

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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March 17, 2019

Volume 39, # 12

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### **Is Ignorance Bliss?**

Is there really a blessing in not knowing? Are we better off to tend to our own affairs and pass through life blissfully unaware of facts and obligations that might bother us? Many have this selfish attitude, and some even offer scriptural proof. (It is nice to know just enough to know one does not have to know.) But we (nosey) must examine their proofs.

Jesus said unto them, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." (Jn. 9:39-41). The lesson is related to the healing of a man born blind, who had never had the capacity of sight. One mentally incapable of knowing would not be accountable, so, would have no sin. But when Jesus said (v. 39), "I am come into this world that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind;" he referred to (1) meek and humble people who had never had the opportunity to perceive truth (Matt. 11:25), whose eyes would now be opened; and (2) those like the Pharisees, who had the opportunity, but who refused to see. Haughty self-righteousness (vss. 23, 34) compounded their sin and blinded them to truth.

Lu. 12:48 reads, "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." This is a portion of a parable regarding slaves and masters, when cut asunder and beaten (v.46), were practiced. The purpose of the parable is clearly stated, viz., "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" or, accountability goes hand in hand with opportunity. (See Matt. 25:14-f) The slave who failed his master was not free of guilt. He was worthy of stripes. As God's creatures, pilgrims through this life, we have obligations to our Maker and fellow-travelers — to know, and accept our fair responsibilities. In a real sense, the parable teaches that one who fails to use opportunities to learn truth and obey, is worthy of many stripes.

Paul obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief. But 1 Tim. 1:13 does not equate ignorance with justification. In v.15 Paul says he was chief of sinners. He just says his was no presumptuous or highhanded sin (See Num. 15:27-31). His railing and persecuting was done in good conscience (Acts 23:1) in keeping with what he verily

thought to be right (26:9). The mercy he obtained is available to us in the person of Christ, who died for those who will do what Paul did when he learned the truth (Acts 22:16).

Peter writes of those who willingly are ignorant of God's power and judgement (2 Pet. 3:5). He admonishes, "Be not ignorant" — (v. 8) for though God is long-suffering, we must all stand before His throne (2 Cor. 5:10). Beware presumptuous ignorance!

Finally, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. 14:38) is an admonition to deliver to Satan — cease to cast pearls before one who obstinately rejects the unified revelation of God's Spirit. Let them alone (Matt. 15:14), from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5). There will be no way to ignore eternal condemnation. (Please read Rev. 6:12-17).

- Robert F. Turner, in *Plain Talk*, August, 1973

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## Putting God's Will First

In preaching to Felix, Paul taught about "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). What does self-control have to do with becoming a Christian? The answer is, everything. One will not and cannot become a child of God until he suppresses his own will and gives preference to the will of God.

*Man Has His Own Way.* Man has his own idea of how he ought to live and conduct his life. What he thinks seems right to him (Prov. 14:12; 16:25). However, it differs greatly from the thinking of God. His ways are higher and greater than man's (Isa. 55:9-10). Following his own plans, man is led to destruction (Prov. 16:25). Examples can be found throughout the Bible of those who had their own ideas. When Naaman heard the instructions from the man of God to dip seven times in Jordan, he revealed his disappointment saying, "Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper" (2 Kings 5:11). In the days of the judges "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Paul lived in good conscience while he was persecuting the church (Acts 23: 1). The Jews were rejected by God because they ignored God's will and went about to establish their own scheme for being righteous (Rom. 10:1-3).

*God's Will Is Revealed In His Word.* The mind of God has been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets (1 Cor. 2:9-13; Eph. 3:3-5). We can now read and understand what God's will is (Eph. 3:3-5; 5:17; John 8:32). The righteousness of God (God's plan for righteousness) is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17).

*We Must Accept God's Will and Put It First.* If we are going to serve God, we must suppress our own will and submit to His. It is only those who do the will of the Father that enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). Those in the church are those who are subject unto Christ in everything (Eph. 5:24). The repentance that God demands of us in becoming his children (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31), involves a change of mind (cf. Matt. 21:28-29). This is a change from following our own will to submitting to the will of God. Then, it is no longer we, but Christ who lives in us (Gal. 2:20). If we are truly converted to the Lord, we will put the Lord first (cf. "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts" - 1 Pet. 3:15) in all things. Thus, it is not just a matter of submitting to the will of the Lord in becoming a Christian, but accepting it in "everything" (Eph. 5:24).

*Reasons for Putting God's Will First.*

1. God is smarter than we are. God's ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts (Isa. 55:9-10). Who among men is wise enough or smart enough to give God counsel, telling him that we have a better way (Rom. 11:34)?
2. Our way leads to death. Though what we think seems right and feels good, it leads to separation from God and eternal damnation (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).
3. God's will is for our good. We do not always see how some command or restriction that God has laid upon us can be for our good. However, his commands are for our good always (Deut. 6:24).
4. If we do not submit to God's will, we are against God. Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matt. 12:30).
5. Man is not qualified to be his own guide. "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

- Donnie Rader

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## **How Do You and I Measure Up?**

Matthew 5:3-11

1. How humbly do I stand before God? (v.3).
2. How sensitive am I to the misery and need of mankind? (v. 4).
3. How well do I keep my God-given powers disciplined and under self-control? (v. 5).
4. How earnestly do I seek to know and do the right? (v. 6).
5. How frequently and how graciously do I extend a helping hand to those who need me? (v. 7).

6. How closely am I in tune with spiritual values? (v. 8).
7. How well am I learning the art of getting along with other people? (v. 9).
8. How ready am I to endure hardship and to suffer for the ideals that belong to the Christian? (vv. 10, 11).

- Frank W. Myers

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## < Snippets >

“Many Christians have been carrying around burdens that the good Lord never intended us to bear. We spend precious moments and hours pushing, tugging, lifting and dragging crosses that are none of our affair. Our shoulders are battered and bruised. Let us not confuse these weights with the burdens God gives us as a part of our spiritual responsibility. Rather, let us think specifically of the hurts, grievances, resentments, antagonisms and hard feelings that eat away at the Christian's soul and destroy not only his joy but also his effectiveness. Too many of us have joined the masses of humanity who are up to their chins in self-pity over the pommeling they have received from life. We can hang a halo over our misery but it won't stick.”

- Decision

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“We have sometimes the experience, when we are talking to other people, of finding that argument and debate and discussion are no longer possible, because we and they have no common ground. There is nothing further to be said. We do not understand them; and they do not understand us. It is almost as if we spoke another language. That happens when men do in fact speak another mental and spiritual language. It is a terrible day when Jesus is silent to a man. There can be nothing more terrible for a man's mind to be so shut by his pride and by his determination to take his own way, that there is nothing that Jesus can say to him that will make any difference.”

- William Barclay, *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 2, [John 19:9] p. 286

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- > “Footprints on the sands of time are not made sitting down!”
- > “Live so that when you tell someone you are a Christian, it confirms their suspicions instead of surprising them!”

- > "The Lord has promised to supply the Christian's needs, but not his greeds!"
  - > "If you are too busy or too tired to attend worship services regularly, you are just too busy to die ... but you will anyway!"
  - > "In taking revenge, a man is equal to his enemy; in passing over it, he is superior!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Fundamental Features of Christianity!*" (Text: Rom. 16:25-27); Sunday evening: "*By The Hands of Godless Men!*" (John 19:17–42, Part 2).