

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### When You've Gotten It, Can You Enjoy It?

“There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: A man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor, so that he lacks nothing for himself of all he desires; yet God does not give him power to eat of it.” (Ecclesiastes 6:1-2)

IN SETTING OUR GOALS AND MAKING OUR PLANS, WE OFTEN ATTRIBUTE TO OURSELVES MORE POWER THAN WE ACTUALLY HAVE. When we aspire to material wealth, for example, we've been taught by the motivational speakers to believe that we can have anything we want: it is only a matter of having enough drive and ingenuity. But there are two faulty assumptions hidden in this thinking. One is that we can acquire however much wealth we want to acquire, and the other is that we will be able to enjoy it once we get it.

But it is God who determines, first, whether we'll be allowed to accumulate wealth and, second, whether we'll be able to enjoy it. Any of us might be the “man to whom God has given riches and wealth and honor” and yet “God does not give him power to eat of it.” The truth is, God can keep us from accumulating wealth if He wants to (despite our drive and ingenuity), and He can just as easily keep us from getting any lasting joy out of it. So write this down and never forget it: if we wrongfully aspire to wealth, one of God's worst punishments is to let us have the thing we thought we wanted and then make us more miserable than we were before we got it.

So when our “dream comes true,” will it make us happy? Maybe it will, but then again, maybe it won't. Foolishly, we assume that getting the wealth we desire will provide the freedom to enjoy life and open the door to happiness. But that won't be the result if God doesn't grant the enjoyment of the things He permits us to acquire. God may see to it that our wealth gives us not freedom but slavery, and there is no worse bondage than bondage to wealth. As the saying goes, “Chains of gold are stronger than chains of iron.”

At the end of the day, freedom has little to do with what we have or don't have. In fact, it doesn't have much to do with our external circumstances at all. Even in prison, Paul had more freedom than most of those walking the streets outside his prison. Freedom is freedom from the sinful desires that have bound us to the devil.

"Freedom does not mean I am able to do whatever I want to do. That's the worst kind of bondage. Freedom means I have been set free to become all that God wants me to be, to achieve all that God wants me to achieve, to enjoy all that God wants me to enjoy."  
(Warren W. Wiersbe)

- Gary Henry

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## The Modernist's Penknife

The 36th chapter of Jeremiah records the tragic account of a king's vain attempt to destroy the word of God. In the opening section of the chapter, Jeremiah the prophet is commanded by God to write down in one volume all the predictions he had uttered against Israel, Judah, and all the surrounding nations, from the beginning of his prophetic ministry.

When this is accomplished, the words of Jeremiah are then read to all the people during a general fast. When king Jehoiakim hears of this, he sends for the roll of Jeremiah and commands that it be read to him. The king was so displeased with the word of God written by Jeremiah that he cut the roll with a penknife and cast it into the fire. This, however, did not destroy God's word. In the last portion of the chapter, Jehoiakim is punished by God and removed from the throne. Jeremiah is commanded to write another volume to replace the one destroyed by the king.

There are those today, who like the wicked king, are displeased with certain things they read in God's book. Therefore, they try to "cut out" certain sections of the Bible by calling them myths or legends. Many so-called preachers have been influenced by critics of the Bible who have tried to up-date and modernize the Bible by downgrading portions of the Scriptures as fiction.

One such preacher had been with a congregation a few years when he was called to the bedside of one of the members who was very sick. "Perhaps you would like me to read and pray with you?" asked the preacher. "Yes," replied the man as he took his Bible and handed it to the minister. When he opened it, he was shocked at what he saw. Many of the pages were torn away, some of the chapters were missing, and a number of verses were actually cut out! The preacher asked reluctantly, "Haven't you

got a better Bible than this?" The man replied, "When you came to our church, I believed the entire Book. But as soon as you told us that certain sections were not true, I removed them. When you said that some stories were probably fiction and referred to them as fables, I tore them out. I think if I had another year under your teaching, I would have nothing but two covers left!"

Such is the effect of modernism! The critics have so mutilated the word of God with their modernist penknife that there is hardly anything left. They have cut out the miracles of the Bible and denied the pre-existence, Virgin Birth and Resurrection of Jesus. The account of creation is said to be of human origin and there never was such a thing as the world wide flood recorded in Genesis. When the critics are through, there is really nothing left of the Bible but the two covers!

However, the modernist's penknife can no more destroy the word of God than could Jehoiakim's penknife in the long ago. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Friends, "the word of our God shall stand forever" (Isa. 40:8). Those who attempt to silence the message of God only bring His displeasure and condemnation upon themselves.

May we, as the good people of Thessalonica, receive the gospel "not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thess. 2:13). The Bible is God's word (2 Tim. 3:16). Let us accept its claims, believe its facts, obey its commands and enjoy its promises!

- Dan Flournoy, via *Words of Truth*, 3/26/82

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## Do You Love The Lord God?

I am confident that the Bible students who read this will indeed affirm their love for Jehovah God. (I am fairly certain that no atheists are reading.) However, the more we learn from God's word and human experience, it is not difficult to perceive that people originate *their own* concepts of God and how to express love for Him, rather than using the words God has revealed to us to form the understanding and response that the Lord God intended for mankind. What is it regarding what God has said and done that would motivate us to love and serve Him?

The Holy Scriptures are clear in expressing that Jesus Christ, God's Son, accomplished something for sinners that sinners were incapable of doing for themselves: Christ Jesus "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6); He "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession"

(Titus 2:14); God “rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14), such “that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19). John declared of Christ: “and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” (1 John 2:2). Now, here is the question to consider: Since He provided this wonderful blessing for you at great cost, should that not be the motivation to love Him in return? The apostle John helps us with the answer: “We love, because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:19).

The love that God expresses to mankind is a deliberate and undefeatable goodwill that acts in the best interest of all. We should try to emulate this love. We may express it best in becoming and remaining Christians. Jesus said, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15). His servant apostle stated again that truth: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.” (1 John 5:3). We should find no difficulty in obediently following the One we love.

And now, seriously, do you love the Lord? Have you obeyed His gospel commands that you might be added to the body of all saved believers? If you have not, can you rightly affirm that you love the Lord? If you are a Christian who has drifted away from faithfulness to the Lord, will you renew your love for God by returning to Him in faithful service? Friend, may we encourage you and help you? (Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17; Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 47; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21; Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)

- Gary Smalley

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- > “The rejoicing Christian: something to do, someone to love, something to look forward to!”
  - > “Happiness will never come your way as long as your back is turned on duty!”
  - > “Happiness is the result of being too busy to be miserable!”
  - > “It is all right to be always looking for compliments — to give to somebody else!”

> "Money may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven and as a universal provider for everything except happiness!"

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** The sermon for Sunday morning is: "*Jesus Christ, The Way To Forgiveness!*" (Text: Colossians 1:13-14).

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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)