

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Idolatry

“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10:14).

The Scriptures tell us whom to worship and how to worship Him, but they never just command us to worship. Man, with a spirit derived from God and in the image of God, naturally worships something. Those who turn away from the worship of the one true and living God turn naturally to idolatry, sorcery, or both (Galatians 5:20). The Gentiles, who refused to know God, turned to idols (Romans 1:20-23).

“Idolatry originally meant the worship of idols, or the worship of false gods by means of idols, but came to mean among the Old Testament Hebrews any worship of false gods, whether by images or otherwise, and finally the worship of Yahweh (the LORD – KS) through visible symbols” (ISBE; cf. Hosea 8:5-6).

The first of the Ten Commandments forbade Israel to worship idols (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10). This included not only images of various animals or even humans representing foreign gods (Romans 1:22-23) but attempting to represent the LORD, who is an invisible spirit, in some visible way (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Exodus 32:4-5). The primary reason the Lord rejected Israel and Judah and sent them into captivity was their idolatry, the most basic breach of His covenant with them (Acts 7:38-43).

Our Catholic friends are idolaters. They claim they don't worship the images before whom they bow but “venerate” them. Worship is “an act of homage or reverence” (Vine. 686). Veneration is worship. Catholics make a distinction where there is no difference. Catholics pray to Mary and the so-called “saints,” but we are to pray to the Father through His Son, Christ Jesus (Colossians 3:17). This leaves out prayers to saints, including Mary, and leaves out Mary as the one through whom we pray to the Father.

The apostle Paul lists idolatry among the works of the flesh, because idolatry's appeal is to fleshly desires. The worship of idols was and is accompanied by the grossest of immorality (Romans 1:24-32; cf. Jeremiah 19:2-6; Amos 2:7-8; Hosea 4:13).

All idols are in actuality nothing; there is no spiritual reality behind the physical image (1 Corinthians 8:4).

The New Testament describes anything that takes the place of God in our hearts as idolatry. Covetousness, the greedy desire for material things is idolatry (Colossians 3:5-6). We can make an idol of pleasure (2 Timothy 3:4), and many Americans do, living for the enjoyment of the moment. Many make an idol of human wisdom (Romans 1:22-23), and many others put their families ahead of the Lord, and thus turn them into an idol (Matthew 10:34-37).

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (1 John 5:21).

Works Cited: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
Vine. W.E., An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words

- Keith Sharp

Scars: Their Stories

Paul had them from beatings (Acts 16:22; II Cor. 11:24). Job, from Satan (2:7-8) and the ten men from leprosy (Luke 17:11-19). Their scars were a result of standing for the truth, living a godly life, and illness. What do your scars say about you?

Paul's scars told stories of standing for a faith so strong even death was an option (Acts 21:13). Job's story was one of righteous living yet filled with questions. And the ten men told of great joy when healed (Luke 17).

Physical scars can carry emotional scars as well and then there are scars that are never visible. What type of scars do you carry? Are they debilitating? Visible or hidden? Do you question or embrace? Are they self-inflicted?

Every person carries their own scar or multiple scars. Methods of coping are numerous. Paul says we are to rejoice (Romans 5:3). God told Job there were reasons beyond his understanding (38:1-18) and the healed leper praised God (Luke 17:18). Can I find a way to grow, encourage others and glorify God through my scars? (I Peter 4:12-19).

Of course, Christ is the ultimate carrier of scars. Although His scars were inflicted by others, He allowed them to be made because they were a means to fulfilling His purpose. Christ's love for us and total devotion to His Father were demonstrated by scars down His back (Luke 22:63), through His hands and feet (Luke 24:30-40) and in His side (John 19:34).

How did HE cope with His scars? He prayed that they may never happen (Matt. 26:39). When God answered, "no," He used them to glorify God (John 17:1-5) and demonstrate His love (Luke 22:42). Scars never completely go away. However, they cease to hurt.

If my Savior, the son of my Creator, could use His scars to glorify God then I ...

"He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds." (Psalms 147:3)

- Unknown

PREVAILING IGNORANCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

Those that are acquainted with the Lord God of heaven and earth are well aware that there is a certain prevailing ignorance concerning the Scriptures. To illustrate this truth, we have but to ask a few questions, the answers to which are obvious. How many contemporary churchmen have even a cursory familiarity with the prophetic books of Lamentations, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, to mention a few? What about the truths that are taught in the book of Hebrews concerning animal sacrifices, purging with hyssop, the washing of water, the ministry of the High Priesthood, the ashes of an heifer, the priesthood of Melchizedec? Similar questions ad-infinitum could be proposed. The teaching of the Apostles concerning atonement, sanctification, justification, the eating of blood, modesty of dress, responsibility toward government, etc., also present areas of great ignorance to the masses.

The truth is that the Scriptures are simply not being preached in their wholeness; the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) is virtually unknown to the multitudes. There are those that are highly successful in obtaining tremendous response to their church programs; there are others that are specialists in organizational efforts; still others have a certain prowess about presentation which lures many people. There are building experts, bus program experts, educational promoters, youth program intellectuals, etc. But where are the authorities on the Word of God? Where are those to whom people may go to know what thus saith the Lord? Is there not a dearth of such men in the land? What honest hearted individual will fail to acknowledge without any hesitation whatsoever that

a knowledge of the Scriptures is extremely rare today? Is this not apparent to any and all that have eyes to see and ears to hear?

The question that we ask in view of these things is this: Is God pleased with a church, with a religious organization that is NOT known for its promulgation of the Word of His prophets, His Son, and His Apostles? Can such organizational machinery ever find a place in the heart of the Savior that spoke to men's hearts, and that died that men might live unto God? Is salesmanship really an adequate substitute for spiritual power and for hearty response to the "truth as it is in Christ Jesus"?

We are well aware that it is often countered that such as ourselves ought to have a larger and more impressive response than we do. But when the truth must be watered down, and the methods of men employed to attract the people, we cannot before God indulge in such efforts. If men do not respond to the pure Gospel, to the wonderful Word of the Lord, then they are lost, without hope and without God in this world. No amount of sugar-coating will ever change that! Nothing that may appeal to their flesh, arouse their intellect, stir their emotions, will ever erase the fact that they are basically and fundamentally dead toward God, unresponsive to His Word, untouched by the sacrifice of His Son. Religious culture does no more to cover man's sin than Eve's fig leaf did to cover her nakedness. Somewhere along the line, man must confront his basic enmity and hostility toward God, shake loose from it, and receive the Word of the Lord. We consider that the necessity of men to employ attractive methods to reach people "for Christ" is only a very resounding commentary on the deadness of men today, and of their total unacceptability to God. The prevailing ignorance of the Scriptures is proof of this!

- Given O. Blakely, The Christian Courier, October, 1973

Those Not Allowed to Enter the Promised Land: WHY?

Bible students are familiar with many facts and figures recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Recall that there were 603,530 Israelites who left the slavery bondage of Egypt to become the inheritors of the land of Canaan, as the Lord had promised them. But of that massive number, only a small fraction would be allowed to enter. Those who were twenty-years-old and upward died during the punishment period of forty years while wandering in the wilderness south of Canaan. They had refused to put their trust in the Lord God and follow His commands (Numbers 13-14). Those nineteen and under during the rebellion against the Lord were led into Canaan by Joshua.

Certainly there were hardships of wilderness travel that those in flight from Egypt had to endure. There were some days without water, and when they arrived at Marah, the water there was too bitter to drink (Exodus 15:22-26). As they grew tired and weary from travel, they did not have the food they wanted (Exodus 16:2-3).

When they came near to the land God had promised them, spies were sent in to investigate and report back the details of what they observed to provide familiarity when they entered. But the majority of the spies gave a bad report which discouraged the faith of the people. "Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there." (Numbers 13:28). These people were giants. "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight." (Numbers 13:33). "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." (Numbers 13:31).

In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews observes: "So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief." (Hebrews 3:19). Absolutely none of the difficult hardships they experienced in traveling provide the reason why they were not allowed to receive the land. The superior strength of the land's inhabitants did not provide the reason they were denied entrance. Just as God had helped them overpower the Egyptians in their departure, He certainly would aid His people with the things they needed to overcome any obstacles that stood in the way of their receiving the land that was promised by God. Truly, the reason they were unable to enter the land was because of their own unbelief. They had no one to blame for denied entrance but themselves.

Similarly, if you and I fail to enter into the eternal kingdom of heaven it will not be because of difficult circumstances we have had to endure while traveling through life. It will not be because Satan enticed us with temptations that we were not able to resist (1 Corinthians 10:13; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). It will not be because sin is rampant in the world (Noah was saved from a wicked world, Genesis 6:5). Exactly like those of Israel who were rejected, we will be rejected because of unbelief.

How can we insure belief? The answer is found in the context of the passage that told us why they were not allowed to enter. Please investigate it for yourself (Hebrews 3:12-19). We must not fall away from the living God in our hearts through a hardening caused by the deceitfulness of sin. We must hold fast to the assurances we have received from Him, hearing His word. We must not continue in sins against God, being disobedient to Him. We must become partakers of Christ. Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). May we encourage you to grow in faith?

- Gary Smalley

- > "Conformists to Christ are non-conformists to the world!"
 - > "An optimist makes opportunities out of his calamities. A pessimist makes calamities out of his opportunities!"
 - > "The glory of life is love, not to be loved; to give, not to get; to serve, not to be served!"
 - > "Good Investment: the bonds of matrimony aren't worth much unless the interest is kept up!"
 - > "Church membership does not make one a Christian any more than owning a piano makes one a musician!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The sermon for Sunday morning is: *Remember Two Great Laborers for the Lord: Aquila and Priscilla!* (Text: Acts 18:24-28).

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)