

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

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DIVINE AUTHORITY

In every realm of life man needs at least two things before he can successfully work and cooperate with others: a standard of authority and a respect or acceptance of the standard. Imagine what chaos would result if we had no standard by which to measure time, weight, distance or money. Workmen could not cooperate in building anything if each man had his own ideas about how long a foot should be or if some refused to accept the common standard.

The need for a standard of authority and for acceptance of it is no less great in religious matters. The existence of many different and conflicting standards of religious authority and the rejection of the Bible as the one and only divine standard of authority has plunged the religious world into utter chaos and confusion.

Even in other areas of authority we can plainly see the results of rejection. Lack of respect for parental authority has motivated some young people to rebel against their parents. A lack of respect for governmental authority is evident in the ever rising crime rate. Perhaps at the heart of all such rejection of authority is the fact that the home is all too often lacking in instruction and guidance that children need so badly to equip them for living in the here and now and in the hereafter. Some vital religious questions regarding divine authority need to be answered.

1. WHAT IS DIVINE AUTHORITY? From God's viewpoint, it is the right to command and to expect obedience and to punish disobedience. From man's point of view, it is the right to act or to do something. This right comes about because God says do it, and that because He said to, no one has a right to disobey without suffering the consequences.

2. WHAT KINDS OF AUTHORITY ARE THERE? Mainly there are three kinds of authority: primary, delegated and usurped. Primary authority belongs exclusively to God by virtue of the fact that He is God. Delegated authority is authority that one has because God has given it to him. Usurped authority is that which one assumes when God has not given it to him.

3. WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF USURPED AUTHORITY? (a) Human reasoning - 1 Cor. 1:21. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:8-9). (b) Conscience - Acts 23:1; 26:9-10. Paul always had a good conscience even though he persecuted Christ and his church. He thought he was right in so doing, but his conscience was deceived. He had a good conscience and did what he thought was right, yet he was a lost man until he obeyed Christ - the true authority (Acts 22:16). (c) Custom or tradition - Matt. 15:13. Those who make their appeal to "the way we've done it for years" make an appeal that in itself will not stand the test of judgment. (Cf. Col. 2:8). (d) Man-made doctrines - Matt. 15:9. They make worship vain and "shall be rooted up." (e) Governmental authority - Acts 5:29. Indeed we ought to obey the laws of the land (Rom. 13), but if there is a conflict "we ought to obey God rather than man." (f) The majority - Matt. 7:13-14. Since the majority of people choose to go to torment it is a sad mistake to justify any practice on the grounds that "everybody else is doing it." (g) Parents - Matt. 10:37. A person's kinfolks are not the standard by which one will be judged (John 12:48). All too often that "ole time religion" that was good enough for mother or daddy may not have been good enough for God. The book of Acts is full of examples of people who had to turn away from the false religion of their parents. (h) Feelings - Feelings are deceptive. One person may eat pizza and feel great and sleep like a baby. Another might do the same and feel terrible and be up half the night. Nowhere in the Bible does God sanction feelings as a standard of right or wrong.

4. WHO HAS AUTHORITY IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS? Christ has all authority (Matt. 28:18-20). This leaves none for the pope in Rome or for anybody else or for any church on earth. God gave it to Him and He alone has the right to say what is right and what is wrong in serving God, His Father. We are to hear Him, not Moses, Elijah or anyone else (Matt. 17:5).

5. HAVE YOU SUBMITTED TO THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST? This is truly an important question. Many think they have, when in truth they have not. The gospel of Christ teaches that one needs to hear the word of God, believe it, repent of his sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and to be baptized in water for the remission of his sins (Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17; John 8:23-24; Luke 13:3; Acts 11:30; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3-5). If you have not been baptized for the remission of your sins you have not obeyed Christ. Remember, your parents, conscience, preacher, pope, church, feelings, or the majority are not what determines right or wrong in religion. Only Jesus has this right. What about those who are Christians? Are you doing all that the Lord has commanded?

- Tommy Hagewood

Via *The Edifier*, West Rogersville church of Christ, 3/29/1981

The Challenge of Abundance

“I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need”
(Philippians 4:12)

WOULD YOU RATHER LIVE IN A LAND OF ABUNDANCE OR ONE OF SCARCITY?
Would you rather have most of what you want in life or little of what you want? To a worldly person, the question would be simply ridiculous, but think twice before you answer, and try to be honest about what your priorities really are.

Maybe we could start by totaling up the disadvantages on both sides. The disadvantages of having little are obvious — perhaps painfully so — but the disadvantages of having much are just as real, even if they aren’t so obvious. Having all, or even most, of what we want can destroy us spiritually if we don’t face frankly the principal problem that goes along with satisfied circumstances: the fact that it is much harder to keep God in the right place in our hearts.

Most people assume that being poor is hard and being rich is easy, but Paul said that he had to learn how “both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” Probably more people have been hurt by satisfaction than by dissatisfaction, but neither scenario is easy or automatic — both take learning and discipline before we can handle them and not be harmed spiritually.

Now you may say that if you had to choose between the problems of being full and those of being empty, there would be no contest: you’d choose the challenge of abundance. And truthfully, most of us would. That’s why we have so little patience with successful people who complain about the disadvantages of their success — for example, celebrities who whine about not having any privacy. We just want to say, “As problems go, that one compares pretty favorably to some others. Why don’t you just grow up and get used to the difficulties of having gotten what you wanted?”

But what about us? If God would let us have the kind of life that we want, all of our problems would be over, wouldn’t they? No, they wouldn’t. If we ever got what we wanted in this life, we would soon find ourselves faced with challenges we never knew existed before. In this broken world, having what we want is not easy. So if you find yourself “abounding,” watch out.

“The problems of victory are more agreeable than those of defeat, but they are no less difficult” (Winston Churchill)

- Gary Henry

THE CHRISTIAN'S BANNER

The song, "The Banner of the Cross" was written by D. W. Whittle in 1884. The first verse, as does each, lauds the Christian's banner, the cross: "There's a royal banner given for display, To the soldiers of the King; As an ensign fair we lift it up today, While as ransomed ones we sing."

Banners can be flags or streamers that are usually lifted up by being attached to a pole or standard for increased visibility as they can be seen from a distance. They are useful in identification of a group of people, land, territory, or space. Also, as the song indicates, a banner provides a rallying point for festive celebration that provides the occasion for remembrance of great accomplishments, causes, names, and emotions of great rejoicing.

There are a few references to banners in the Bible, one of which was in Exodus 17:15. Recall when Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. Aaron and Hur supported Moses' hands with the staff of God in his hand, as he presided over the battle from the top of the hill. When the Lord gave His people the victory, He promised that the memory of Amalek would be blotted out from memory. Then, to commemorate the victory, "Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner;" (Exodus 17:15).

In Psalm 60:4, the Lord Himself set up a banner for His people: "You have given a banner to those who fear You, That it may be displayed because of the truth." As always, the rallying point for God's people is the Lord Himself. Rallying around Him, taking a stand with the Lord and for His truth can inspire renewed resolve in the hearts of people to be faithful to Him.

For Christians, "Let the standard be displayed!" as we tell the story of the crimson banner. The Lord claims His own, as we march in time with His orders, "'Neath the banner of the cross!" The joyous and victorious sentiment of David, in the long ago, comes to mind: "We will sing for joy over your victory, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners. May the LORD fulfill all your petitions." (Psalm 20:5).

- Gary Smalley

* "The Bible should be our steering wheel, not our spare tire!"

* "The character you end life with is the character you begin eternity with!"

* "Worry is a subtle form of atheism!"

* “Money will buy: a bed but not sleep, books but not brains, food but not appetite, finery but not beauty, a house but not a home, medicine but not health, luxuries but not culture, amusements but not happiness, religion but not salvation!”

* “The gem cannot be polished without friction nor the child of God cleansed without adversity!”

THIS WEEK’S LESSON: The sermon for Sunday morning is: “*Jesus Christ, The Way To God!*” (Text: 1 Timothy 2:5).

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)