

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### From Hatred to Honor

We had met for coffee early one Sunday morning, and somewhere in our conversation my friend told me about his growing up. His last childhood memory of his father was at age five, as he watched him beat his mother in the front yard. Shortly thereafter, his mother took him and his sister and left, never to return. She never remarried but dedicated herself to being her children's provider and protector – in the process, she became their hero. As you'd expect, my friend grew up full of anger, promising himself that one day he would have his revenge on the man who destroyed their family circle.

In his mid-twenties, my friend married, had four daughters, and became a Christian. Now, as a follower of Christ, he knew he must confront the hatred he had for his father; but his good intentions were easily put on the back burner. And the years passed.

Then came a day when, having been asked to preach, he prepared a lesson on honoring God and one another. Late on a Saturday night, he read again the command to honor mother and father, and like a ton of bricks it hit him: he was to honor his mother and his father. But how could he honor the man who beat his mother and was never there for them? And why should he be required to honor an abusive, womanizing alcoholic? "My father doesn't deserve honor," he cried to God, but as soon as he said it, an echo came back, "And you didn't deserve to have my Son die for you, but He did." Shaken to his soul, my friend knew that somehow, in some way, he must reach out to his dad.

The only thing he knew to do was to write a letter. "Father, as I was growing up I could not wait for the day when you and I would meet so that in some way I could either physically or verbally hurt you. But I am now a Christian, and I need to honor you. You are my father, and I want to tell you four things: (1) I forgive you; (2) I honor you; (3) If you need me, I will be there for you; and (4) I love you." Later that morning, on the way to church to preach on honor, he mailed the letter.

A week later the phone rang, and my friend answered. The person on the other end was sobbing, but these words came through, "Son, this is your dad. I read your letter and I'm

sorry. I'd like to see your family and meet my granddaughters." Arrangements were made. When my friend and his family went to the airport to pick up his dad, he was especially touched when one of his daughters grabbed her grandfather's hand and walked with him through the terminal and to the car. Over the next few years, the ties that bind deepened. My friend and his sister were there for their father during an illness; they were there to help him move into a new home; and they were with him at the end. They honored their father. Even more, they honored their God.

"The Christian ideal," said Chesterton, "has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried." Don't tell me that some sins are so beyond the pale that we are exempted from acting redemptively toward the sinner. Don't tell me that any hurt we've experienced from another is so deep that we can dismiss them as worthless and deny their uniqueness as one created in the image of God. And please don't tell me that while you can forgive, you can't forget and be reconciled to the miscreant who ruined your life. To hold such attitudes is to burn the very bridges Christ crossed in order to provide reconciliation to us (2 Corinthians 5:19). My friend puts the lie to all the pious tripe that postures as virtue; count him among the 7000 who have not bowed the knee to hatred or self-pity.

"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Ask my friend about his experience with his dad and all he'll say is, "To God be the glory!"

And so say we all.

- Kenny Chumbley [slightly edited – GFS]

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## **I Choose Truth, Do You??**

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" — Romans 8:38–39

Reading that scripture, Paul has such a great grasp on God's love. Knowing your own emotions, have you thought, "Why don't I feel that excited?"

Some who read this have been singing this Truth since they were a child. "Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so . . .". Yet, in their heart, they have lost track of His love and do not always feel loved or loveable.

Do you have this problem? Intellectually, what the apostle wrote in that passage does not match my emotions. Relationships are divided. Friends isolate themselves from me. My children do not appreciate my advice. My co-workers barely speak to me. Neighbors avoid me. People do not appreciate my faith.

Although the love and admiration of others may not satisfy nor deliver to your soul what you need, God's declaration of love is unending (1 Corinthians 13:8). His love provides us the assurance to conquer someone's isolation or ridicule. His love overcomes the war, the violence, the abuse, or the loss. His love slays the sin. His love crushes the interruptions in life. His love is the hope when it appears all is against us. I choose this truth.

- Shawn Bain

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## ***Share a Quote ...***

No apostle ever wrote one line in Scripture with the specific purpose of lending encouragement to any person who is practicing sin - even if he does not know that what he is doing is a sin. It is one thing to be patient, sympathetic and understanding toward one who has not yet come to a knowledge of the truth on a given matter, but it is quite another thing to lend support, either moral or otherwise, to one whom we are convinced is practicing sin. There may be some individual matters about which there will be differences of opinion, but even here the Christian must not compromise his own convictions. He should live up to what he has learned thus far, and he should encourage his fellow-Christian to do the same. Only as a Christian walks in the light that he has received does he have assurance that he will gain greater light.

- Walton Weaver, via *Truth Commentary on Philipppians*, 189-190

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## **INVESTIGATE THE TRUTH**

I love the inquisitive nature of children, even the ones that seem to wear out the word "why?". I love it most when children ask spiritual questions. Far too many adults never ask anymore. Could it be because people think they have settled the questions and found the answers already, or does it reveal apathy, people just don't care anymore? I love being around people who care enough about the Lord God and His Holy Word that they will never give up learning from it!

This describes a sentiment of David, one who valued his relationship with God, in the Psalms: "O taste and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes

refuge in Him!" (Psalm 34:8). The many Psalms of David testify that the spiritual things of God were the very center of His concern, and that no greater refuge could be experienced by man. For anyone who may be interested in the goodness of God – just taste, and you will experience the very best in goodness, grace and kindness! Put your trust in the God who wonderfully met the needs of His servant David, and He will meet your needs.

Jesus Himself taught people to investigate and pursue truth. To some, He stated "You search the Scriptures ... it is these that testify about Me;" (John 5:39). On several occasions He asked His hearers, "Have you not even read this Scripture ...?" (Mark 12:10). To those who would listen, He was always pointing them to the Scriptures. They were given to man for his highest good.

Who can forget the eye-opening response of the Scripture-searching Bereans upon hearing the gospel of Christ? "Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11). They listened to the preaching of the cross of Christ with a desire to know the truth. They were not people who stubbornly refused the gospel, nor did they gullibly accept it. They were confident that no message from God would ever contradict the Scriptures He had given. They knew that God's word settled all matters with regard to the truth. They respected the Scriptures and measured what they heard by them. We should imitate their example in our pursuit of divine guidance.

The Ethiopian eunuch was investigating Isaiah 53 when the Spirit-led Philip joined him in his chariot and explained that Jesus Christ was the subject of Isaiah's writing. Philip preached Christ to him, baptized him, and sent him on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:26-39).

The Scriptures, being God's complete revelation to man today (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3), answer the questions that every man should have regarding his existence and purpose in life. Have you investigated the claims of Holy Scripture? Have you tasted to see that the Lord is good?

- Gary Smalley

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\* "If you wouldn't write it and sign it, don't say it!"

\* "A diamond is a chunk of coal that made good under pressure!"

\* "Many people borrow trouble and return it with interest!"

\* "When people speak ill of you, so live that no one will believe them!"

\* "If you are not as close to God as you once were, you need not wonder who it is who moved!"

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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)