

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

December 15, 2019

Volume 39, # 51

Water: An Amazing Substance!

Water is truly an amazing substance, yet it is so common, so abundant that we take it for granted. Its chemical composition is the bonding of two gases, hydrogen and oxygen and it is identified in a chemist's notation as H₂O. We are familiar with its various forms from the gaseous, steam; to the liquid; to the solid, ice and snow. We drink it, bathe in it, swim in it, float over it, generate electricity with it, soak the grass with it, buy special clothes for when it falls from the sky and on and on we could go about all the uses we make of the common and remarkable substance called water given to us by God.

God has given us water not simply as an element of our physical life, but also as an object lesson to teach us spiritual truths. Water is so much a part of our lives and covers so much of this planet that it can be said that it "day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard. Its line has gone out through all the earth, and its words to the end of the world" (Psalms 19:2-4). Listen and learn the lessons water can teach us.

It Refreshes

Out in the hot sun all day working hard, your throat begins to dry out and your tongue feels parched. You try to lick your lips and only end up feeling like you ran sandpaper across them. As the sweat drips from your brow, a picture comes to your mind of a tall clear glass of ice water, the ice cubes tinkling invitingly against the inside of the glass and beadlets of water sparkling on the outside of the glass. You almost tumble over your own feet in your rush inside for a drink of water to refresh your throat, body and mind from the thirst the heat and work has whipped into you.

How refreshing water can be. David on one occasion desired to be refreshed with water from a certain well and said with longing, "Oh, that someone would give me a drink of the water from the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate" (2 Sam. 23:15). Three mighty men broke into the camp of the Philistines just to obtain the water that would refresh David.

Jesus praised those who refreshed little ones with "only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple" (Matt. 10:42). Jesus knew how precious it was to have a refreshing drink of water as in His agony on the cross He cried out, "I thirst" (John 19:28).

God uses our physical thirst for water, our longing for refreshment to teach us the need for spiritual thirst. David expressed the thirst of a soul longing to be refreshed in the presence of his God. "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh longs for you in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water" (Psa. 63:1). As if in response to David's plea for his soul to be quenched, God promised to provide the water that would satisfy and refresh the thirsty soul, "For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water..." (Isaiah 35:6-7).

Jesus told the woman of Samaria that He was the source of the refreshing living water promised by God. "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life" (John 4:13-14). Immediately the woman desired to drink of the water Jesus offered.

The apostles of Jesus later explained how thirsty souls might be refreshed by God's living water. One must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, "so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 2:38; 3:19). Souls that are as eager as David to be refreshed in the presence of God will humbly submit to the command of baptism in water and they will indeed receive the forgiveness of their sins and the refreshing living water of God.

It Cleanses

After a hard day of backbreaking work, nothing feels quite as good as a long hot shower or bath. To soak up the water and scrub off the sweat and grime not just cleans the body, but makes one feel like a new person. We use gallons of water every day to clean our bodies, our clothes, our dishes, our cars, our pets, and anything else that we can reach with a bucket and a scrub brush.

Under the Law of Moses, cleansing with water was a frequent requirement. The frequency of cleansing with water for the priests required a bronze laver of water to be placed in the tabernacle courtyard between the altar and the door of the tabernacle. Moses was commanded concerning the laver, "you shall put water in it, for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of

meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the Lord, they shall wash with water, lest they die" (Exodus 30:19-20).

Again the Lord has given us the physical quality of water and its use in cleansing to teach us a lesson concerning spiritual cleansing. Just as dirt will make our body filthy and require water for cleansing, so also sin will make our soul filthy and require water for cleansing. David fervently prayed to be cleansed of his sins, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin ... purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psa. 51:2, 7). The Lord promised in the Old Testament a means of cleansing, "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1).

Under the New Testament, the Lord kept his promise and sent his son, Jesus Christ, to open up the way to the fountain whereby those who love God might be washed, cleansed, purified and purged of their sins. God has ordained that for one to be cleansed of his sins he must in faith submit to baptism in water, "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). Saul was commanded by God through Ananias, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). One must be baptized not to remove the filth of the flesh, but in order to give the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21). Only those who have had their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and their "bodies washed with pure water" can "draw near (to God) with a true heart and in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22).

It Is Essential To Life

Water is essential for life to exist on this planet. All creatures require water to live. The human body is three quarters water and uses water for digestion, circulation, respiration, temperature control, waste removal and many more functions. While one can live without food for three weeks, one cannot live more than three days without water. Hagar and Ishmael would have died in the wilderness without water when their skin of water was used up if the Lord had not opened Hagar's eyes to find a well of water (Gen. 21:14-15).

Throughout the ages God has made water not only a requirement for physical life but also for spiritual life. During the Patriarchal age, water became the means through which God saved Noah and his family. "God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was prepared, in which few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:20). Later, God saved the nation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt through the water of the Red Sea. Under the Law of Moses, God required that the priests wash themselves with water before entering the tabernacle in service to God and failure to do so meant death (Exodus 30:18-20).

Just as God requires water for our physical life and as he used water as a means to save those under the Patriarchal and Mosaical dispensations, God now requires water as an essential element for salvation under the dispensation of his dear Son. Jesus laid down the need of water for spiritual life to Nicodemus, "Most assuredly, I say unto you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Before Jesus ascended into heaven he told his apostles, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Because of God's requirement of baptism in water and its essentiality to our spiritual life, Peter wrote that as Noah and his family were saved through water, "There is an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism" (1 Peter 3:21).

What is truly amazing about water is that the very element which we desperately need and use so much, God has blessed us with in exceeding abundance in the form of dew, rain, ponds, lakes, creeks, streams, rivers, seas and oceans. Just has so very few need to die physically for lack of water, no one needs to continue in spiritual death for lack of baptism in water in obedience to Jesus. "See here is water, what hinders me from being baptized?" (Acts 8:36).

- Wayne Greeson

Dealing with Others Maturely

"People-dealing maturity comes only after we learn that we are all sinners, and are completely humbled before God. The "babe" seeks an "issue" so he can "give 'em Hell" and perhaps make a "name" for himself. But maturity seeks for souls, hoping to "give 'em Heaven," and save them from Hell. The babe sees himself as a General in the Lord's army; the mature saint is an expendable servant of the Lord!"

— Robert F. Turner

Absalom, The Promoter

The church has always had its promoters. By their "good words and fair speeches" they deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:18).

There are many who "promote" with misguided fervor, some project that has no basis in God's instructions. We would remind that all works truly "of God" are properly encouraged when we teach people to be more God-like. There is good reason to question any project that needs ballyhoo, flattery, and "coffee fellowship" to make it go.

Absalom was a "promoter" (2 Sam.15). He put on a great front, with fifty men to run before his chariot. He stood at the gate, watching for those who had a "cause." He pretended great interest in their case, and depreciated the king by saying, "Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man who hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice."

He was a flatterer. "When any man came nigh to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took hold of him, and kissed him." Thus, he "stole the hearts of the men of Israel." By such tactics he built up a following, so that when he felt the time was right he called for his dupes to declare him king.

"And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were invited, and went in their simplicity; and they knew not anything" (vs.11). Thus we learn not only the blueprint for selfish promotions, but also the kind of people who will be taken in by such methods.

Promoters are not limited to one class. Elders, preachers, members in no particular group -- any of these may use Absalom's tricks. "Mr. X" will sympathize with anyone who differs with status quo; flattering any who feel a bit rejected; urging on all who are brave enough to speak out -- but being careful to stay in the background so that if the argument backfires "Mr. X" will not get hurt. Men of experience have learned to spot such promoters in all walks of life.

If we feel we see an error needing correction (and all errors do) let us use forthrightness. With true humility; with love and desire for unity among brethren; go to the source of the problem, or to those responsible. Present your case with scripture; not with prejudice, threats, or the numbers you have lined up on your "side." Since none of us are infallible, be prepared to learn that you really may not "have a case."

If we would see a new work done or present program enlarged; this is commendable. Make sure it is a work authorized in God's word, and be prepared to give chapter and verse. Present it to the elders; or where there are no elders, at an appropriate business meeting. Leave pride at home, for it is possible that others may not share your judgment -- and this must not be a personal "shoulder chip."

Have convictions, and stand firmly for them. Just be sure it is God's cause you seek to further, and not your own. **BUT DO NOT BE AN ABSALOM!!!** And sharpen your wits lest an Absalom steal your heart and damn your soul.

- Robert F. Turner, Plain Talk, January, 1967

- "Ask your preacher where the Bible says a second chance to be saved is given after death. Compare his answer with Hebrews 9:27!"
 - "Self-seeking religious "leaders" find it easier to fleece the flock after they have first pulled the wool over their eyes!"
 - "With many people, sin is not merely missing the mark, its missing the whole target!"
 - "I don't know how much wood a woodchuck can chuck, but I do know more Christians need to chuck their crosses over their shoulders and follow Jesus!"
 - "An old preacher once said he wished he knew what kind of fruit Eve ate to make her realize she had no clothes on; he'd like to pass it around again!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Sin Nobody Will Admit!"* (Text: Exod. 20:17); Sunday evening: *"A Wise And Discerning Heart!"* (1 Kings 3:5-12).