

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **WILL ONLY THOSE IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BE SAVED?**

If you have ever told anyone that you are a member of the church of Christ, you have probably had to field the above question. How would you answer the question? In reality, as I see it, it is a loaded question with built in prejudices. The challenge with such a question as the above is that it can't be answered with a simple yes or no without being misunderstood. If you answer, "yes," you will be viewed as judgmental and leave people thinking that you believe that anyone with a "church of Christ" label has a free pass to eternal life. If you say, "no," you open the door to let them believe that God has little concern for wide variations in doctrine and religious practice and will let any good person into heaven. If you are reading this, then be honest, as I seek to answer the question truthfully and tactfully.

First, notice that I said the question has built in prejudices. Most of the time the person asking the question already has a preconceived idea of what he/she wants to hear, so regardless of the answer he/she will not deal with the answer logically or rationally. Prejudice is defined in the dictionary as "a preconceived judgment or opinion, especially an opinion or learning adverse to anything without grounds, or before sufficient knowledge." It saves time since it condemns before investigation. It enables a person to form an opinion without first carefully examining the facts. As someone has written "it is a loose idea tightly held." The Jewish leaders often asked Jesus loaded questions, not because they wanted to really hear His answer, but because they were trying to trap Him into saying something they might use to turn the people away from Him.

Secondly, in answering the question, one needs to define what is meant by "the church of Christ." What I mean by the term and what the religious world means is often two different things. For example, when I speak of the necessity of one having to be baptized, I then have to explain that baptism is by a burial in water for the remission of sins because the majority of people understand that baptism can be done by sprinkling or pouring or immersion, and it can be done after one is saved, not before. In the same fashion when answering the title question I must define what is meant by the term "church of Christ." Most religious people do not understand that the term "church of Christ" is not the

designation of a denominational group of believers, but a designation of possession. In the Bible it designates a group of people who belong to Christ and belong to God. If you don't belong to God and His Son, then you will not be saved. This raises the question, "Who belongs to Christ?" Only the word of God can reveal the answer. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." (Gal.3:26-29). That's pretty clear isn't it? Those who have faith in Christ Jesus and have put on Christ in baptism belong to God and His Son. But God has more to say about this. "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (Gal.5:24). Who belongs to Christ? Those who have put off the works of the flesh, walk by the Spirit and thus produce the fruit of the Spirit in their lives (Gal.5:16-23). These are those who belong to God and His Son. They are the church that belongs to Christ. They are the ones who will be saved.

But somebody may ask, "Will Baptists be saved or will Methodists be saved, etc.?" Well, the Bible doesn't say anything about these groups, so we can't assume that they will be saved as such. Those who are saved are God's group of people – the church that belongs to Him and His Son. The question that each person must answer for himself is, "Do you belong to Christ?" And the only way to answer that question is to ask, "Have you come to God in the way He has prescribed in His word, the Bible?" If so, then the Lord has added you to His church (Acts 2:41, 47). If you try to come to Him any other way, then you are not part of His church, for He saves only those who follow His instructions (Jn.14:6; Lk.6:46). There is no other way but His way.

That may sound pretty harsh and exclusive but once again, what does the Lord say about it? Listen to an inspired apostle, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Either you are saved by Christ in the way He has prescribed and belong to Him, or you are not. Either you are in the Lord's church, through the grace of His blood and faith and obedience in His name, or you are not. Please understand that in answering the title question in the affirmative, I am not saying one is saved by an attachment to a name or a group of people, but by surrender to the Lord. One may identify oneself as a member of the Lord's church, but if he hasn't surrendered his heart, his mind and his will to the will of God, then he can call himself whatever he wants, he will not be saved. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from

Me, you who practice lawlessness.” (Matt.7:21-23). One is not saved by confession alone, but by active obedience.

While the salvation of the Lord is now open to all, God saves those who have accepted His salvation on His terms. Those who have done so, He adds to His church, His group of people, who reside with Him eternally. If a person wants to be saved, he will search the New Testament and examine the church he reads about there. He will seek for truth, not for silly things that mean nothing as far as the Lord is concerned.

- Tommy Thornhill

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## Internal Conflict

The way brothers and sisters interact is a phenomenon that is fascinating. Siblings will fuss and fight with one another. However, if one becomes the target of an outsider's bullying, the siblings unite.

I grew up the eldest of five children. I am sure an outsider would think we did not like each other. Hardly a day went by that there was not a busted lip, a bloody nose, a knot on the head, a black eye, a chipped tooth, and bruises of various sizes administered by one's own sibling. Nevertheless, if a neighbor kid decided to pick on one of the siblings, they paid the price for their impudent act of war.

This phenomenon also occurs in the affairs of the State. This past decade has seen the politics of our beloved Republic degenerate into vicious wrangling. It has been termed the politics of destruction. Political busted lips, bloody noses, black eyes, chipped teeth, and bruises have become the norm. The citizenry has lost faith with politics creating apathy for the election process. It now seems that a change has taken place. We are seeing cooperation. We are hearing words of agreement concerning the course of action our country should take being spoken by political rivals. What has brought about this change? A terrorist bully attacked our free Republic killing two thousand eight hundred and one of our fellow citizens.

The way that families and politicians treat one another is also seen among Christians. With no outside threat, local churches have a tendency to turn their attention inward. The atmosphere becomes tense and wrangling begins. The church at Corinth was a divided church. Paul addressed the problem by writing, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and (that) there be no divisions among you; but (that) ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them

(that are of the household) of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Paul" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

I draw our attention to two things. First, biting and devouring one another is a fulfilling of the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:15-16). Secondly, Christianity is under constant attack from the devil (1 Peter 5:8). I am told that Luther Blackmon once said, when brethren get stirred up they are worse than a nest of West Texas rattlesnakes. I am sad to say it, but brother Blackmon's maxim rings true. Though the cry is for doctrinal purity, I fear that conflicting personalities are the culprit. Did Paul's unyielding nature make him more correct than Peter or Apollos? Did Peter's personal friendship with Jesus make him more correct than Paul or Apollos? Did Apollos' eloquence make him more correct than Peter or Paul? The obvious answer is NO!

Today, we are not in jeopardy of losing our life for the cause of Christ. Nonetheless, the devil attacks us constantly. He uses every terroristic and cowardly means at his disposal. We are at war with him. We need to reprove, rebuke, and exhort our brethren when sin is present. We need to love the brethren in word and by our deeds (1 John 3:18). Do not wait for some tragedy to express loving deeds to your brethren.

- Glen Young

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- > "The best time to do something is between yesterday and tomorrow!"
  - > "Gratitude is the interest we owe the Lord for the life He has loaned us!"
  - > "A good thing to remember, a better thing to do: work with the construction gang, not with the wrecking crew!"
  - > "Your temper may get you into trouble, but it is your pride that keeps you there!"
  - > "The only way to get rid of your cross is to die upon it!"

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**THIS WEEK'S SPEAKERS:** Sunday morning: Jerry Ellis; Sunday evening: Jerry Holt.