

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **Since September 11**

Let's face it: Americans are slow learners. We think that repeating cute little clichés long enough will justify nearly anything.

Clichés die hard. Usually, only a personal or national disaster of monumental proportions can dislodge them from our thinking. Admittedly, the events of September 11, 2001, have forced a few people, at least, to abandon some of the more popular clichés.

Since September 11, we don't hear quite as many people affirming that one religion is as good as another. If this were true, it would mean that the religion of radical Islamic terrorists is as good as the religion of Christ. Do average Americans really believe one religion is as good as another? Do we believe these terrorists should be praised for their religious zeal, or punished for it?

Another saying that suffered a minor setback is, "It doesn't matter what you believe." If so, then the views of terrorists are of equal worth to the views of decent, law-abiding citizens. Perhaps our school system should train our children to believe that terrorism is good. What do you think?

And what about the cliché that asserts, "Truth is relative"? Perhaps our first question should be to ask if this statement is "true." If no, it doesn't deserve our attention. If yes, it's not relative. When a person claims that something is true to him, we wonder why terrorists in airplanes don't have the right to claim that murdering people is "truth to them"! You may not like their view of "truth," but they do. What gives you the right to force your "truth" on someone else? Does this sound familiar? If truth is relative, then no one is safe!

Closely related to the relativity of truth is the claim that morals are relative—there is no right or wrong. If morals are relative, then who is to say that terrorist attacks are wrong? Who are you to judge others?

Friend, isn't it about time to bury these old lies and pursue the truth of God? There is such a thing as truth. God says so: "...then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31, 32).

- Rick Duggin

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## ***CONTEMPLATING: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS*** **(Part 4)**

We have shown in our studies thus far that the Bible teaches that every responsible, accountable individual is in need of the forgiveness of his sins. The Bible teaches that the GOSPEL is the means whereby man can receive forgiveness from God. Last week we directed attention to the parable of the sower in order to show that the gospel can be received or rejected depending on the condition of one's heart, and every man controls his own heart. To reject the gospel is to be lost eternally. To receive the gospel AND practice it in our lives is to gain heaven. I have never talked with any person who says, "I want to go to hell when I die." But I have talked with many that condition their hearts in such a way that the gospel cannot get in, stay in, and produce spiritual life. Our next consideration in the study of forgiveness is FAITH.

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH. The Bible teaches in irrefutable terms that forgiveness will not be possible without faith! - "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." (Heb. 11:6). "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16). "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:36). "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24). These few passages deal with the importance of faith and are sufficient to show that faith is required by God.

WHAT IS FAITH? "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1). Faith is confidence in respect to things hoped for. Faith takes the place of proof or demonstration that is needed to satisfy the mind in regard to the reality of things unseen. Thus, when God speaks, His word is, to the believer, an end of all controversy. There is no way that man can come to realize the truthfulness of God's word through his five senses. Faith grasps this truth, relies on it, trusts it, acts upon it, and faith is supported by it. Faith is not that information which we get by seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or feeling. Faith is not a judgment or a decision that is based on possible or

probable evidence. It is not a mere guess or speculation based upon what we have in our minds. Faith is a result of reliable witnesses and competent evidence that point to the truthfulness of a thing. We have faith because of a firm persuasion, a genuine conviction, which is the result of that which we accept as truth.

**THE SOURCE OF FAITH.** Because God has commanded us to believe, we must conclude that he has given us everything we need in order to believe: the evidence to believe and the ability to believe. (If man did not have these, God would not condemn him for not believing.) In Luke's record of the Lord's explanation of the parable of the sower, he states, "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved." (Luke 8:12).

John states: "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20:30-31). John wrote enough to produce faith which would result in life. Consider Paul's teaching in Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." We can only get the faith that pleases God by hearing the truth that comes from God, the word of Christ. Faith that brings forgiveness and salvation comes through no other means than the GOSPEL.

**THE KINDS OF FAITH.** The Bible speaks of "little faith" (Matt. 6:30), "great faith" (Matt. 8:10), "weak in faith" (Rom. 14:1), "strong in faith" (Rom. 4:20), "rich in faith" (Jas. 2:5), a "dead" faith (Jas. 2:17, 26), and "faith was perfected" (Jas. 2:22). The faith that we are to have is a strong faith, a faith that comes from the pure word of God rather than the teachings of men (1 Cor. 2:1-5). This is "the power of God." We must have a "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6) which, with patience, enables us to "inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12). The faith that we get by means of God's word is that which saves, justifies, remits our sins (Acts 16:30-31; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:21; Acts 10:43; Rom. 5:1).

**FAITH THAT SAVES.** Saving faith is not "faith only" or "faith alone" even though thousands have the opinion that it is. Please be objective in your consideration of the important contrast below:

THE WORD OF GOD: "But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED

GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone." (James 2:20-24).

THE WORD OF MEN: "Justification ... is bestowed ... solely through faith in Christ." (*The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches*, p. 62). "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." (*Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Church*, p. 29).

As can be seen by the deadly contrast above, men depart from God's word and dishonor Him in their religious devotions by "TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN." (Matt. 15:9). Far too many of this nation's most influential preachers teach this false doctrine and give false assurances to those that accept it.

The Bible teaches that the only faith that is acceptable to God is the faith that works: "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." (Jas. 2:17). "For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (Jas. 2:26). Many preachers in the religious realm teach that a man is saved at the point of faith without any further act of obedience. Therefore, what they actually teach is a salvation that is by a DEAD FAITH. Remember the teaching of Gal. 5: 6 that we suggested earlier: that which avails is "faith WORKING through love."

Please consider these passages and the connection between faith and obedience that is taught in them: "... Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles ..." (Rom. 1:4b-5a). Consider: "but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith;" (Rom. 16:26). In Acts 6:7 we can read how, "The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith." According to 1 Peter 1:22, it is OBEDIENCE TO THE TRUTH that purifies souls: "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls ..." Certainly, the Bible teaches that this command to believe must be obeyed in order for one to have his sins forgiven!

- Gary Smalley

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## Preparing the Soil

Pioneer preacher Raccoon John Smith was once asked, "If the gospel is so plain, as you say it is, why do you have to labor so hard to get people to understand it?" Smith replied,

"I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch, and though I had the kindest soil and the best seed, and the sowing was easy, I never got top nor root until I first took my ax and hoe and briar knife and went in and hacked and grubbed and cleared the ground. The Lord knows I do not esteem it hard to preach the simple gospel to those who are prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice, and cut down the systems, and clear away the sectarian trash that cumbers the minds and hearts of the people."

- From the book, *The Life of Elder John Smith* by John Augustus Williams

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> "Clean living takes a lot more than soap and detergents!"

> "Deciding not to choose Jesus is still making a choice!"

> "Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop!"

> "Nothing else ruins the truth like stretching it!"

> "Wisdom has two parts: (1) having a lot to say, and (2) not saying it!"

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## ***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)