

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jesus Would Have Us Obey the Apostles' Commands & Examples

Many people have a desire to be saved, and some of these same religious souls have chosen to rely on only a select few Scriptures for the basis for all their beliefs. I am sure you have heard it said that Jesus' words are the only important passages – in other words, you only have to be concerned with the red-letter portions of your Bible to serve God. We are indeed blessed to have Jesus' words for guidance so we can rightly serve God, but it is important that we ask "what would Jesus say" about the importance of the Scriptures written by the apostles. Would Jesus agree that only the red-letter portions of our Bibles are of critical importance?

When discussing the coming of His church, Jesus told his apostles, "and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18). This passage sure makes it sound like Jesus is placing critical importance on the things that the apostles would be saying and doing during the age of the church, the kingdom of Jesus. Here, Jesus says that the apostles' teachings and examples were already authorized or "bound" in heaven.

Knowing that He would leave the apostles to return to heaven, Jesus did not leave their teachings and examples to chance. "These things have I spoken unto you, while yet abiding with you. But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:25-26). This was Jesus' plan all along! He told the apostles all He could at that time knowing that much of it would be misunderstood and forgotten. But after His ascension back to heaven, Jesus would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, to guide the apostles, teach them, and remind them of the things Jesus wanted done. The words of the apostles are certainly beginning to look very important.

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John 15:26-27). Jesus again shows that the apostles would have the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter guiding them. This Spirit was coming to the apostles from the Father Himself.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:13-14). Jesus' own words here tell that the apostles would declare to us the very things of Jesus! Jesus makes it clear that to heed only the red-letter portions of the Bible is to ignore Jesus Himself! We must heed what the apostles say, and we must follow the examples that they set for us. Their words and examples are Jesus' message every bit as much as Jesus' own words.

What would Jesus say about listening to the apostles' commands and following their examples? What would Jesus say about the importance of those Scriptures written by apostles? Jesus has plainly told us that the apostles' messages were not their own. They were proclaiming Jesus and God's truths to the world. To obey the apostles' instructions, and to follow their examples, is to follow Jesus' own will. We dare not ignore their words.

- Randy Baker

There's No Need to Hurry!

The late evangelist, D. L. Moody, tells of a preacher who was preparing a sermon on the urgency of receiving Christ when he fell asleep in his chair. The preacher had a strange dream in which he heard a group of demons discussing how to devise a scheme to lead people into hell.

One of the evil spirits said, "Let's tell people that the Bible is not the word of God and that it cannot be trusted." Other spirits spoke up and said that isn't enough to persuade men. Another demon said, "Well, let's tell them that God doesn't exist, that Jesus was only a man, and that there is no heaven or hell." The other spirits rejected that idea as well. Finally, a third demon said, "Let's tell them that there is a God, a Savior, a heaven and hell. But, let's assure them that they do not need to hurry, because they have all the time in the world to be saved. Let's encourage them to delay their decision to serve God."

Satan is the master of deceit. He doesn't care if we believe in God because he also believes in God. He doesn't care if we accept that Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

He was there and witnessed the entire crucifixion. He doesn't care if we believe that the Bible is God's infallible Word. He knows Scripture and knows that God doesn't lie. He isn't even concerned if we believe that the church is the body of Christ.

What Satan wants is for us to put God off. To tell God that we will serve Him when we have time, or get the kids through school, or finish our other commitments. He wants us to believe there is no rush, no need to be in a hurry. Sure, he would be delighted if we just denounced God completely, but he knows historically that approach has limited effectiveness.

Time is God's gift to us. Each day is an "extension" of life granted by our heavenly Father. Each day He longs for us to fill each moment in deep fellowship with Him, in sharing His love, His grace, and His message of redemption with a dying world. God wants our hearts without diversion, without distraction, without reservation.

The demons in the preacher's dream were correct. Tell the world that there is no rush. Tell believers that they will have time to serve God ... later. That is Satan's deceptive and fatal message.

- Al Behel

YOUR WILL BE DONE

When we learn to properly honor and respect Almighty God and pray for His rule in the hearts of all people, the sentiment that is on our prayer lips is this: "Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10b). The early disciples of the Lord were learning these vital priorities as He taught them to pray.

In order for the Christian's prayer to be sincere, he acknowledges that God knows what is best. Pause to meditate on this, dear disciple. Are we fully assured that truly, our heavenly Father knows what is best? In everything? In the world? In our lives? There are so many professed believers in the world that can't seem to get past this point. One can see it in the decisions they make, the words they speak and what they do. Who really knows what is best for MY life? Is it me? Our Creator certainly knows what is best!

Recall Paul's prayer for the Colossian disciples: "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," (Colossians 1:9). Complete spiritual knowledge and understanding of God's will is key. The heavenly Father cannot be served without correct knowledge (Romans 10:1-3). Deep insights into the will

of God can only come through obedient faith in the gospel of Christ. Wisdom results from the insight gained through the knowledge of God's revelation to man. It involves reading the Bible, keeping the Lord's commands and praying (James 1:5; Psalms 19:7; 119:98).

Since God knows what is best and has revealed it to us in His word, we are obliged to surrender our personal will to His: "Your will be done". There is no question regarding the fact that His will is done in heaven (cf. Psalm 103:21), and it is the Christian's desire and prayer that God's will would be done throughout the world. Within the lives of people on this earth is the only realm where the will of God is not performed. Isn't this frightening to contemplate?

Why has the will of God become such a bad thing? Why are so many adverse from learning and following it, regarding it as too painful and harsh? How vehemently the devil has maligned God! Satanic deceptions steer us away from contemplating a world that follows after the Lord God. Peace in the world is not impossible (He is "the God of peace" - Hebrews 13:20). Love, mercy and justice for all men is truly obtainable under His direction. Things are only as bad as they are because God's will has been rejected by men. If only the will of God were done on earth, as it is done in heaven!

The will of God is the will of a Father: "Our Father who is in heaven," (Matthew 6:9). The Father sees what is done in secret (Matthew 6:18); He feeds the birds of the air (v.26); He clothes the grass of the field (v.30); He knows our needs (v.32); He gives what is good to those who ask (Matthew 7:11); He allows entrance into the kingdom of heaven (v.21); He blesses with an inheritance of the kingdom prepared for His people from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34). And there is so much more!

Men must cultivate an undivided, absolute allegiance to God, "doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). Only then will they submit to His will. In doing so, there is great reward (Hebrews 10:35-36)! May the Lord help us to devotedly perform His will, flawlessly and fervently conforming to it (Romans 12:1-2). May the laws of God be readily obeyed by men as perfectly and unceasingly as they are in the heavenly realm. May we follow our Lord Jesus, as He did the Father's will (Hebrews 10:7). May our prayers truly be thus: "Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven."

- Gary Smalley

* "Many people enjoy the shade, but only a few people are willing to rake the leaves!"

* "Money may talk, but it does not give itself away!"

* "If you are too busy for God, you are busier than God wants you to be!"

* "We overcome our deficiencies by taking unto ourselves the excellencies of Christ!"

* "Much trouble is caused today by workers who do not think and by thinkers who do not work!"

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)