

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### Carried by Angels

An interesting line occurs near the end of Hamlet, as Shakespeare has Horatio saying these words as Hamlet dies: "...Good night, sweet prince, / And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" (5.2.361-2). Shakespeare's idea of angels being near when an individual dies does not conflict with what we learn from the Scriptures regarding a faithful Christian's death.

"And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried" (Luke 16:22). Most are familiar with the story of the rich man and Lazarus, which is in Luke 16. During his life, Lazarus, a beggar, was in a very pitiful situation. His body was full of sores, and he was carried to the gate of a rich man's home so that he might get some crumbs that fell from his table. Lazarus was so helpless that he could not even stop the dogs from licking his sores. In contrast, the rich man was clothed in "purple and fine linen" and "feasted lavishly" (NRSV) every day. Both men died and went to the Hadean realm (v. 23, Acts 2:27). The rich man went to "torment" or "Tartarus" (v.23a, 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6), and Lazarus went to "Abraham's bosom" (v. 23b), which is also called "Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

How did Lazarus get to Abraham's bosom? Verse 22 says that he was carried there by angels. The facts of this story are to be believed, and thus, we can say that all righteous people who die will be carried to Abraham's bosom by angels. There is no reason to conclude otherwise. This fact is of significance as it demonstrates God's tender love and care for his children, and it ought to comfort us.

Even Christians are sometimes anxious about death as the unknown can cause apprehension. However, we can be reassured when we realize that the angels of God will be present when we die to carry us to Abraham's bosom. We, as faithful Christians, will close our eyes in death, and then, in a sense, open them in the reassuring presence of angels who will carry us to Paradise.

Many have had to deal with the hardship of their loved ones passing away. It may have been a mother, a father, a sister, a brother, or perhaps a close friend. Many may have been with a loved one when he or she passed away. For those who remain, there is comfort in knowing that when faithful Christians die, they are in the presence of angels.

Consider the following illustration. There is usually a point when parents will leave their child with a baby sitter for an evening to go out by themselves. Conscientious parents will not just leave their child with anyone. If that person is someone they can trust, like their parents or a close friend, they know their child is in good hands, and they can leave the child with full confidence. When loved ones who are faithful Christians leave this life, we know they are in good hands. Angels will transport them; their destination will be Paradise (and ultimately heaven); they go in good hands. As with the resurrection, we ought to "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18), perhaps with thoughts of "flights of angels" conveying our loved ones to their rest.

- Mike Johnson

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## PREJUDICE

Prejudice is: "Preconceived judgment or opinion; unreasonable predilection or objection; esp. an opinion or learning adverse to anything without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge." (Webster)

Pre-judging is a common error. It is prevalent in politics, social matters and religion. No doubt, all of us have a certain amount of preference. However, there are many who are dishonest in their preferences. They dogmatically decide that a thing is right or wrong before and without considering the facts.

This sin was to a great extent responsible for the stoning of the prophets of old, the crucifying of Christ, the persecution of the early church and is the reason for many rejecting the truth today. When one decides what he is going to believe on the basis of personal preference or opinion and not upon the authority of God's Word he is often blinded to truth. Jesus said, "And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: 'Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.'" (Matthew 13:14-15, NKJV).

The Psalmist said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." (Psalm 119:18). The honest mind will "prove all things; hold fast that which is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21). It realizes that the Scriptures "furnish us completely" (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and is interested in pleasing God rather than pleasing self. Do you want to know the truth, so that you can be free from your sins (John 8:32), or do you have a closed mind because of prejudice? Can you find Bible authority for everything you believe and practice in religion? Are you acting by prejudice? God's Word says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

- Frank Jamerson (1936-2012)

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# The Resistance Warrior

Choosing to live as a Christian is synonymous to becoming a warrior, a spiritual combatant. Discipleship places us on a battleground, where fierce assaults can destroy us if our resistance falters. We must allow the Lord to strengthen us by putting on "the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11). Our Adversary is relentless and his deceitful and cunning strategy must be met with "the full armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13). This is the pathway to victory in the battle of resisting what the devil offers in his attempts to destroy our souls (cf. James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). Every Christian is a contestant in this spiritual warfare.

The spiritual-combat warrior has to first find the way of escape that is provided by the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:13) in order to endure temptation. Hanging around in temptation territory only subjects one to further barrage. Get away from the temptation (cf. Paul's directives: 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee immorality" and 1 Corinthians 10:14, "flee from idolatry."). One must isolate himself from the lures and attractions which are designed to advertise and emphasize pleasures (cf. Luke 8:14; Hebrews 11:25) while cleverly concealing the negatives. One must seek the place of heaven's refreshment and care, and sometimes rest and recuperation helps fortify one's faith (cf. Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43). Sometimes one re-enters the battle, placing himself in position of temptation because he feels stronger. We should not go looking for temptations to conquer. More often than not this is a foolish move (cf. Matthew 26:41; 6:13; 2 Peter 2:9), where one should avoid all slippery slopes as he travels the pathway of righteousness.

Secondly, the unrighteous, unlawful, illegitimate desire must be put to death (Romans 6:6, "our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;"). Fleshly passions and desires (lust) must be extracted from the Lord's warrior (Galatians 5:24). Fear must be conquered (Revelation 21:8). Honest acknowledgement of failure deeds and negative consequences helps one to maintain humility, sincerity and genuine faithfulness to the Lord. Accurate personal assessment properly positions one to make confession to the Lord (1 John 1:9) and to help others who become overtaken by sin in the fray of battle (Galatians 6:1-2).

Thirdly, one must be purified (1 Peter 1:22); he must be cleansed from the stain of iniquity (2 Corinthians 7:1). The Lord is the only legitimate source of forgiveness (Colossians 2:13), so remission of sins must be obtained on His terms (Hebrews 5:9). We may also be required to seek forgiveness from others that we have sinned against (Matthew 5:23-24), which sometimes involves making restitution to another person (cf. Luke 19:8). An offender is required to repair damage that he has done to another (cf. Matthew 18:15-17). He is required to make things right and put good relationships back together to the extent of what is possible (cf. Philippians 4:2-3). One's brethren share interest in him and fellowship with him (Philippians 2:1-4). The Lord commands them to

help and encourage the weak and faint of heart (Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14). Allow them to glorify God in this way by helping you bear your burdens (Galatians 6:2).

These things will restore the joy of one's salvation (cf. Psalms 51:12). Re-affirmation from brethren is vitally important (2 Corinthians 2:6-9). Failure to forgive, comfort, and confirm love is disobedience to the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10, KJV).

From among these battle-tested warriors, spiritual helpers are made. Teachers and elders are found here. These are the spiritually minded who restore brethren and help them grow to be stronger warriors, fighting the "good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). They are helpers, nurses and medics who carry their own experiences and use them to help others prevent falling away and denying the faith they once confessed. These are mature, full grown and mostly display the image of Christ without being swallowed up by evil in the world (Ephesians 4:13; Colossians 1:28; James 1:4; Hebrews 5:14). These full-grown ones provide stability, having been trained to discern good and evil – and they will always be spiritual warriors.

- Gary Smalley

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- \* "The only way to settle a disagreement is on the basis of what's right — not who's right!"
  - \* "A Christian is one who does not have to consult his bankbook to see how wealthy he really is!"
  - \* "What you laugh at tells plainer than words about who you are!"
  - \* "One great pleasure in life is to do a good deed in secret and have it discovered by accident!"
  - \* "It is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret!"
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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)