

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **God Uses Ordinary People**

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say” (Acts 4:13-14).

Peter and John had just been used by God in an astounding miracle, the healing of a man crippled from birth (Acts 3:1-8). They were dragged before the Jewish religious leaders for interrogation, and Peter answered that it was “by the name of Jesus Christ” that the man had been healed (Acts 4:10). As one writer pointed out, “The Jewish priests, scribes, and elders suffered from elitism, believing that only a limited number of people in high positions could be used by the Lord. That elitism continues in the thinking of many religious people to the present day. But God confounded that prejudice. He chose to use those who the snobbish might consider just ordinary, everyday people, such as Peter and John, to do great things for Him.”

Have you ever felt that God couldn't use you to serve Him because you were just too ordinary? Zig Ziglar has often said that you are not a meaningless generality. God makes you a meaningful specific. He gives meaning to your life. From Genesis to Revelation, the Lord used ordinary people to meet needs and be used as His instruments to bring deliverance, provision, or leadership. This was certainly true of David. Do you remember the time when a giant Philistine was taunting the armies of Israel? Everyone was paralyzed with fear. So whom did God select? He chose a shepherd boy who had been sent by his father to take food to his brothers on the frontlines. He went out to face the giant with a few stones, a sling, and, more importantly, faith in God. That was the person God used.

At another time in Israel's history when they were immobilized by fear because of their enemies, following seven years of cruel oppression by the Midianites, Israel cried out to the Lord God for relief. God found Gideon threshing wheat. He was convinced that God

had called the wrong person. But God selected Gideon because he didn't trust in his own ability. Gideon was conscious of his own weakness and the difficult tasks before him; therefore he was an ideal example of how God works deliverance through ordinary people. Gideon trusted in God, and He used Gideon to deliver Israel.

Remember that the apostle Paul said, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God" (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). All over the world God is using ordinary people to advance His cause. God will use anyone who is willing to advance His Kingdom. The question is, are we ready to let God use us? By following God's lead, you will be an answer to prayer and used by God to change and save souls.

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." (- Jim Elliot).  
- Guy Roberson

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## ***CONTEMPLATING: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS*** **(Part 5)**

Last week we studied a few passages of scripture which show that "... 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). We have shown that "... faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17). We pointed out from the scriptures that the faith that saves is not mere mental assent, agreement, concurrence, and acquiescence, but a faith that leads one to obey every command that God has given to us in the Bible. Today we want to present the fact that the Bible teaches all to repent in order to be forgiven of sins.

**THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.** The importance of repentance is shown by the emphasis God has placed upon it in his revealed truth. Notice that repentance is required of ALL: "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). The king, the beggar, the rich, the poor, the wise, the unwise, ALL are commanded by God to repent. "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9). For those that will not repent, an everlasting torment awaits: "I tell you, no, but unless you repent,

you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). If we desire to please God by our faith, we must obey His command to repent.

WHAT IS REPENTANCE? Anything so important that a man will perish without it, is important enough for man to learn what it is and how it functions that he may profit by doing it. We might first get an indication of what repentance is by showing what it is NOT:

(a) Repentance is not sorrow for doing wrong. The following passage makes a distinction between "sorrow" and "repentance", even between what is called "the sorrow of the world" and "repentance". "For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." (2 Cor. 7:10). Godly sorrow is not repentance, but it brings men to repentance.

(b) Repentance is not a turning to God because the following verse makes a distinction between "repent" and "return" (be converted - KJV), and it also places "repent" before "return." "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;" (Acts 3:19).

(c) Repentance is not reformation of life because John the Baptist made a distinction between repentance and reformation of life when he told the Pharisees and Sadducees who came to his baptism to "Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance;" (Matt. 3:8). The change of conduct that is brought about by repentance is the fruit which they needed to bring forth. Their manner of life needed to show that they had repented; thus, "Then prove your repentance by the fruit it bears." (Matt. 3:8, NEB).

We may observe from the case of the two sons what repentance is: "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go work today in the vineyard.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he regretted it and went." (Matt. 21:28-29). Repentance is a change of mind or purpose which leads to a reformation of life. When we repent, we change our minds from wrong to right, and that change leads to a change of action. Any person claiming to have repented of any sin, yet continuing the practice of that sin, has failed not only to repent, but has failed to understand the Bible meaning of repentance. In Acts 19:18-20 we find how some Ephesians gave evidence of their repentance: "Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." In Acts 16:32-34, we find how the Philippian jailor gave evidence of his repentance: "And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and

immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household."

**WHAT INDUCES REPENTANCE?** It will be beneficial for us now to raise another question: What motives lead men to repent?

(a) Previously mentioned is the truth that "... the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, ..." (2 Cor. 7:10). Repentance is one of the actions that brings to us "forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).

(b) Repentance brings spiritual life: "When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, 'Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life.'" (Acts 11:18).

(c) The fear of judgment and eternal punishment motivates repentance. "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31). Paul gave reason why our aim should be "to be pleasing to Him" in 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

(d) Romans 2:4 suggests another motive that would lead men to repent: "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" It is the goodness of God that brings salvation through Christ. It is the goodness of God that provides forgiveness in Christ and every spiritual blessing. When we read in the Bible of the goodness of God, we desire His blessings and are moved to turn away from evil and do good.

**FAITH BEFORE REPENTANCE.** The preaching of the gospel produces faith (Rom. 10:17) as man receives it. It is through the preached word that man learns of his sinful condition, learns of God's displeasure for the sinful, learns of his need to repent, learns of forgiveness that God has made available, and learns of His promise of eternal life for the obedient. Thus, the hearing of the word of God produces faith, out of which repentance must come! Acts 2 is a record of gospel preaching where Peter preached to those who had killed the Christ, and he convicted them of their sins (Acts 2:36). They realized the terrible fate awaiting them as the enemies of God (Acts 2:34-35), and wanted to save themselves from the wrath of God (Acts 2:40). "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what

shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). It is quite obvious that these men BELIEVED that Jesus is the Christ, and that the message spoken by Peter was actually God's message to them. This was the reason they asked for further instructions. Their faith provided the basis by which they knew to ask for other instructions. The very next requirement that was commanded of these believers was REPENTANCE (Acts 2:38).

"I tell you that ..., there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents ...." (Luke 15:7).

- Gary Smalley

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> "Little sins add up to big trouble!"

> "Freedom isn't the right to do as you will, but the power to do as you should!"

> "Think of your own sins, and you will become more understanding of the sins of others!"

> "Peace starts with a smile!"

> "Don't let your worries get the best of you; remember, Moses started out as a basket case!"

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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)