

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"Thou Hast Revealed Them Unto Babes"

In one of the prayers He addressed to His Father, Jesus said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight" (Matthew 11:25-26). He then said to those who would hear Him, "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (v. 26). In Luke's recording of these words, He adds that Jesus turned privately to His disciples and said, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see" (Luke 10:23). God has revealed truth unto man. In this present time, the Father has revealed His Son, Jesus Christ, to those who will see and hear. In Christ is revealed all truth for man to know and please God. Jesus said that God gave this revelation unto "babes," and hid it from the "wise and prudent." When Jesus used these terms, He referred to the world's judgments as to who was wise and who was naive. The "wise and prudent" are those who, due to their worldly wisdom and self-righteousness, rank themselves highly. "Babes" are those who humble themselves before the altar of God's wisdom, leaving behind human assumptions and preconceived notions. Revealed truth is "hidden" from the wise and prudent because they refuse to acknowledge it. Truth is "revealed" to babes because they are of a mind to hear and heed God's word.

Paul, in speaking of the fact that some would deem the message of the cross (the gospel) as foolishness, wrote: "For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.' Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:19-21). Education can be very helpful, but filling the mind with large doses of worldly wisdom (whether religious or secular), can endanger the soul. The more enamored we become with worldly philosophy and wisdom, the more difficult it is for us to perceive spiritual

truths. "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (2:14). This is why Paul warned the Colossians to beware of being "plundered" by "Philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Colossians 2:8). One commentator noted correctly "it is paradoxical but true that study can separate a person from the truth as well as bring a person to truth. It is the attitude of the learner that determines the result" (Robert E. Mounce, NIBC, Matthew, p. 107).

Again, Paul wrote, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty ..." (1 Corinthians 1:26). Worldly wisdom is a trap that the devil sets to lure those who will not fully submit their minds to God's revealed will. Christians should not be ashamed of lacking worldly learning and prestige. We are still fully equipped to stand up and contend for the faith and give a defense for the hope that is within us (Jude 3; 1 Peter 3:15). You may be a "babe" in worldly wisdom, but you can understand the revealed mind of God.

- Marc Gibson

Ornery Cows and Longsuffering

Once, when I was a child, my dad traded a hog for a cow. At the time, I didn't think it was a very good trade. The old cow suffered from what we called "holler horn," and besides, I did not relish the chore of milking. "Holler horn" is caused when someone dehorn a cow and doesn't take proper care. The holes become infected.

I learned two things about that old cow. One, she had her horns removed for a reason. She suffered from what modern psychologists would call antisocial behavior. Two, she was suffering from hollow belly as much as she was suffering from "holler horn." The second thing I learned caused me to feel sympathy for her. The first, however, tried my patience. When we milked, we put out feed for the cows to eat. She could eat faster than a famished teenage boy. When she finished, she would run away. If you tied her with a rope, she would jump back and forth, either kicking over the bucket of milk or sticking her foot in it. There was no way to milk her when she had eaten all her feed. I would milk frantically, but alas, it was all for naught. Try as I did, I could not finish the milking before she finished eating.

One cold north Alabama morning, I decided I was going to finish milking that ornery old cow if it killed her. And furthermore, she was not going to ruin the milk by knocking it over or sticking her foot in it. I had about three-fourths of her milk in my bucket when she finished eating. She began her little dance while I did my best to finish milking her and, at the same time, to protect the milk bucket. I decided she needed to know who was boss. I doubled up my fist and chose the soft spot between her rib cage and hip, then let fly with all the strength I could muster. Did I mention it was a cold morning, and that I was wearing a nice sturdy denim jacket? When I connected with her, my fist and arm sunk into her gut up to my elbow. Well sir, instead of quieting down like I thought she would, or at least moving away from me, she jumped on me. This knocked me to the ground, at which point she proceeded to stick her right hind foot down inside the front of my jacket, pinning me to the ground. As I surveyed the situation from my vantage point, I decided I had made a big mistake. The milk was spilled, and I was at the mercy of that old cow. Luckily, she decided to let me up, once she understood I was the boss.

As I think of the lesson I learned on that cold Alabama morning, I think of what the Lord teaches us about our dealings with one another and how we need to learn longsuffering. "Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye." (Col 3:12-13). I have too often been guilty of dealing with situations without practicing longsuffering. When longsuffering is missing, efforts to teach, reprove, and rebuke will illicit the same kind of counteraction I got from the cow. How often would a brother or sister have heeded our admonition, if we had not doubled up our spiritual fists. We perceived them to be stubborn and ornery and in need of a lesson, so we let them have it.

Even in the face of sin, we are to practice longsuffering. Listen to the words of Paul, "... admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all." (1 Thess. 5:14). Lest we think it un-Christian to be longsuffering with the erring, consider our personal condition before the Lord: "... but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Pet 3:9).

The next time your patience with your brethren wears thin, and you want to grab hold of one of them and shake him till his teeth rattle, think about a teenage boy, an ornery old cow, and a cold north Alabama morning.

- Glen Young

The Goodness and Severity of God

It seems to me that many people have an unbalanced view of God. Some picture Him as angry and vengeful, thinking He enjoys our suffering and looks for opportunities to punish us for our failures. Others prefer to view God as a cosmic grandfather figure, sitting up in Heaven in a rocking chair, looking for opportunities to get us out of trouble and waiting to grant our every wish. Neither view is accurate.

Paul told the Romans: "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off" (Rom. 11:22). God is capable of both goodness and severity. This should not surprise us, for we are capable of both, and we have been made in God's image.

The reason God can show kindness, patience, and grace to man while also being capable of indignation, anger, and wrath is because God is impartial. He is no respecter of persons. God will always approach man with kindness, patience, and grace. However, if these are rejected and one persists in sin and rebellion against God, he will receive God's wrath.

Earlier in the Roman letter, Paul had described God as rendering "to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness - indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:6-11).

It is a dangerous thing to have an unbalanced view of God. God is not out to get you, but He will punish you for your sin. Receive the forgiveness He offers you through the gospel.

- Heath Rogers

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- > "Be careful with half-truths; you might have told the wrong half!"

 - > "By examining the tongue of a patient, physicians find out the diseases of the body, and the Lord the diseases of the heart!"

 - > "Hope of ill gain is the beginning of loss!"

> "The largest room in the world is room for improvement!"

> "A wise man knows more than he tells, but a fool often tells more than he knows!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Temptations!*" (Text: 1 Cor. 10:12-13);
Sunday evening: "*The Trial of Pilate Before Christ!*" (John 18:28 – 19:16, Part 3).