

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Good For Evil

Most Bible students remember the teaching of Jesus that commands his disciples “to turn the other cheek.” In the Sermon on the Mount, He called to mind the teaching of Moses’ law which demanded that Jews as a matter of justice exact an “eye for an eye” and a “tooth for a tooth.” He then taught His disciples to the contrary: if a man “smites thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39).

This certainly, at first reading, would be viewed by His disciples as a “hard saying” — one that is difficult to accept and practice. And it is. But as the years pass — maybe as a result of age, physical weakness, or a natural tendency to be cowardly — I have found this command to be less demanding. I seldom build up or feel any urge to retaliate and get even when I feel I have been wronged. Where I do struggle, however, is at the next level to which both Peter and Paul take this instruction of the Lord.

The apostle Paul, when he reaches the practical application of the gospel in his epistle to the Romans, instructs them to “render to no man evil for evil” and then goes to another level and commands these brethren: “if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink” and “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17, 20, 21). Peter also writes of disciples being “loving,” “tenderhearted,” “humble minded” and rather than “rendering evil for evil” or “reviling for reviling” to turn away from evil and render a “blessing” to those who persecute and reproach them (1 Peter 3:8-11).

What both apostles tell us reveals what the love of Christ, who died for the ungodly, demands of His disciples. As followers of Jesus who must walk in the footsteps of their Master, disciples must act with positive good and loving kindness toward their enemies. With many brethren it would be fine if they could pray for their enemies, as Jesus taught His disciples (Matthew 5:44), and then leave them to themselves and their own thoughts and feelings. Few of us would feel a need to harm our enemies or to get even by rendering evil to them.

But are we able to move to the next level? Can we reach out to them with positive acts of kindness to show them the love of our Master and Savior? Gospel preachers, likely more than others, have had to face brethren who are angry, who want them fired, and who say and do unkind things to advance their agenda of getting rid of the preacher.

Multiple other reasons create faction and bitterness in the lives and hearts of brethren toward one another. Incidents likewise occur in the world of sinners where saints must live and conduct themselves in an exemplary manner. I personally have found little problem overcoming bitterness and petitioning God for them and my relationship with them. But the next level of reaching out with positive and loving acts of kindness to mend and reestablish relationships that might open up opportunities to influence enemies spiritually and bring them to Christ is one that challenges a disciple's maturity in Christ.

Rendering "good" for "evil," brethren, is the ultimate challenge and meaning of love and maturity and perfection in Christ (Matthew 5:43-46). If your enemy is naked, clothe him; if he is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink. Love, William Barclay writes, is "undefeatable good will" and "unconquerable benevolence" — a devotion to mankind, including enemies, that no evil deed or spiteful act must be allowed to remove from a disciple's heart or life.

- L. A. Stauffer

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## ***CONTEMPLATING: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS*** **(Part 10, Final)**

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AFTER OBEDIENCE. We have presented God's plan of salvation from His inspired word. We have given passages from the Bible to show what an individual must do in order to be saved from past sins. Remission of our sins is not something that produces some mysterious or miraculous feeling deep within ourselves. Joy is felt because of the individual's understanding of and obedience to the truth (Acts 8:39). Forgiveness takes place in the mind of God. Prior to our faith and obedience, we were viewed by God as unrighteous. After obeying Him, He views us quite differently, we are righteous; He has forgiven us. The emotions of the heart are truly involved in one's being forgiven, but the genuineness of this forgiveness is not determined by emotions or feelings. Our hope for spiritual blessings must be based on the firm foundation of God's Word, not upon our personal feelings. Feelings are fallible. God's Word is infallible!

We have stated that forgiveness takes place in the mind of God. When we obey His will, He begins a new relationship with us. The assurance of this cannot be verified by our feelings or emotions. There is another important change in our relationship that takes

place in the mind of God. Far too many have ignored it because it is not discernable by human feelings or emotions. The only means by which one may realize this is by knowing the Word of God. We can learn of this when we read about the Jews in Jerusalem obeying the gospel on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2). Those that were baptized in order to receive remission of sins (Acts 2:38) were "added to the church" by the Lord (Acts 2:47, KJV).

The same process which makes one a Christian constitutes him a member of the Lord's church. No one can be a Christian without belonging to His church. The church includes and consists of all Christians (the saved). When the Lord added the saved to the church (Acts 2:47), He added all the saved, as soon as they were saved. That is why one cannot be a Christian without being a member of the church. God adds everyone to the church who becomes a Christian, at the same time and by the same process he becomes a Christian.

(1) THE CHURCH IS THE BODY OF CHRIST. "He is also head of the body, the church ..." (Colossians 1:18). "... on behalf of His body, which is the church ..." (Colossians 1:24). "as head over all things to the church, which is His body" (Ephesians 1:22,23). "... as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body." (Ephesians 5:23).

(2) THIS BODY, OR CHURCH, INCLUDES AND CONSISTS OF ALL CHRISTIANS. "For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." (Romans 12:4-5). "For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). "But now there are many members, but one body." (1 Corinthians 12:20). "Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it." (1 Corinthians 12:27). "with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. ..." (Ephesians 1:10). "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13). "and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." (Ephesians 2:16). "*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;" (Ephesians 4:4). No man can be a Christian and not belong to the church, any more than he can be a Christian and not belong to Christ, for the reason that the church is the body of Christ.

(3) THE CHURCH IS THE HOUSEHOLD, OR FAMILY, OF GOD. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household," (Ephesians 2:19). "... so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, ..." (1 Timothy 3:15). Every Christian is a child of God (Gal. 3:26), and every child is a member of the family of God, which is the church. No man can be a Christian and not be a child of God, and no one can be a child of God and not belong to the family of God, which is the church.

(4) A SPIRITUAL BIRTH MAKES A MAN A CHRISTIAN, A CHILD OF GOD, A MEMBER OF GOD'S FAMILY (THE CHURCH). "... unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) "for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." (1 Corinthians 4:15). "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures." (James 1:18). "for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God. ... And this is the word which was preached to you." (1 Peter 1:23, 25). "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ..." (1 John 5:1). Everyone that is born again is a child of God. Everyone that is born again is born into the family of God, which is the church. The same process that makes one a Christian makes one a child of God, a member of God's family, a member of the Lord's church. It includes and consists of all of God's people. Now it is one thing to become a member of the body of Christ (the kingdom of God), and another thing for a person to unite with a local congregation to worship, grow, and work.

- Gary Smalley

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\* "Sin has two great powers; it reigns and it ruins!"

\* "Devoting a little of yourself to everything means committing a great deal of yourself to nothing!"

\* "An atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support!"

\* "I make it a rule of Christian duty never to go to a place where there is not room for my Master as well as myself!"

\* "The right train of thought can take you to a better station in life!"

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** The sermon for Sunday morning is: *Perilous Times!* (Text: Matthew 2:16-18).

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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)