

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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From the Son of Thunder to the Apostle of Love

The apostle John, one of the sons of thunder (Mark 3:17), once reacted strongly to a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus. He along with his brother asked, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” (Luke 9:54). It was obvious that he was a man of great passion and conviction, and one who allowed his anger and passion to lead him to drastic action. On this occasion, Jesus admonished him and James, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (9:55-56).

This same John is called by many the apostle of love. The name is well deserved. John emphasized Jesus’ teaching on love for God and man in his gospel, and his epistles are filled with exhortations for Christians to love one another.

“He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him” (1 John 2:10).

“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (1 John 3:10-11).

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

“And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also” (1 John 4:21).

“And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another” (2 John 5).

“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church” (3 John 5-6).

It is amazing how the influence of the Christ affected John. He came to know that love for God is seen in obeying His commandments. He recognized that one can't love God unless he loves his brother. He understood that it was important to love those in the world enough to preach the gospel to them. And, he fully embraced the idea of loving your brother and sister in Christ, as you do yourself.

Some Christians seem to have the idea that it's OK for brethren to not get along or care for one another. John knew that such wasn't the case. One of the saddest things you hear of as a child of God is a lack of love between brethren. A brother or sister in Christ who ought to love another, but who can barely tolerate them. Such a thing ought not to be! “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11).

I recently came across a discussion between brethren who were talking about the issue of attending physical worship services (rather than virtual) in the pandemic. Good brethren differ on this issue, as you know. One man in the discussion, in a fairly short comment, said he wished that some (of his brethren) would just SHUT UP, and QUIT BEING STUPID about these things. It is rather appalling, but unfortunately there is too much of it going on. The world sees it, and our influence is greatly harmed.

Casting aspersion upon the motivation or honesty of a brother in Christ is inappropriate. Paul wrote that love, “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Corinthians 13:7). And yet we can, at the drop of a hat, be hateful to our own spiritual family. This is shameful.

The devil is working hard these days to divide the people of God. Anytime he can, he seeks to drive a wedge between brethren. Our only hedge against him is to “love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22). Brethren, think on these things.

- Stan Cox

HONOR THE KING!

Since the horrible world-wide pandemic is viciously at work destroying people, many of us have tried to learn more about it and how to combat it by watching News broadcasts, maybe more than we normally do. In doing so, maybe you have observed what I have.

I recently finished reading a short biography of Edward R. Murrow, who was one of America's most celebrated broadcast journalists. We need more news reporters like this man. He was the trail-blazer that brought live reports from the streets and rooftops of London during the battle of Britain into the American living room. Interestingly, he repeatedly clashed with his boss over the conflict between journalistic integrity and corporate profits. I say this to make this point: broadcast journalism is not what it used to be! There has been an obvious erosion of standards since the days of Edward R. Murrow. Sensational stories of the tabloid variety are now pedaled as "news," and many journalists have achieved a new low, foreign to the accuracy, integrity and reliability of many in the previous generation.

The word of God commands this: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king." (1 Peter 2:13-17). Practically, this admonition promotes an orderly society by citizens having a proper respect for authority.

All believers are admonished to, not only submit to the king, but also to honor him. The "king" of Peter's day would equate to the President of our day, the chief authority in civil government. Christians honor the President by virtue of his office: he represents an authority that is ordained by God (cf. Romans 13:1-2).

How out of step the present Western world is with the sacred words of scripture! Our President has addressed the nation daily to inform every American of the virus threat and what the experts in their respective fields are advocating and doing to destroy the virus and return Americans to their normal lives and jobs. Many journalists who are allowed to participate and ask questions have resorted to badgering the President with accusatory questions, framing them into imagined contradictions, making false charges and continuing to interrupt the President as he responds to questions. Yes, we have seen them stand as the President and his associates enter and exit the room, which is an appropriate sign of respect, but in many cases their lips betray the content of their hearts.

And for a political opponent to rip up a copy of the President's speech is an act you would expect to see among second-graders, not an adult, elected official. Mature Americans have lived through the administrations of several Presidents, and not everyone agrees with the respective policies of each of their administrations. But everyone should agree that we owe honor to the office of the President. And we all should give it. By giving it, we are not condoning ANY sin in the President's life. We are following the command of our Lord. There has never been a President, Governor, Prince, or Ruler that has lived a sinless life, ever. It is not about honoring sin. It is about honoring the office.

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance." (Psalm 33:12). "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people." (Proverbs 14:34). America, hear the message from Almighty God: "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

- Gary Smalley

Can a Good Man Be Saved and Not Be a Member of the Church?

In the title of this article, I am not using the word "church" in a denominational sense. The Bible knows nothing about a denomination. Our question for discussion is: "Can a man be saved and not be a member of the church the Lord had in mind when He said, 'Upon this rock I will build My church' (Matt. 16:18)."

I believe the Bible teaches that a man must be a member of the church described in the New Testament. Notice the following reasons:

1. There is an example of a good man having to obey the gospel (Acts 10). In verse 2 it is said that he was a devout man, a God-fearing man. In Acts 11:14 it is said he had to hear words whereby he and his household could be saved. He is an example that a man cannot depend on his moral goodness. He obeyed the commands and was added to the church (Acts 2:47).
2. Redemption is in Christ (Eph. 1:7). One cannot be in Christ without being in the body of Christ. The church is His body (Eph. 1:22-23); so one cannot be in Christ without being in the church. A penitent believer is baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). He is also baptized into the body (1 Cor. 12:13). This shows that to be in the body is the same as being in Christ. If one is saved out of the body of Christ, he is saved without being connected with the head. Christ is the head (Col. 1:18).

3. Reconciliation to God is necessary to be saved. One is reconciled to God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:18). It is said that one is reconciled in the body of Christ (Eph. 2:16). So if one is saved outside of the body, which is the church, he is saved without being reconciled to God. Who can believe it?

4. Those outside of the body are aliens (Eph. 2:12). He is without God, a stranger, no hope, and without Christ. Can that kind of person be saved? Paul said that those in the body of Christ are fellow-citizens with the saints (Eph. 2:19).

5. Finally, the church, which is His body, is the family of God (1 Tim. 3:15). Members of His church are heirs (Rom. 8:16-17). They are God's children. Will God save any other than His children? Does God have children outside of His family?

- B.G. Hope

* "A big fall begins with a little stumble!"

* "A diamond is a chunk of coal that made good under pressure!"

* "Obstacles are those frightful things you see when you take your eyes off the goal!"

* "For peace of mind resign as general manager of the universe!"

* "Two marks of a Christian, giving and forgiving!"

THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The sermon for Sunday morning is: *The Bible: a Book by Workers, about Workers, for Workers!* (Text: Colossians 3:23-24).

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)