

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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February 02, 2020

Volume 40, # 05

With God, One Person Can Make A Difference!

The spiritually-charged David was optimistic and enthused in his living relationship with the living God. "But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because you defend them. . . . For You, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favor You surround him as with a shield" (Psa. 5:11-12, NKJV). He wasn't psyched up with super self-confidence, but he could "strengthen himself in the Lord" (1 Sam. 30:6) because he had great God-confidence. "The Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me" (Psa. 3:5b-6). He could count on his God to help in time of need. "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved" (Psa. 16:8b). Instead of faith in faith, he had faith in Jehovah, who is the source of all power. "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I trust; my shield and . . . my stronghold" (Psa. 18:2). He didn't need a humanly devised PMA [Project Management Academy - GFS] pep talk, for his positive faith exuded active trust in doing great things by his God. "For by You I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall. It is God who arms me with strength. . . He makes my feet like the feet of deer, and sets me on my high places. . . . Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great" (Psa. 18:29, 32a, 33, 35b). His God was able! He had never sponsored a losing cause. We can have this joyous exuberance and optimistic faith in serving God. Our efforts can count for something worthwhile.

"And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one" (Ezek. 22:30, NASB). One of the leaders during Ezekiel's day could have made a difference in Judah. God needed someone to rise to the occasion and help stem the tide of moral decay. If I were alive back then, would I have stood in the gap? Would you?

Sound Familiar?

Have you ever been discouraged because you thought your efforts didn't make much difference in the overall scheme of things? When we think we're spinning our wheels, with

little to show for our work, we think, "Why bother? What good does it do to try?" Some of you have tried once or twice to lead singing or prayer, to give an invitation, teach class or talk to a lost person and seemingly made a mess of it. Embarrassed, you might resign yourself to failure. "I can't" slams the door on trying to learn to do better and go on in making a difference in the Lord's work. If at first you don't succeed, you're about average, so try, try again! Look at Jesus' first sermon in the synagogue and how they ran him away (Lk. 4:28-30). Instead of saying, "I can't," say instead, "Up until now, I haven't been able to do this, but I am willing to learn." Sometimes temporary failure teaches us the things we need to know to make progress.

Others might be discouraged, swamped in a sea of apathy, worldliness, contention or pessimism among members of the church. You might think, "Why go on? What difference will it make?" Or you might have visited several unfaithful brethren who showed no interest in the Lord and were quite hostile because you cared enough to visit. You probably feel just like the brother who had a seemingly good prospect suddenly lose interest in studying the Bible. As our heart sinks, we wonder, "How could they care so little for their soul? Isn't anyone interested in the gospel?" There's an unbelieving spouse who makes life for the believer so miserable that they're tempted to cry out, "I can't go on!" A preacher spends hours in visiting, preparing lessons, teaching and preaching, but is frustrated by a lack of visible results from preaching his heart out. Sitting at home alone late Sunday night, he wonders, "Is something wrong with me? It all seems to make so little difference, no matter how hard I try." We all have pondered upon our purpose, if we really made a difference.

A "Faith Lift"

"Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22). Our mighty, awesome God is able to make a difference between defeat and victory. "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord and You are exalted as head over all. . . . And you reign over all. In your hand is power and might; in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all" (1 Chron. 29:11-12). Our God has the power if we have the faith, for we cannot out-believe the great I AM. Our faith increases as we increase the focus on the object of our faith. Such is the beginning point of all spiritual achievement (Heb. 11:6). Wonder of wonders, he is on our side (Heb. 13:6). With him there are no insignificant lives, no little people. He specializes in the people-changing business. "For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: 'I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite

ones" (Isa. 57:15). He has not left us to struggle alone. "Am I a God who is near,' declares the Lord, 'and not a God far off?" (Jer. 23:23, NASB)

God made us for himself and his glory (Isa. 43:7), so that we might come to serve and know him and then enjoy him forever. He makes no mistakes, nor did he put us here to fail or wallow in self-pity. He took the dust of the ground, made Adam, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. This living being was a man, the height of God's creation. "What is man that You are mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:4) On a sermon tape, I heard Paul Earnhart observe how we excuse some mess we've made by saying, "Oh, I'm only human." But as David beholds the wonders of creation, he marvels at man as the zenith of creation. Made in God's spiritual likeness, to be human is to be truly remarkable. The Son of God shows us the way of obedience, to become a new and better person day by day, "raised to walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). We have vast potential, with the God-given power to think, to choose, to act and become all God designed us to be (Eph. 2:10). We're not shoddy material. We sin and fall short of his glory when our faith fails (Lk. 22:32). But by nourishing our faith, we don't have to be the way we are, but can be a changed and better person, enabled by great faith in God to do great things for Him. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20). Do we believe this? Within the will of God, what earth-shattering things would we attempt for Him if we really believed He would not fail us? "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) Who dares to fight against us if God is fighting for us? Christians are never losers, but we are the super conquerors in life and eternity, led in triumph as we follow Jesus (Rom. 8:37; 2 Cor. 2:14).

How You Can Start Making A Difference

Read in the Bible about the daring lives of those who did not trust in themselves to do tremendous things, but had trusting faith in God to do His will through them. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Amos, Daniel, Esther, Jeremiah, Nehemiah and the apostles are part of the roll call of glory. They were people like us, with problems and fears to face. But by faith, each one made a difference in his generation, amid a faithless world. They encourage us to carry on. "God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Heb. 11:40).

Their mission is not complete. We stand at a unique time on the stage of human history with a once in a lifetime opportunity to act in the drama of human redemption and destiny. There are more people alive today than have ever existed in all of history. Each one will spend eternity somewhere. We can make a difference in the lives of the people around us. God is calling all Christians for an all-out attempt to work in the urgent harvest of souls (Matt. 9:37-38). Can the Lord count on you to develop yourself into a soul-winner? No

greater issue faces us today. The eternal destiny of billions is at stake. Only you can develop and use your ability; that's an awesome responsibility! Jesus talked to thousands of people to get to those who were willing to respond. So must we be going out to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). If we don't, who will?

For us to make a difference, we need to learn to tap the power of prayer, crying out, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk. 11:1). By ourselves, our puny efforts and plans will accomplish little. But on our knees, our prayers can enlist the greater power of Providence. Little faith produces little praying. Prayer makes a difference, as it brings down blessings, wisdom and opens the door for the word (Mk. 11:22-24; Jn. 14:13-14; Jas. 1:5; 2 Cor. 1:11; Col. 4:3). Since prayer moves the hand that moves the world, a righteous person can cause a commotion when he knocks on heaven's gate (Jas. 5:16). Be righteous and pray, for it gets God's undivided attention (1 Pet. 3:12)! Nothing is outside prayer's reach, if it's first within God's will.

To build yourself up in the holy faith, commit yourself to regular, systematic Bible study. It's food for the soul, like a spiritual vitamin. Who would go several days without eating? But how much more important that you feed your soul, which needs to be nourished for eternity? "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Knowledge breeds confident faith (Rom. 10:17). Dig into the riches of God's word and it will make a difference in your life. Soon, you'll be able to make a difference in the Lord's service. For a clear, readable and overall accurate translation, I recommend either the New American Standard or the New King James Version.

"And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6:9). We need not be bogged down in excuses or defeated by circumstances. Today is as bright as the promises of God (2 Cor. 1:20). We are his co-laborers, so we need to build an optimistic, constructive attitude that we can make a difference. God sees and knows the struggles we face. But he is on our side and he is greater than any challenge we face. Keep your eye on the Lord, and by faith we can make a difference.

- Frank Walton, via *Guardian of Truth*, 01/21/1988

> Ask your preacher where the Bible says religious bodies of different faiths and orders are accepted of God. Compare his answer with 1 Corinthians 1:10 and John 17:20-23!

> "Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist, I'll butt it as long as I've got a head, and I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth.

And when I'm old, fistless, footless, and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition." — Billy Sunday

- > "Much smoking kills live men and cures dead hogs!"
- > "If people knew as little about how to handle fire as they do about to handle the Bible, every town in the world would burn to the ground tonight!"
- > "If everyone's nose grew like Pinocchio's, the amount of dishonesty in this country might be as plain as the nose on your face!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*Shame!*" (Text: 2 Thess. 3:13-16); Sunday evening: Why Believe the Bible? *The Problem of Evil*, p. 64.

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)