

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **"A Contrite Spirit"**

"The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Psa. 34:18). "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. 6:8). Numerous Scriptures could be produced which project similar sentiments. Are we hearing them?

Jesus exemplified and typified the "contrite spirit." In all situations and on all occasions He was just, merciful and humble. See Him in the face of death (Jn. 11). See Him before the begging blind (Mk. 8). See Him among the diseased (Matt. 4). Everywhere and always He exhibited tenderness and kindness. But how did He act when faced with hatred, hypocrisy and meanness? "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23).

Jesus was not an effeminate weakling. He was daring, determined, resourceful and resolute. He never wavered before evil. He never toyed with temptation. He exposed and reproved evil deeds and opposed and rebuked evil doers. He did so, not as a raging ruler, but as a subservient Son. He acted in the best interest of truth and righteousness. He did not react or respond to His own emotions, nor as a result of the pull and appeal of temptation, but His every act was performed to please His Father. That is the essence of a contrite heart.

Christians must be compassionate, courteous, kind and loving (1 Pet. 3:8). They must "hate every false way," "the deeds of the Nicolaitans," and such like (Psa. 119:128; Rev. 2:6). They must mark the enemies of the cross of Christ, avoid them, receive them not into their houses and have no fellowship with their unfruitful works of darkness (Rom. 16:17; 2 Jn. 9-11; Eph. 5:11). All these things must be done with gentleness, meekness, patience and fear. Nothing is to be done for fame or acclaim, nor for vengeance, but to uphold truth, promote justice, manifest mercy and work righteousness. Whether it be

preaching a sermon, debating a false teacher, teaching a class, disciplining a child, reasoning with a sinner, loving one's family, working on a job, studying in school, or relaxing at home, all things must be done to glorify God. In substance, every act is to obey our Lord, to love and serve Him (Lk. 6:46). This is what it means to have "a contrite spirit."

"The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life" are the constant adversaries of an obedient attitude. No man is immune to the germs of envy, pride and selfish ambition. For this cause, one must guard his thoughts against the onslaughts of jealousy, bitterness and evil surmising. They are gangrene to the soul. They will cause one to react like a wounded animal, to lash out in defense of self. Protection of one's staked out turf or territory belongs to snarling dogs and snorting stallions, but it has no place in the kingdom of God's dear Son. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). This is the nature of "a contrite spirit."

- Larry Ray Hafley, via Guardian of Truth, January 20, 1983

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## **The Importance of Influence**

Influence is an agency serving to affect, modify or sway in some way. All of us have influence either for good or for bad. It behooves each of us to check to see which one we are having on others.

### **We Should Be Salt**

Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13). Salt is that which makes our food pleasant to eat and preserves it. Farmers well know the use of salt in preserving meat. Here Jesus is speaking of individuals who were salt. That is, they are to be instruments by which the world is influenced from moral corruption. If salt becomes saltless or loses its saltiness, then it has no more value. It is good for nothing. If we lose our influence we are then good for nothing.

### **We Must Be Light**

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good

works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16). As the sun makes objects visible, God's people, by their influence, show to the world the requirements of our God. As a city set on a hill cannot be hid, the actions of Christians are visible to the world. God's people must be seen to have the proper influence. As a lighted candle benefits others, so God's children must let their light shine as they live faithful lives in the presence of others. The purpose of this light shining is to cause men to glorify God. Paul told the Philippians, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).

### Christians Are Leaven

Leaven or yeast will pervade a mass of dough, spreading throughout the entire amount, causing it to rise. The Lord uses the figure of leaven to teach us about our influence. Hosea refers to it in this language: "They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened" (Hos. 7:4). Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened" (1 Cor. 5:7). Here, Paul is after the Corinthians because they were glorying in the sin of fornication which had been committed by one of their members. This was having its influence. As leaven influences the whole mass of dough in which it finds itself, so does sin have its influence in the lives of those around us. When such is the case, there must be a purging so we can be a new lump.

### A Christian Is An Epistle

Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (2 Cor. 3:2). Paul taught and converted the Corinthians as we can read in Acts 18:8. They became an epistle. An epistle was a letter. These Christians were known and read of all men. This is influence. When people read us, what do they read? What kind of influence are we having on others? This influence helped others see the kind of person that Paul was. Our lives must be an open book.

Let all of us work on our influence for good.

- Johnie Edwards, via Truth Magazine, January 26, 1978

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# The Fall And Rising Of Many

"Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). These words were spoken of our Lord When He was but a small baby. They present two distinct pictures of Jesus.

The first picture is of Jesus as a stumbling block, over which many of Israel would stumble and fall. For several reasons Jesus became a stumbling block to the Jews. (1) Some stumbled over His teaching. They found His teaching too hard and "walked with Him no more" (John 6:60, 66). Too, His teaching did not agree with their traditions, especially regarding the Sabbath, ceremonial washings, and certain moral questions. People are still stumbling over His teaching today for the same reasons, especially regarding baptism, divorce and re-marriage, the nature of His kingdom, etc.

(2) Others stumbled over the cross. "We preach Christ crucified," Paul wrote, "to the Jews a stumblingblock ..." (1 Cor. 1:23). The suffering, scourged, despised, dying man on the cross just did not fit their concepts of what their Messiah would be.

(3) Still others stumbled over His salvation. They preferred salvation based upon perfect keeping of law rather than upon faith in an atoning Savior through whom God's grace would be extended to all who would be obedient to Him (Rom. 9:30-33). So the Jews, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10:3). Jesus indeed was destined for the fall of many in Israel as prophesied by Simeon.

The second is a picture of Jesus as a Savior, extending a saving hand to helpless people sinking in the mire of sin. It is a picture of people, recognizing their inability to save themselves, extending their hands to grasp the only hand that can lift them from sin. Jesus indeed was destined for the rise of many.

*"From sinking sand He lifted me, With tender hand He lifted me, From shades of night to plains of light, O praise His name, He lifted me."* [Charlotte G. Homer]

Three thousand on the day of Pentecost believed in Christ, repented, and were baptized, and thus grasped the saving hand of Jesus (Acts 2:36-41). Later it would be the Samaritans, then the Ethiopian, then Saul, then the Gentiles, and then people of all the world even to our day - even to me!

The choice is yours. Jesus today will be either the occasion of your fall or of your rising. He wants to be the occasion of your rising. Obey Him.

- Bill Hall (1991)

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- "Many hold a theory wherein they regard what they feel as superior to what God says in His word! Any theory that discredits the word of God is wrong!"
  - "A spiritual depression is worse than an economic one!"
  - "It's better to be alone than to be in bad company!"
  - "There would be less falling from the Lord if there were more calling on the Lord!"
  - "An atheist cannot find God for the same reason a thief cannot find a policeman!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Amaziah: Five Signs of an Arrogant Heart!"* (Text: 2 Chron. 25:17-22); Sunday evening: *"Sorrow Will Turn To Joy, Failure To Victory!"* (John 16:16-33).