

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
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oldhickorycofc.com

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Burn the Boats!

In 1519, Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes and his band of soldiers faced a near impossible task; plunder the Mayans. For 600 years, no one could defeat them. Armies with more resources than Cortes tried and failed. When Cortes' men sailed ashore, he stayed with them on the beach for days, firing them up with motivational speeches. He helped them envision how great life would be once they plundered this treasure, he led them in songs to build their confidence, and he encouraged them to be wild men of adventure. It was inspiring, but Cortes knew they need more than inspiration to win this fight. He turned to his men and said, "Burn the boats." Wait — what? Some of the men probably thought he was joking, but he was dead serious. Cortes knew, even after days of inspiration, motivation, and encouragement on this beach, what the men needed most was commitment. They burned their own boats to give themselves zero chance of retreat. Win or die. The only way home was on the ships of their enemies.

In Romans 13:14, the apostle Paul writes, "But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." Sometimes we make provisions for our flesh by keeping sinful boats around as an escape just in case. Just in case the fight against pornography gets too difficult, I'll keep an unfiltered laptop in my house. Just in case marriage gets too hard, I'll keep a prenuptial on file and divorce attorney on call. Just in case life gets too overwhelming, I'll keep some beers in the fridge. Just in case sexual temptation gets too strong, I'll keep a "friend with benefits" on speed dial. Just in case life gets too boring, I'll keep my gossip group on standby. Burn the boats! Commit! When we keep these sinful boats around, we make sin an option.

Jesus said, "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into Hell." (Matthew 5:29). What boats need burning in your life? What provisions have you made to fulfill your sinful desires when temptation hits? It may be an object we need to get rid of, it may be a relationship, it may be a routine or tradition, it may be a place. Whatever it is, don't let it be a crutch anymore.

I know it's scary, but we have Christ and we don't need it anymore! Jesus said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62). When we burn our boats, there's nothing to look back at, and that's a blessing. It means we're all in now! Win or die! Heaven or hell! There's no going back! There's no in-between! (cf. Matthew 6:24).

- Brian Messerli

Mothers: The Heart Of The Family

Nations rise and fall, empires prosper or crumble and men are stirred to great accomplishments or driven to shameful failure often because of the influence of a wife or mother. The wise poet has properly said, "The hand that rocks the cradle, is the hand that rules the world."

For most women, motherhood is a great privilege, a crowning joy and a sublime fulfillment. Perhaps the greatest privilege of motherhood is that of sharing and giving. No one shares and gives as a mother does. She shares her body with another in order to conceive. She shares it again with her unborn child. Then she shares her time, energy and talent with it after it is born in order to meet its needs and cause it to grow and develop. But most of all, she shares her heart and her love as she weeps, laughs, sorrows and rejoices with her child through the months and years of infancy, adolescence and youth and adulthood.

Motherhood, while being a great privilege, also involves obligation. No task on earth requires more dedication, greater skill or fuller commitment. Her responsibilities demand devotion to the highest ideals and patient perseverance over long years of time. Her task is formidable because there is no human obligation that is less adaptable to substitution than motherhood. You can substitute for the teacher, policeman, governor and almost anyone else but no one has found an adequate substitute for a mother's love.

The greatest writers and speakers of the ages have tried to capture the fullness of motherhood but all have failed to maximize it. Only in Scripture do we see the blessedness of a good mother fully described. "Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.' Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:28-31).

Happy and blessed is the home and the children of a loving mother—one devoted to her husband, children and the Lord. Let us thank God if our home is so blessed.

- Gene Taylor

To Save a Soul You Have to Get Dirty

It's so easy to just look away. To act like I don't see. To give "reasons" as to why it is not worth my time and energy. To tell myself, "they would never turn their life to Jesus, so don't bother."

I'm speaking of those we so often categorize as the "unclean" of this world. You know, sort of like the following list:

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

That's a black list we might call "The Untouchables." Wipe the dust from my feet (Luke 10:11). Don't cast pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6). Redeem the time by looking for greener pastures and going to the "almost persuaded" (Acts 26:28). Spend my time more wisely by going only to those who are "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark 12:34).

But in doing this you have walked right past the very people Jesus came to save. You know, like the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11). Like the demon man called Legion (Luke 8:30). Like the publican who would not even lift his eyes in shame (Luke 18:13). Like the chief of sinners called Paul (1 Timothy 1:15). Like me.

Peter and John stopped to give the beggar at the gate more than silver or gold (Acts 3:6). They had seen Jesus stop hundreds of times to serve the untouchables ("the lame, blind, lepers, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" – Luke 7:22). To save a soul they had learned you have to get down and dirty, for salvation is a dirty business. It might take months, even years, of investment to save a soul. But oh the joy when it is said, "and such were some of you, but now you are washed" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

- Rick Lanning

A THOUGHT FROM ACTS 2

The eleven remaining apostles and the one new apostle, Matthias (selected by the Lord to take the place of the betrayer), "were all together in one place" when the day of Pentecost had come (Acts 2:1). What suddenly happened next "came from heaven" (verse 2). It was the fulfillment of the Lord's promise made to His chosen apostles (John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-8). "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance." (Acts 2:4).

There are many commentators and teachers who declare that the "they" who "were all together in one place" (verse 1) and "were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues" (verse 4) has reference to "the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons . . .)" (Acts 1:15). One must, in reading of the "they" in each of the first four verses of Acts 2, go backwards by twelve verses to find this "hundred and twenty persons." I am confident that several of the excellent English teachers who taught me in school would mark my statement as incorrect if I were to write such a thing in a term paper.

Who were the ones who were filled with the Holy Spirit? The answer is "they," the ones mentioned in verse 1 of Acts 2. If we ignore the unfortunate separation of the later-added chapter division we discover that the obvious and correct antecedent of "they" appears in the preceding verse (Acts 1:26): "apostles." Who were the ones who were filled with the Holy Spirit? The apostles of Christ. Only twelve men were immersed in the Holy Spirit on this day.

The context makes this conclusion evident as well as the limitations of the promise concerning the Holy Spirit. Christ had promised this Helper or Comforter to the twelve on the betrayal night.

On the day of ascension, the Lord again reminded them of His promise, that as "witnesses" (Luke 24:48), "the apostles whom He had chosen" (Acts 1:2) were charged "not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'" (Acts 1:4-5).

We must be careful to not pervert the Scriptures into teaching anything that is not true. The purpose of the occasion on this Pentecost was to formally and publicly indicate the divine authority granted to these twelve men to teach and preach the new covenant of Jesus Christ to all men beginning in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit was given to them to accomplish salvation among men. This was God's "testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." (Hebrews 2:4). The immersion in the Holy Spirit was promised and given to the twelve.

- Gary Smalley

* "Being a servant is a choice. Choose wisely!"

* "Begin to weave and God will give you the thread!"

* "Are you walking with God or going your own way?"

* "The bottom line in the Christian life is obedience and most people don't even like the word!"

* "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in the Lord I do trust!"

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)