

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

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Restoring A Soul

In competitive events, it is not unusual to see opposing parties wishing disaster upon each other. I have yet to see a middle linebacker cry because he decked the opposing quarterback hard enough to knock him out of the game. Nor have I noted much sorrow from the remaining contestants when one player hits the bankrupt space on the "Wheel of Fortune." In the business world, the cutthroat mentality seems to be accepted as a part of the corporate ladder climbing game. When the one on top falls, the next one is more than happy to take his place without much mourning over the associate's lot. As any of us with children know, that kind of thinking begins very early. During the typical Nintendo game at our house, Chris and Ryan make no secret of the fact that each wants the other to mess up so as to hasten their next turn at the controls. While competition is healthy in various aspects of life, we need to beware of the general belief that good will come to us as a result of other's disaster - especially in spiritual matters.

When disaster comes upon one in the spiritual realm, it means that a soul is in danger of eternal condemnation. A lost soul benefits no one. When one falls through Satan's devices into sin, no one is better off. Yet, those who would claim to be Christians sometimes seem to rejoice at the fall of a brother or sister in Christ. It is a sad fact that news of another's sin has occasionally been spread with glee among some Christians. Please notice the emphasized words. I do not believe such is the normal practice among brethren, but it has happened. Nor do I believe that most Christians react to a brother's sin with glee, but it has happened. I remember a case of two people in a congregation who had a continuing feud. When one of the two was caught in a sin, the other hit the phone to help spread the "juicy news" and further embarrass the first. The practice of such gossip seems to be increased when the sin is one of a sexual nature. If the sinner is a preacher or elder, the urge to gossip seems to grow larger. Instead of sorrowing over the fact that a soul is in danger, lives have been ruined, and great damage has been done to the cause of our Lord; a few seem to delight in spreading the details of such tragedies. No sin should serve as the kindling for a fire of gossip, nor should any sinner be the wood consumed for the glee of another's self-promoting tongue!

A few examples in Jesus' teaching should serve to declare his disgust with such behavior. For example, examine the case of the elder brother upon the return of the prodigal (Lk. 15:11-32). After the prodigal had repented and had been forgiven of his sins, the elder brother sought to rehash the sordid past of the prodigal's sins with harlots. Even though the prodigal had left such sinful relationships and had humbled himself in repentance, the elder brother desired to benefit from his father by bringing it up again. Jesus even directed one of his parables "unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought" (Lk. 18:9). The Pharisee of the story was quick to notice and confess the sins of others, particularly those of the publican. As he compared himself with the publican, the Pharisee was lifted up in pride. He did not seek, as did the publican, the forgiveness of God and transformation of his life to the instructions of the divine standard (Rom. 12:1-2). Obviously, Jesus despises the practice of rejoicing over the sins of another.

We have seen how we should not react towards the sins of another, but what should we do? The apostle Paul addresses that question:

Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself (Gal. 6:1-3).

If we are indeed "spiritual" ones, our place is to restore our brother or sister who has been defeated in a battle with sinful passions. Instead of looking down our noses at our brother, we should consider what it would be like if we were in our brother's place and see that such a scenario is possible. If we are certain of our own invulnerability to such sin, we have deceived ourselves and our fall may be imminent (1 Cor. 10:12). We must strive to help our brethren with the load of temptation under which they fell. Such is our duty commanded by God!

Since God gave us the obligation of restoring others, we should seek to follow his example in fulfilling it. After Israel had sinned against God in every imaginable way, God still offered restoration through the message of his prophet in Isaiah 57. He promised, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. 57:15). God's actions towards Israel were aimed at bringing such humility and contrition so that he might "restore comforts" unto them (Isa. 57:18). God's actions towards man have always been governed by that goal - restoration of the humble and contrite.

Is that not also the goal he desires us to pursue with the brother or sister overtaken in a sin? A good example of the principle is seen in the way God declared the fornicating brother of I Corinthians 5 was to be handled. The faithful brethren were told to "deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). Paul goes on to state that the same method was to be used for other cases where one refused to leave a sinful practice:

I wrote unto you in my epistle to have no company with fornicators; not at all meaning with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous and extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world: but as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

One might say that such cannot be done in the "spirit of gentleness" previously instructed (Gal. 6:1). However, when Paul commands the same thing of the Thessalonians, he adds, "And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:15). Thus, God declares that congregational discipline can and must be done in a spirit which shows our brotherly affection towards one overtaken in sin. The aim of such action ought to mirror God's goal - restoration of the humble and contrite.

When the brother of 1 Corinthians 5 responded in humility and contrition to the action taken, the next step in the process of restoration needed to be taken. Paul gave these instructions to the church:

Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many; so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you to confirm your love toward him (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

It was time for them to help the brother grow in service to Christ, reassured by their love. A soul had been saved from death and a multitude of sins covered (Gal. 5:19-20). They were to act accordingly. The same principles should govern our actions today. When one of a truly humble and contrite heart turns from sin and ceases the sinful actions, God covers the sins up. Who are we to dig them up again, chew on the past, and regurgitate the details? Let us help "lift up the hands that hang down" and heal the lame (Heb. 12:12-13).

Regarding the restored brother or sister, as David's penitential Psalms have helped others be restored, so can you as your contrite and broken spirit shows through to others.

- Harry R. Osborne, via Guardian of Truth, XXXV: 12, pp. 362-363, 6/20/1991

Origin and Meaning of Antichrist

The English word Antichrist is taken from the Greek *antíkhristos*, which literally means "instead of Christ".

The words "Antichrist" and "Antichrists" appear only five times in the Bible - in two of the Apostle John's three letters in the New Testament, I John and II John:

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22, ESV)

This passage gives us the answer to the age old question. The text here says the antichrist is anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is the Messiah [i.e. the Son of God].

Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (1 John 2:18, ESV).

This passage tells us that antichrist is coming in the last hour; i.e. the last hour or dispensation began on Pentecost (Acts 2), all those that denied Christ during this time were antichrists as well as those in the future from that time until the end of the world.

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3, ESV).

There is little to doubt about who is meant in this verse, surely the Gnostics which surely were many during the early period of the church after Pentecost are intended here. The Gnostics were a religious group that denied the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, they believed that Divinity could not reside in flesh and blood because of the physical body ability to decay and go back to dust.

Many deceivers have gone out into the world; they do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 1:7, ESV).

In this verse we have a further description of antichrist, antichrist is one who denies that Jesus Christ is the Messiah [i.e. Divine]. This is a good description of the Gnostic religious philosophy and they are surely included in this description.

Antichrist is therefore anyone who denies that Jesus Christ is divinity or denies that Jesus Christ of Biblical history has not come. This idea of limiting antichrist to one person [i.e. a

particular person in history] is without Biblical support. Because of these facts we conclude that antichrist is (1) any person who denies the Biblical - historical Jesus Christ [i.e. God's Divine son] in any age or (2) any group of any size consisting of a movement that denies the biblical Jesus Christ and His divinity.

- Garreth L. Clair

- > "Ask your preacher where the Bible says one church is as good as another. Compare his answer with Acts 2:47!"
 - > "The heart of education is the education of the heart!"
 - > "Some people are like rocking chairs – full of motion, but they make no progress!"
 - > "Bad habits are like a comfortable bed; easy to get into, but hard to get out of!"
 - > "Plastic surgeons can do almost anything with a nose, except keep it out of other people's business!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Lessons From Noah's Ark!*" (Text: Gen. 6:13-18); Sunday evening: Why Believe the Bible? *God's Evidence (part 2)*, p. 61.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)