

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
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oldhickorycofc.com

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CONSISTENCY-MODERN STYLE

A man argued with me thirty minutes that it is wrong to debate.

A lady told me that it doesn't make any difference what a man believes, and then tried to enroll me in a program to fight Communism.

Some parents told me that they liked to let their children make up their own minds about going to church service, but whipped them because they didn't want to go to school.

A member argued with his neighbor that the church of Christ is right because it observes the Lord's Supper every Sunday, but he missed the next Sunday himself and went fishing.

A family, figuring income tax, showed a 10% deduction as contribution to the church, and when the collection plate came around on Sunday they dropped in a total of one dollar and a dime.

A man, opening a fresh pack of cigarettes, explained to me that he didn't have money to buy his mother some badly needed medicine.

An individual griped because the sermon was so long, then went out in the cold the next night and spent two and one half hours on the hard bleachers watching a ball game.

A member didn't come to services Sunday morning because it looked like rain, and then waded out to his neck in ice water the next morning before dawn duck hunting.

A lady stayed at home Sunday morning with a pain in her left ear, and went to work Monday morning with a pain in both ears.

The whole family had to stay at home with the sick child on Sunday, then left the child alone and went their respective ways on Monday morning.

A member gossips to the preacher's back about the preacher not having the "spirit of Christ."

Some members want the WHOLE gospel preached until you start preaching on church cooperation, the work of the church, the all-sufficiency of the local congregation, the evils of the social gospel, the danger of the pastor system, the importance of speaking as the oracles of God, the unscriptural-ness of man-made religious fraternities, the importance of giving as prospered, worldliness, discipline, or bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Oh yes, and steer clear of the marriage question. What's left to preach to the members of the church? Why, BAPTISM, of course. I've never seen a "baptism Christian" yet whose religion didn't remind me of WATER - weak, shallow, and stagnated.

People resent the preacher trying to tell them how to run their business or office, but at the same time try to tell the preacher how to run his.

Let us all practice what we preach (Romans 2:1).

- Guthrie Dean

ARE YOU PERSUADED?

Ambition is the eager desire to achieve some particular result. The Apostle Paul named his ambition in 2 Corinthians 5:9, that is: "to be pleasing to Him" [Christ]. In Romans 15:20, he names his ambition as preaching the gospel, which is God's power to save people who believe (Romans 1:16). What an excellent ambition that is, to please Christ by faithful obedience to Him in all things heaven has determined are "good" (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). This servant of Christ was the opposite of pseudo-servants, servants "in name only" who were actually "argumentative" and disobedient (Titus 2:9). This servant of Christ dedicated his entire energies into communicating heaven's message to people, preaching "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). What was the basis of his ambitious motivation?

Paul declared, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Coming to know Christ and His great love for man, Paul was compelled to renounce his former life in conversion to Christ. By Paul's own words, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered

the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him," (Philippians 3:8-9a).

Paul had entered a right relationship with God by changing his life to conform to Christ's gospel. He was persuaded! Lasting change is brought about and endures only by genuine persuasion. Only genuinely persuaded people turn from bad thoughts and bad deeds to good deeds and righteousness. What could be powerful enough to effect real change in a person's life, evidenced by confessing and renouncing past wrongs? What kind of person can be brought to say, genuinely, "I was wrong in the horrible things I thought, said, and did!"? Only the fully persuaded have this kind of courage!

With Paul's ambition set on the right course, he declares his life's activity: "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men," (2 Corinthians 5:11). [Contextually, Paul was defending his personal character and apostleship which his enemies called into question in an attempt to void the power of gospel persuasion.] What was powerful enough to persuade Paul? He answered, "the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:8). What is powerful enough to persuade men today? That same valuable knowledge of Christ!

It is "the knowledge of the Son of God" that allows us to attain the unity of the faith and spiritual maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13). Paul referred to this enlightening knowledge as "treasure" (2 Corinthians 4:6-7). Paul lived and taught Jesus Christ, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2:3). It is by the "knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" that the persuaded escape "the defilements of the world" (2 Peter 2:20). The Apostle Peter affirmed, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence." (2 Peter 1:3).

The knowledge of Christ has power to persuade men, leading them to Christ. Jesus taught, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." (John 6:45). Peter acknowledged to Christ, "You have words of eternal life." (John 6:68). As you search the Scriptures you will find sinners being persuaded by the powerful message of the gospel (Acts 17:4; 18:4; 19:8, 26; 26:28; 28:23-24). Salvation became the possession of those who were genuinely persuaded by those divine words, those who heard and learned the gospel (cf. Acts 11:14; 16:32-34).

Paul re-affirmed to the Roman Christians, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17). He had stated to them, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became

slaves of righteousness." (Romans 6:17-18). They had been genuinely persuaded and enjoyed the resulting forgiveness of sins because of their obedience to the message.

Are miracles required to save a person? No. You and I might be tempted to exalt miracles to an essential role in each person's salvation, but the all-wise God has already stated their purpose: confirmation of the spoken word (Hebrews 2:2-4). In New Testament times, there were occasions where God used miracles to effect circumstances which gave rise to the preaching of the gospel and the resulting salvation of those who heard and obeyed. (Not everyone was persuaded to believe, Acts 28:24.) It took a miracle to bring Philip to the travelling man from Ethiopia (Acts 8:26), but it took the gospel to bring the traveler to Christ (Acts 8:27-39; note especially verse 35).

Miraculous visions given to Peter motivated him to travel some distance to the house of a devout man named Cornelius, where many people had assembled (Acts 10:27). While Peter was preaching, the Holy Spirit was poured out on this house of Gentiles (vss. 44-45). Peter's conclusion of this event was that these Gentiles should not be prevented from being baptized in water (vss. 46-48). They had not assembled so that Peter could impart miraculous spiritual gifts to them, nor did they assemble to receive something miraculous from the Holy Spirit. Hear Cornelius testify as to the reason they assembled: "Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." (Acts 10:33). When Peter testified at Jerusalem following certain Jews taking issue with him over associating with Gentiles (Acts 11:2-3), he quoted the angel of God in his command to Cornelius to have Peter brought to him: "he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household." (Acts 11:14).

Similarly, Saul had a miraculous vision wherein he saw the Lord Jesus while on the road to Damascus, but this amazing miracle was not his point of salvation. He was commanded to get up and continue travelling into the city, where "it will be told you what you must do." (Acts 9:6). Following his arrival, God sent a man named Ananias to tell Saul what he must do: "Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16). Contrary to the statements of many misguided men, Saul (later called Paul) never testified to anyone that he had been saved on the road to Damascus.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, stating: "you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God," (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Further, "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13). The Thessalonians had forsaken idolatry because they received the gospel, the word of God. Feelings, experiences, New-Testament documentation of miracles, or circumstances of life may

provide an occasion for people to be persuaded, but only the gospel and the obedient faith generated by it through persuasion can provide the occasion for people to become forgiven and saved.

Have you been persuaded by the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ?

- Gary Smalley

* "Confess *your* sins, not your neighbor's!"

* "Darwin and the dead know better now!"

* "Dusty Bibles lead to dirty lives!"

* "Circumstances are just raw material out of which God makes character and strength and virtue!"

* "Enjoy this day! Compliments of God!"

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)