

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

“Membership has its rewards.” - That’s how many companies advertise their special offer of the month. And truthfully, I like those kind of programs, because they make you feel like you’re getting something for nothing. You receive benefits – either frequent flyer miles or hotel points – when nothing extra is required of you. You don’t have to pay a monthly fee, you don’t have to recruit other people to join the group.

Membership itself just has its rewards. What about membership in the local church? Certainly it has its rewards. From a family of fellow believers to those who will help us bear our burdens, we are benefitted greatly by this relationship. But membership also has its responsibilities. We cannot expect to obtain something for nothing. There is a requirement that accompanies our commitment. When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he mentioned three words that he had elsewhere famously linked together: “constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father” (2 Thess. 1:3). Faith, hope, and love. We recognize this trio from 1 Cor. 13:13 as well as Col. 1:4-5. But notice the words which precede them in this context: work, labor, and steadfastness. Together, they testify to the responsibilities that come with membership.

In consideration of all that God has done to make us members of the body of Christ, what response is required on the part of every member?

“Work of faith.”

Paul commended the Thessalonians because “in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything” (1 Thess. 1:8). They had a faith, but not a faith that stood still. In fact, their faith had a reputation in other parts of the world. But how would the world have known about their belief unless it was something that they had put into practice and worked out?

As someone has famously said, “Christianity begins in the head, travels to the heart, and exits in the hands and feet.” Our faith must have action with it or it is no faith at all. James 2 was not written just to give us something to hand to our denominational friends who believe in salvation by faith alone. This epistle was first handed to the twelve tribes dispersed to remind the Lord’s own people that believe by itself is dead. What “work” has your faith produced? Remember, membership has its responsibilities.

#### “Labor of love.”

The word “labor” means “toil” or “work” and can be used in the context of laboring through some difficulty or trouble. The church in Thessalonica had “received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6). But even though the gospel had produced hardships and trials in coming to them, it was still received joyfully because it was considered their “labor of love.”

Love and labor aren’t words that we usually put together. Not everyone loves what they do for a living. Sadly, sometimes our labor for the Lord leaves that same impression. Do you love what you do for Him? Just because it is a responsibility doesn’t mean that it has to look like one. And even when hardship is involved in carrying this work out, consider it all joy and a privilege to labor for a Master who loves you.

#### “Steadfastness of hope.”

The apostles encouraged the Thessalonian brethren to “wait for His Son from heaven... who rescues us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10). “Hope” is looking forward in confident expectation. This hope produces a steadfastness or, as some translations have it, “perseverance” or “patience.” Such was needed as the early saints waited on the Lord for final vindication.

Hope is what gives us something to hold on to in our ever-changing world. That’s why it’s described as an “anchor for the soul” (Heb. 6:19). It comes with the realization that we’ve not reached our final destination. We’ve started our journey, we’ve weathered some storms, but we’re not there yet. We must wait, patiently and with expectation that the Lord will bring into reality all that we have hoped for.

On that day, membership will certainly have its rewards. Until then, let us be about our responsibilities in His service.

- Bubba Garner

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# The Law of Liberty

There are many today who believe the religion of Christ is without law. They will say something like, "We are not under law, but grace." Their idea is, a man simply enjoys the grace of God without having to be concerned with the keeping of commandments. This is not so!

First, James said, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (Jas. 1:25). The "perfect law of liberty" is the "law of Christ," the gospel (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). This "law of liberty" is what ensures liberty, for without law to grant liberty, there is no liberty.

Second, the grace of God in Christ is not found in nature, and it is not known by man intuitively (Prov. 14:12). It must be revealed. Thus, God revealed His grace in the gospel of grace (cf. Acts 20:24). How can a man know about the "unsearchable riches of Christ" separate and apart from the law of Christ, the gospel (cf. Eph. 3:6-9)? It is impossible.

Third, the Holy Spirit said, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Titus 2:11-12). Grace teaches! When grace teaches us to deny "ungodliness and worldly lust" and live "soberly, righteously and godly," it is based on a standard, a law.

When you read the above, do you begin to complain about keeping commandments and earning salvation? Remember, God's commandments are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). Too, obeying does not earn salvation, but it cannot be separated from it either (1 John 5:3; Heb. 5:9).

Friend, the law of liberty will grant you freedom from sin and Satan (cf. John 8:32). Are you willing to abide by that law in order to have true liberty?

- Steven F. Deaton

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## **“All Flesh Is As Grass”**

Peter, in 1 Peter 1:24-25, “For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you.” Since the word

abides forever, we need to be reminded of three important points concerning the word of God.

First, the word is powerful. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." The word possesses power because of what it can do. It can change the sinner to a saint!

Second, the word will judge. John 12:48 says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day." The word is not to be toyed with or disrespected, for it will determine our eternal destiny based on whether we obey it or not.

Third, the word will save. Romans 1:16-17 says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." It will save because all of us sin and the Bible reveals how Christ died on the cross, redeeming us from the bondage of sin.

Seeing that the word of God possesses all three of these characteristics, we should hold it in the highest regard and follow it (Luke 11:28). If you wish to know more about God's word, please contact us for a study.

- Kyle Campbell

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## **DOES MORAL GOODNESS MAKE ONE A CHRISTIAN?**

As a result of much false teaching in the world today, many honest and sincere souls have been misled in believing that if a man is morally good, he is a Christian. No man can be a true follower of Christ without living upon a high moral plane. But Christianity is more than being good. In Acts 10 we read of a man whose living standards were above reproach. The life of Cornelius would put to shame many a professed Christian of today. Yet Cornelius was not a Christian until after Peter's visit to his home and his obedience to what Peter told him. It was not his prayer nor his good deeds that made him a Christian; neither was it the result of seeking and hearing an angel, but the word of God was preached to him, and he believed, (Acts 15:7), and repented, (Acts 11:18), and was baptized. (Acts 10:48).

A man or woman can be good and not be a Christian, but he or she cannot be a Christian and not be good. Both good and bad must obey the gospel to be saved.

- Unknown, via The Instructor, Feb., 1964

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- > "The heaviest thing you can carry is a grudge!"
  - > "Going the course of least resistance, is what makes men and rivers crooked!"
  - > "We all need to be on the same page, and the same page is the Word of God (1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Timothy 4:12-13)!"
  - > "If you have ever been closer to the Lord than you are right now, maybe you have backslidden!"
  - > "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." (Rom. 12:18)
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Life's Most Common Regrets!*" (Text: Matt. 21:28-32); Sunday evening: "*The Royalty of Service!*" (John 13:1-17).