

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Songs of Deliverance

"You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." (Psalm 32:7)

The 32nd Psalm is ascribed to be a Psalm of David. It is rightly grouped together with Psalm 51. However, because of its didactic form, it is called a Psalm of contemplation or instruction.

The Psalm begins with a proposition - the blessedness of the one who is forgiven of sin. To clearly establish his point, the Psalmist speaks of the distress and misery caused by hidden, unconfessed sin. (Vs. 3, 4)

The road to relief is clearly stated. When the sin is acknowledged and confessed there is forgiveness. This requires one to state specifically what God already knows – that His law has been broken. No excuses – one must frankly call the violation by its ugly name.

For full pardon, such an acknowledgment must be coupled with a determination to cease from the transgression. Having experienced God's grace, David would counsel the impenitent to consider the joyful blessings of such a confession.

Having acknowledged his own sin, the Psalmist states the fruit of such confession. Marvelous thoughts of God flood his mind. The remorse that once consumed him is replaced by songs of deliverance! "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the blood of the lamb".

Additionally, the penitent Psalmist has renewed thoughts of God. God is his hiding place. There is blessedness here! There is new freedom, a new joy in God, new ties of love. The burden is lifted!

With renewed confidence, David is ready to declare these marvelous truths to others. He bids us to not be like the obstinate horse that must be bridled, but to lay bare our own transgressions against God, and then rejoice in God's mercy. (Vs.10, 11)

Dear reader, is there a song of joy in your heart, or is there the remorse of a life broken by sin? "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered." (Psalm 32:1)

- George Slover

Be a Sponge, not a Faucet

But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger (James 1:19b).

In discussing this verse, I've heard it said, "This is why God gave us two ears and one mouth, so we will listen twice as much as we talk!" That's a good way to think about it.

Good Bible students have a healthy curiosity. They are "quick to hear", that is, they are eager to not only hear but to listen. In Bible classes, they are attentive and engaged, absorbing God's word like a sponge. They speak up when questioned and are ready to add to the discussion in such a way as to move the conversation forward. But they are "slow to speak" in that they hold back, self-editing their comments to ensure that they add to and not detract from the topic at hand. And they are thoughtful and careful about the words they speak. We often see this attitude spill over into other areas of their lives: how they deal with their spouse and children, their brethren, those in the world they come in contact with, their colleagues and bosses.

Then there are the faucets. They are the opposite: quick to speak and slow to hear. A would-be healthy curiosity is supplanted by a desire to be heard rather than to listen. The self-editing mechanism is either broken down or rusted from lack of use. Instead of adding to the conversation and moving it forward, they detract from the issue at hand, often inserting their own agenda, their ears closed to the words being expressed by others.

Consider what the apostle Paul says about our coming together as a congregation. In 1 Cor. 14, he tells the brethren in Corinth how they ought to handle the spiritual gifts they have been blessed with. The overall message is that things need to be done orderly and in such a way that everyone will be edified (vv. 26, 40). Note what he says in verses 18-19: "I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue." Paul makes it clear that being selective about the words spoken so

that the hearer can understand them is far more important than just the amount of words spoken.

We would be well served to heed the teachings of Paul. We no longer need the miraculous abilities to confirm the gospel message as those in Corinth were utilizing. But the idea of using our words to teach, to edify and to do so in an orderly fashion applies to the Lord's church forever more. Let us never let our precious time together descend into meaningless chatter!

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge—by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

- Kevin Hall

EVER LEARNING BUT NEVER KNOWING

In 2 Timothy 3:7, Paul described certain people in the following manner: "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." They were so laden with sin and led by carnal lusts that they were "taken in" by men of corrupt minds.

Wrong Sources

Some of today's learners are never able to obtain the truth because they look to the wrong sources. Such are they who go to an encyclopedia to get information about the church of Christ, or about baptism, or about the Lord's Supper. Encyclopedias serve useful purposes, but they are not God's word. One must go to the Bible to find God's truth about the church, the way of redemption, baptism, worship, etc. It is possible to learn a lot from standard reference books that men have written and still not come to know the divinely-revealed truth that comes through the Bible.

Wrong Subjects

Others are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth because their interest is in the wrong subjects. A person may be exceptionally well informed about politics, economics, science, and human philosophy but terribly ignorant of the sacred scriptures. Some who study the Bible dwell more on technicalities and trivialities than on the practical themes and basic principles that are revealed.

Wrong Attitude

Then there are others who are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth due to a wrong attitude toward truth. They seem to suppose that storing information in the intellect is all that matters. For a variety of reasons, they go to the Bible and study it, but they lack one thing that is indispensable to saving knowledge: the desire to obey God. Jesus said, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). Willingness to do the will of God is essential to knowing the truth. Intellectual understanding avails only when applied. One may be able to quote scripture but not able to relate the meaning to himself. The knowledge that saves is applied knowledge. James warned, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas. 1:22).

Do Not Recognize Truth

Finally, there are people who are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth because they do not recognize the truth. They are intrigued by the novel, fascinated by modern ideas, and charmed by speculations. Blown about by every wind of doctrine, in their instability they hurry past the fixed and eternal foundation.

- Irvin Himmel

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free!"

This statement of Paul to the Galatian Christians describes the freedom (from the preceding verses) in which Christ made all Christians free. Christ emancipated us, He liberated us in order that we might enjoy and rejoice in this freedom.

If people are not free from sin, remaining in its bondage, there is no fault that belongs to heaven; it is a person's own doing, he is exercising his own will and desire to remain there. However, through Christ's death on the cross, once for all time, it is possible for people to become free, free from the curse of the Law of Moses (including the requirement to be circumcised, Galatians 2:3-5), from the requirement to obey it (the theme of the epistle), and from the consequences of sin (John 8:32, 36, "free indeed"; Romans 6:18, 22 - "freed from sin"; 8:2).

The law that saves the Christian is "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2), that is what saves us from "the law of sin and of death." The law of sin is the "law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 7:23). To be in captivity to it is to be dead spiritually, hence, the law of death (Romans 6:23). Freedom from that law is the freedom wherein Christians are to "keep standing firm" (Galatians 5:1). Herein is

salvation made available by the gospel (Romans 1:16), "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

It must be stated that Christ has not freed people from the obligation to obey ANY law. In Christ, Christians do have a law to keep: "the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2); "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (James 1:25; cf. 2:12); "the law of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:21). If there is no law, there is no sin because "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4; Romans 4:15, "where there is no law, there also is no violation."). Without a law there is no sin, and if there is no sin there would be no need for a Saviour. That conclusion is unacceptable.

Christian: keep standing firm in your freedom that Christ has provided!

- Gary Smalley

* "Some 'Christians' are like trailers - they have to be pulled along!"

* "The Devil is pleased when you get peeved and refuse to speak to someone!"

* "The church boss is likely to be the Devil's hireling!"

* "Though a lie runs like lightning, the truth will eventually overtake it and 'lick' both the lie and the liar!"

* "If you are given to wobbling, you can't stay in the narrow way!"

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)