

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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October 24, 2021

Volume 41, # 43

Doing Odd Things to Get Even

Have you heard of someone cutting off their nose to spite their face? In an effort to get back at others, or teach somebody a lesson, people often wind up inflicting a lot of pain on themselves. Suicide bombers are a case in point. The bitterness and hatred that could lead a person to blow himself up just to harm those that (he thinks) have harmed him, reveals human vengeance for what it is: self-centeredness gone stupid.

In Genesis 34, there is the record of Shechem, a prince of the Hivite people, violating Dinah the daughter of Jacob. To avenge their sister, Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi devised an evil plan against Shechem and his people. They told Shechem that he could marry their sister if he and his men were circumcised. Shechem agreed. Genesis 34:25 states, "Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males." While this vengeful atrocity appears at first to have evened the score, it did not. By their vigilante justice, Simeon and Levi made many enemies for their family from among the people of the land -- they had cut off their own nose, in a manner of speaking. "Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, 'You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I am few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.'" (Genesis 34:30). Chapter thirty-five of Genesis goes on to tell how that it was only by God's protection that Jacob's family was able to safely flee to Bethel.

Vengeance does not belong to men; it belongs to God. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. (Romans 12:19).

There appear to be any number of reasons that God has not given individuals the right to avenge themselves. For one, we aren't wise enough to determine who deserves to be punished. Nor are we very good at deciding the appropriate degree of punishment to be

inflicted. This is especially true when we are personally involved in a situation. Our judgment is imperfect at best, and often clouded by self-serving prejudice. But another reason we haven't been given the right to take vengeance for ourselves, and the main point of this article, is that our efforts to even a score are often so badly botched that they wind up hurting us more than anyone. Truly, "Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him" (Proverbs 26:27). Let us give place to the wrath of God. "He will repay my enemies for their evil" (Psalm 54:5).

- Steve Klein

The Need for Hate

It's not a word we like to hear about. Hate. The very word conjures up horrible and vivid images in our minds — maybe of hate crimes, of cruel people doing cruel things — the kind of things of which nightmares are made. Hate. What terror and yet what passion it arouses!

Hate is a passionate emotion that is closely related to love. Why do so many marriages end in hate-filled exchanges in the divorce court? Why do friendships or other relationships often result in hate? When love is interrupted, the passion needs a vent. Thus, it manifests itself as hate.

Our Father sent His only begotten Son to die upon the cross in a passionate display of His love. Perhaps you have heard the crucifixion called "the passion." It exemplifies passion. What passionate love, for an innocent to die for the guilty! And yet many do not accept God's love. Some choose to love sin rather than to love God. So God's love is interrupted. It manifests itself as holy hatred toward sin. The Psalmist wrote that God "hates wickedness" (Psalm 45:7), and the day is coming when God's patience toward sinners will wear thin. The soul in sin will forever be separated from the love of God and damned to a devil's hell. Because God loves, He hates.

Perhaps you were frightened by the title of this article, but isn't it true? Don't we all need hate in our lives? Jude writes that we should "hate even the garment defiled by the flesh" (Jude 23). Hate. If we love God, then we are going to hate. It is essential. The Christian must hate all those things that separate humanity from the loving Father. If we would hate sin instead of simply tolerating it, we would be much more inclined to go out and make a difference in our lost and dying world. When something comes between us and our heavenly Father, then we need to hate it with all the passion we can muster. Love demands no less.

- Michael W. Rhodes

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He is Wonderful, Counsellor. Justly is He called Wonderful, for He is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints; in His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, He was wonderful. A constant series of wonders attended Him, and, without controversy, great was the mystery of godliness concerning Him. He is the Counsellor, for He was intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from eternity, and He gives counsel to the children of men, in which He consults our welfare. It is by Him that God has given us counsel, Psalms 16:7; Revelation 3:18. He is the wisdom of the Father, and is made of God to us wisdom. Some join these together: He is the Wonderful Counsellor, a wonder or miracle of a counsellor; in this, as in other things, He has the pre-eminence; none teaches like Him.

- Matthew Henry (1662-1714) [slightly edited, GFS]

Wonderful Counselor (Literally - "Wonder of a Counselor") - Note that some translations see two titles for the Messiah (e.g., Isaiah 9:6 in the KJV, Isa 9:6 in the ASV - see W.E. Vine's Expository Dictionary). This name means something like "either 'a supernatural counselor' or 'one giving supernatural counsel'" (Motyer). This coming King will be a wise counselor in contrast to King Ahaz who was clever in fleshly terms but was not wise in the sense of godly wisdom. King Ahaz's decision to not ask God for a sign and to seek security in the arm of flesh (alliance with the Assyrian king) resulted in God's hand of judgment against the entire nation. The counsel of a nation's ruler has great impact on the course of that nation. The coming King will rule with the wisdom of God for He is God and the nation will reap the benefits thereof. Even in Christ's first coming, He never sought the counsel of man, and He never asked for the advice of man. He needs no counselor! (cf. Romans 11:34).

Bruce Hurt, Commentary on Isaiah [slightly edited, GFS]

Jesus Is the Son of God!

During the sham trial of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders, they charged Him before Governor Pilate, who found no guilt in Jesus: "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." (John 19:7). At this point in the examination their real issue was presented. Jesus was indeed the long-awaited Messiah, the very Son of God, even the Lord of the Sabbath. These claims were never denied by Jesus; they were clearly affirmed. But the chief priests presented their case as if the claims made by Jesus originated within His own imagination, that they were merely fanciful claims that amounted to blasphemy (cf. Leviticus 24:16). John makes it clear in

his gospel account that Jesus' claims of a direct relationship with God were true. Quoting Jesus, he wrote: "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." (John 5:30). Further, in verse 36, "the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish--the very works that I do--testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me."

Jesus affirmed His identity as deity, the very Son of God! This is exactly what the Jews understood Him to be affirming. John testified, "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God." (John 5:18). John also recorded: "The Jews answered Him, 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.'" (John 10:33). Yes, Jesus affirmed reality: He is the Messiah!

As we learn the Holy Scriptures and rightly conclude that they are indeed the very words of God, let us strengthen our faith by observing two facts which indicate that Jesus did not cease to be God (divine) when He came to this earth as a man (cf. Philippians 2:5-8):

1. Authority on earth to forgive sins! Mark affirms in his gospel account that Jesus, confirming that He is "the Son of Man" (a reference to the Messianic prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14, which emphasizes His humanity, cf. Hebrews 2:5-18), miraculously healed a paralytic man. This was undeniable evidence, as He stated the reason for the miraculous sign on this occasion: "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" ... (Mark 2:10). As the paralyzed man was presented to Jesus by his friends, the Lord said to him, "Son, your sins are forgiven." (Mark 2:5). The scribes reasoned that only God could forgive sins, and not believing that Jesus was the divine Son of God they concluded in their hearts that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy (Mark 2:6-7). But Jesus was who He claimed, and thus had authority on earth to forgive sins, as was further demonstrated throughout His personal ministry.

2. Jesus allowed men to worship Him! Recall the truth that Jesus declared when the devil requested worship from Him: "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'" (Matthew 4:10). This was no hidden precept. Peter refused to allow Cornelius to bow in worship before him (Acts 10:25-26), Paul and Barnabas refused worship by the men of Lystra, directing their attention to the "living God" (Acts 14:14-15), and when John attempted to worship an angel, he commanded John not to do it, but rather to "Worship God." (Revelation 22:8-9). But recall that Jesus allowed people to bow before Him in reverence, worshipping Him (Matthew 8:2; 9:18; 15:25; 17:14-15; 20:20; Luke 24:52; John 9:38; cf. John 20:28). Certainly these were no hypocritical actions on His part, but rather further affirmation of His true identity. He is the Son of God!

- Gary Smalley

- * "The person who is always finding fault seldom finds anything else!"
 - * "Don't treat God as a lawyer, never calling Him until you are in trouble!"
 - * "Nothing lies beyond the reach of prayer except that which lies beyond the will of God!"
 - * "The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist see the opportunity in every difficulty!" -Winston Churchill
 - * "A smooth sea never made a skillful sailor!"
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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)