him." How much worse to say this of a book given to us by God! It contains one consistent message and to make it support contradictory positions requires an abuse of its message.

The Real Problem

The problem is not with the Bible, nor with its source. The problem is the varying approaches to following the Bible. Some believe in a careful adherence to what the Bible says. Others believe in a rather casual following "not of the letter, but of the Spirit," as they put it, adopting the words but not the sense of 2 Corinthians 3:6. Stated another way, some construe the Scriptures strictly, believing that we must do in religion only what the Scriptures authorize. Others construe the Scriptures loosely, believing that we may practice anything not plainly forbidden.

These two views formed a clear issue between the two great reformers of Germany and Switzerland, Luther and Zwingli. In A History of the Christian Church, Lars Qualben explains: "One of the great differences between Zwingli and Luther was: Luther used the Bible as corrective, retaining those rites and ceremonies of the Medieval church which were not positively anti-scriptural. Hence he retained images, altars, ornaments of the churches, organs, church bells, and the like. Zwingli used the Bible as a code of laws, rejecting everything not expressly enjoined in the Scriptures" (p. 255).

Following Recipes and Directions

If a teacher gives a student a recipe for making a cake, what does she expect? If the girl adds ingredients not found in the recipe, will the teacher credit her with following the recipe? Obviously, the student was following the recipe as long as she was using what the recipe required. But when she added other ingredients, she ceased following the recipe and began following her own way.

If a person is given directions for finding a location, what is involved in following those directions? As long as he is making the turns authorized, he is following directions. But when he begins making turns not called for, he has ceased following directions.

Are people actually following the Bible as they follow recipes or directions? The majority of ingredients in modern religion are nowhere authorized in Scripture. They are the products of human wisdom. And it is these additional ingredients, these unauthorized changes of directions that account for the differences that exist in religion.

- Sewell Hall

RAISED IN THE CHURCH

There was a young boy who was raised "in the church" but as he got older, became independent, he left the faith instilled in him by his parents. He noticed that without his childhood faith he was doing just fine in life. Great in fact!

He had soared through college, landed a great career, married, two kids, house and the perfect well-behaved dog. "See, who needs God?"

Then he lost his job, he lost his house, he lost his marriage and his kids, and then the dog died. He went back to the church and spoke with the preacher he'd known since childhood.

The desperate and distraught man questioned how everything had been so right and then it all fell apart. The preacher said, "One of your mistakes was that you thought you had built this hedge of perfection about you which could not be touched because of your own greatness.

The reality is, one time your dear sweet faithful mother confessed to me that she would pray for you every single day. Pray for your prosperity. Pray for your protection. Pray for your soul. You see son, you never built anything. Your mother built that hedge for you through her faithful service to the Lord and through her prayers for you day and night.

Did you notice that when things began to fall apart in life, is when you lost that faithful prayer warrior that was fighting for you every day of her life?" The man, breaking down into tears, realizing his selfishness, arrogance, and folly said, "What do I do?"

The preacher said, "You've come here upset and heartbroken over all that you have lost. If you want any of it back then you need to start with the first thing you lost." "My mother?", the boy replied confused. "Close", the preacher said, "Your faith..."

"Find your faith, and you will find your mother, and her legacy of prayer and trust in the Lord, and her greatest prayer would finally find fruition... in your soul turning back to the Lord."

- David Osteen

Who Boast In Face

For a while, a man and his wife visited our services regularly in Sydney, Australia; then I missed them several Sundays in a row. When I went to visit them, the wife explained that she really enjoyed the simple and unpretentious worship but her husband complained that the singing was terrible and he felt like a little school boy sitting in a classroom because I used the blackboard in preaching. Another objection was that we were a small struggling group, meeting in a converted house, and would never amount to very much. He had agreed to go with her to a large denominational church where the preacher stood and philosophized, and there was a nice brick building.

That presents a real problem — but only to those who boast in face (i.e. who glory in appearance).

Paul says that that which is seen is for a season but that which is not seen is eternal, (2 Cor. 4:18). He ministered in things that were true and lasting, while others were boasting

in appearance. Because man is confined to a world of material things, he tends to build eternal hopes upon temporal foundations — it's quite natural, really — but that is like building your house on the sand: you lose everything, (Matt. 7:26-27).

When Paul judged Christ by fleshly standards he rejected Him, (2 Cor. 5:16). It was only when Paul learned to evaluate in terms of eternity that he properly evaluated the Savior. (See Isa. 53: 1-3) And many fail to know Christ today because they seek only to know Him after the flesh. They know him as a human philosopher, humanitarian, or emotional prop, but never as their eternal Savior.

There must be constant danger signs to warn Christians and keep us traveling on the road; to make us realize why we are what we are, and why we do what we do. If not, we can slide into a tail-spin and follow denominationalism into the bar-ditch of boasting in face.

Look what a nice building we have. If we are glorying in appearance, we would be better off selling it and meeting under a tree. We had _____ in attendance last Sunday. If we are trying for numbers for the sake of numbers, send them all home. Twenty, thirty, forty people were baptized in our meeting (campaign?). How many never attended one service? How many fell away? Look how fast the Church of Christ is growing. Yes? And what about the Mormons or the J.W.s? If we are just trying for a glowing report and an impressive record, we had better stop before we make them twofold more the sons of hell than ourselves, (Matt. 23:15).

Our glory should be in the heart, for one day we shall be made manifest before the one who sees us as we are. Knowing the fear of the Lord, let us not boast in appearance but persuade men that one died for all that all might live unto Him, (2 Cor. 5:14-15). That is eternal! That is like building your house on rock, (Matt. 7:24-25). You gain all that Jesus has to offer.

- Jim R. Everett, via *Plain Talk*, Dec., 1971

2 Thess. 3:1-2 -- Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord will spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you; and that we will be rescued from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. [NASB]

“Perverse” means: “**1a** : turned away from what is right or good : CORRUPT
b : IMPROPER, INCORRECT **c** : contrary to the evidence or the direction of the judge on a point of law <perverse verdict> **2a** : obstinate in opposing what is right, reasonable, or accepted : WRONGHEADED **b** : arising from or indicative of

stubbornness or obstinacy **3**: marked by peevishness or petulance : CRANKY
4: marked by perversion”

Synonym Discussion of PERVERSE :

CONTRARY, PERVERSE, RESTIVE, BALKY, WAYWARD mean inclined to resist authority or control. CONTRARY implies a temperamental unwillingness to accept orders or advice. (a *contrary* child)

PERVERSE may imply wrongheaded, determined, or cranky opposition to what is reasonable or normal. (a *perverse*, intractable critic)

RESTIVE suggests unwillingness or inability to submit to discipline or follow orders. (tired soldiers growing *restive*)

BALKY suggests a refusing to proceed in a desired direction or course of action. (a *balky* witness)

WAYWARD suggests strong-willed capriciousness and irregularity in behavior. (a school for *wayward* youths)

[- Merriam-Webster Dictionary]

> “Nothing will cook your goose faster than a red hot temper!”

> “How did mothers ever learn all the things they warn their daughters not to do?”

> “A Christian is one who does not have to consult his bank book to see how wealthy he really is!”

> “A grudge is too heavy a load for anyone to carry!”

> “I used to ask God if He would come and help me. Then I asked if I could come and help Him. Finally I ended by asking God to do His own work through me!”

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*True Friends!*” (Prov. 27:6-17); Sunday evening: *Calvinism (Lesson 12, part 2, page 71)* 1 Cor. 2:14.