

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Sour Grapes

The children of Israel had a proverb in the days of the prophets. "...The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?" (Ezekiel 18:2). This of course is simply not true. A father does not eat a sour grape and a child's face is puckered from the tartness of the fruit. God would set the record straight and no longer allow Israel to cite such foolishness (Ezekiel 18:3).

We learn in the text of Ezekiel 18 that "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (verse 20).

This passage teaches us that we do not have to fall victim to our circumstances. If we have a wicked family we do have to fall prey to their wickedness. We can rise above their lawlessness, and be rewarded for our own obedience. The opposite is also true. If we have a good family, that goodness does not preserve us in our wickedness. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:10-12). Truly this is the only way it can be for God to be just and fair. "Is not My way equal?" (Ezekiel 18:25).

— Stacy Crim, via The Cornerstone, Richmond, Virginia

Emphasizing the Basics

If the Lord's church is to survive and prosper, it must never depart from the basics of the gospel.

A wise and experienced elder once told me, "I've never known a church to grow that didn't emphasize the basics. If a church is struggling, they just need to get back to first principles and preach them like the people have never heard them before." That was good advice.

If Christians do not have a basic understanding of the elementary principles of the gospel, they have no solid foundation on which to build and grow. One of Christ's parables spoke of the need of making certain that we build on the right foundation (see Matthew 7:24-27). That reminds us of the importance of teaching some of the same lessons over and over again.

There are several reasons for this.

First, there are always young people growing up who have heard these lessons from the time of their birth. But, at a very young age, most of these studies do not sink in. At some point (and really, only God knows when it will be), a lesson that young people have heard numerous times finally takes hold and they understand an important truth for the very first time. We should never assume that our young people know and understand Bible subjects just because we know they have heard them before.

Secondly, we can never be sure when a visitor will show up and, perhaps, hear a vital Bible lesson at a crucial time in his life. It may be the first and only time that person will ever have the opportunity to understand an important doctrinal point, which could make the difference in his eternal destiny. That's also why we should make certain to explain the plan of salvation during a lesson every time. You just don't know who may be listening carefully and seriously considering obedience. He might have listened many times in the past, have done nothing about what he was learning, and still be receptive this time.

Also, we must not assume that our older members (not in age, necessarily, but those who have been around a while) can always remember everything they've ever heard. It might have been a long time since they have studied a particular subject, or they might be aware of the truth but not know where the verses are that teach that truth. It is always helpful to be reminded of things we know to be true so that our convictions are deep and not easily shaken. These things help to mature and stabilize us spiritually "till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:13-14).

There will be certain subjects that we will never outgrow. We must never be afraid to preach lessons that members have heard many times. When someone has been a Christian for several years, there is almost no way to preach something new to him. As people have said, "If it's new, it isn't true; and if it's true, it isn't new." No matter how much "strong meat" of the word people can handle, those who are the most mature spiritually will never grow tired of hearing these basic principles of truth, because they know how

important they are. They love all truth and do not have to be entertained with "some new thing" all the time.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12).

If people are not growing spiritually, if the church is struggling with carnality and division, if souls are not being saved, look first at the preaching. Maybe we need to just get back to the basics.

- Roger Hillis

REDEMPTION

Helping us understand our need for the *salvation* that God offers in Jesus Christ is a concept very closely related: redemption. This more specific word means to buy, to buy back, or to recover by buying. In ancient Israel, both property and life could be recovered, or redeemed when a buyer came forward and made the appropriate payment. In New Testament times, the word was used to denote the purchasing of a slave for the intention of setting him free.

In explaining every man's need of redemption from the bondage of sin, Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin." (John 8:34). Similarly, and parallel with this metaphor, is Paul's question in Romans 6:16, "Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"

The concept of redemption beautifully describes the process whereby one is recovered by purchase, bought back from his slavery to sin, and thus set free. Recall that Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8:31-32). The widespread slavery in the Roman Empire when Jesus spoke these words was the basis upon which His listeners could easily understand their spiritual meaning.

Redemption is a significant concept in understanding the Lord's mission in coming from the Father: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45). Here the word redemption is not used, but the passage is crucial to the subject. Peter reminded other Christians of the immeasurable

cost in redeeming men from the guilt and consequences of their sins: “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” (1 Peter 1:18-19). This was accomplished in order that the ones redeemed would put their “faith and hope ... in God.” (1 Peter 1:21). The Lord’s life of service led Him to an act of self-sacrifice which served as the ransom payment for the many in need of redemption.

In a context of discussing the grace of God (cf. Rom. 3:24), the Apostle Paul said of Jesus: “who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.” (Titus 2:14).

Do you not agree that “redemption” should be regarded as precious in the Christian’s vocabulary as it reminds him that his salvation has been purchased at great and personal cost? The Lord has given Himself to redeem us from the bondage of our sins and set us free from their consequences. Paul further wrote of Christ: “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Colossians 1:13-14). Friend, may we encourage you to respond to the Lord’s gracious offer of spiritual freedom and live a new life of good deeds?

- Gary Smalley

The Preacher’s Reminder ...

Our first priority should be to find peace with God. Sin brings unhappiness, conflict, and chaos into our lives (Psa. 1:1; Isa. 57:20-21). A person’s iniquities cause fellowship with God to be broken (Isa. 59:1-2). If we are to avoid eternal condemnation, we must make peace with God. This cannot be accomplished on our terms; obedience to the Lord’s will is the key (Isa. 55:7-9)!

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- > “Ask your preacher where the bible says I can worship God acceptably in an assembly where false doctrine is taught. Compare his answer with 2 John 9-11 and Romans 16:17.”

 - > “Bible mathematics: We do not add to the Bible nor subtract from it, but rightly divide it!”

- > “A weak mind is like a microscope which magnifies trifling things, but cannot receive great things!”
 - > “The most destructive acid in the world is found in a sour disposition!”
 - > “Can the Lord count on you to develop yourself into a soul-winner?”
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*An Ugly Story of Beautiful Love!*” (Text: Hosea 1:1-2); Sunday evening: Why Believe the Bible? *The Problem of Evil*, p. 66.

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)