

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

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### The Hell We Find in Our Minds

The poet John Donne was a brilliant man. At age ten, he was proficient in French and Latin; at age eleven, he attended a school that became part of Oxford; at age fourteen, he matriculated to Cambridge; at age seventeen, he graduated from Cambridge. In time, after being pressured by friends and the king, he became an ordained Anglican clergyman and preached to overflowing crowds at St. Paul's Cathedral. But despite all this, Donne lived under a dark cloud. In the irresponsibility of his youth, he wrote some things he later viewed as blasphemous and obscene (one was an essay in praise of suicide), and he lived in constant dread that these would become known and be his ruin (some of them did resurface after his death). "If only I had never written them!" was his constant moan.

One of life's bitterest lessons is when we learn we are capable of doing things we will come to wish we had never done. After experiencing this, the agony of guilt becomes real. John Nelson's (a stonemason who was one of John Wesley's assistants) description of how his guilt affected him rings true: "Oh the hell that I found in my mind when I was alone!" If you want to read a description of the hell you can find in your mind, read Psalm 32:3-4. If there was any way David could have undone what he did, he'd have done so. The misery that resulted from his despicable deed with Bathsheba and his unconscionable murder of Uriah was unrelenting. Paul couldn't undo the crimes he committed (Acts 8:1, 9:1, 22:4, 26:10). It's often the case that people who find themselves in David's, Paul's, or Donne's situation often spend their life tortured by guilt.

But there's no need for this. If some wrong we did can be righted, let's right it. But surely (am I wrong here?) one of the greatest aspects of heaven's mercy is found in the fact that even when a wrong can't be righted, it can be forgiven. And it's in forgiveness—and in believing in its reality—that clouds are lifted and peace returns. David learned that adultery and murder can be forgiven (Psalm 103:10-14). Paul learned that Christ Jesus came to save sinners, including those guilty of heinous crimes (1 Timothy 1:15). The only solution to "If only I'd never done it" and the resultant hell we carry inside is the forgiveness Jesus gives. So let us confess our sins and believe 1 John 1:9. And in regard to our

victims, let us pray that God cleanse those we've defiled, strengthen those we've weakened, set right those we've misled, and recall to Himself those we have alienated from Him.

For Jesus' sake.

- Kenneth Chumbley

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## **I Saw the Light!**

I first saw the light of Christ in the lives of godly men and women who were letting their light shine as commanded by Jesus (Matthew 5:14-16). I'm sorry to say that even as a child I saw others who claimed to be Christians but whose lights were concealed under bushels of indifference and immorality. But in the first cases just mentioned I did see the light.

God's people have been "called out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). God has shone into their hearts "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). This shining was not through some miraculous means but rather through "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" being preached to them (2 Corinthians 4:4-5).

The light of the Christian is a reflection of the light of Christ--a light revealed in the gospel. One must not merely view this light but must also accept it, obey it and abide in it (John 3:16-21; Ephesians 5:8, 13-14; Romans 13:12-14). What tremendous blessings we have when we experience this in our own lives and when we see the light of Christ in the lives of others!

Paul spoke of these blessings in the following words: Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated [us] into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:12-14).

Paul also spoke of the responsibilities we have as a result of receiving such blessings. For an example, note carefully the following passage:

But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others [do], but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of

the day be sober, putting on the breastplate faith and love, and [as] a helmet the hope of salvation. For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11).

Truly it is great to be a Christian and to see and live the life of life, of love and of light that is found only in Christ Jesus.

Are you a child of God? Have you seen the light? If so, join with me as we praise the Lord! If not, wake up from your sleep. Life is swiftly passing as we journey toward one eternal night or one eternal day.

- Tommy Hagedwood

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## Some Thoughts about the Cross

The events surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus holds special meaning for all Christians. Perhaps the following thoughts might add a special dimension to these events.

Simon, a Cyrenian, literally carried the cross of Jesus. When we read this account, can it not serve to remind us to take up our cross and follow Him? Can it not remind us that He depends on our help to carry out His will on earth (Mark 8:34)?

When we picture in our minds the outstretched, nailed hands and arms of Jesus, we can recall His words, "Come unto me ..." His arms are always open to receive us.

The two thieves who were crucified with Jesus were situated, one on His right and one on His left. At the second coming, when He sits upon the throne of His glory, all nations will be separated one from another; the saved on His right and the lost on His left. This can be a reminder to be on the "right" side of Jesus (Matthew 25:33).

The cruel death Jesus suffered is an example to remind us that we too can face whatever type of death is in store for us. He will see us through it (Hebrews 4:16).

Jesus had the disciple whom He loved (John) to take His mother into John's own house. This is a lesson to us that, unlike Cain's question to the contrary, we are our brother's keeper. We have a charge to love and take care of the needs of our brethren (1 John 3:17).

The parting of Christ's garments can serve to remind us all not to be concerned about the material aspects of life. We must lay up for ourselves "treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6:19).

The title Pilate wrote and put on the cross, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS, should remind us daily that Jesus" ... is King of kings and Lord of lords. We must honor Him and acknowledge His power always and in all ways.

- Red Springer

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## **"I am not like other people!"**

Think carefully: have you ever heard someone say with regard to personal sins, "I am not like other people!?" They may have said, "I am not as bad as a ... (thief, murderer, adulterer, etc.)!" Now this question: why would a Christian ever give a single thought to saying something like this? "I am not like other people!" (See Luke 18:11).

"I am not like other people!" Really? "Rather, let God be found true, though every man be found a liar," (Romans 3:4). [The NLT has, "Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true."] Using the Lord's question, "Did you never read in the Scriptures ...?" (Matthew 21:42), notice: "we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;" (Romans 3:9). "The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one." (Psalms 14:2-3); "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way;" (Isaiah 53:6a); "there is no man who does not sin" (1 Kings 8:46); "in Your sight no man living is righteous." (Psalms 143:2). "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." (Ecclesiastes 7:20). "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." (Isaiah 64:6); "death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). "But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin," (Galatians 3:22). "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8).

Now, will you say this again: "I am not like other people!?" This is the prayer of self-righteousness! If such represents your thinking and your words, then the Lord says you are not justified (Luke 18:14). We can always find great faults in others while minimizing our own. When we feel contempt for sins in others without remembering our own

transgressions, we lack a firm grip on reality, we have denied the truth. And how will the Lord deal with us because of this guilt?

- Gary Smalley

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\* "A successful marriage isn't finding the right person. It's being the right person!"

\* "A talent for the Lord will wither if not used!"

\* "A turtle only makes progress when it sticks out its neck!"

\* "A weakness in our attitude becomes a weakness in our character!"

\* "Actions speak louder than words!"

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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)