

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

March 13, 2022

Volume 42, # 11

What Faith Is All About

Some years back I received word that a dear friend and brother in the Lord was dying with cancer. I wrote a letter to him, which said in part:

"They say you are going to die-like the rest of us. What have "they" ever known about anything? WE say you are going to live - and we are going to live with you. And we have an empty tomb near Jerusalem that says our hope will become a reality."

I visited my brother just before his death, and he thanked me for what he called "much needed honesty, in a time like this." Then he added, "This is when we learn what faith is all about." I don't suppose I have yet learned the full meaning of that, but as the years increase, and I see other friends slipping away, it is getting through to me.

The Hebrew writer said, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). "Substance" is from "sub" plus "stano"-- that which stands under, or upholds. That theme is repeated over and over in the chapter: "things seen were not made of things which appear" - or - "Noah, warned of things not yet seen" - or - "Abraham went out, not knowing whether he went" - or - "these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." Faith moves a man on, when his senses fail him.

We do not refer to self-reliance, or "faith" in oneself. That is but a weak derivative of positive thinking, irrevocably tied to our "this world" existence. Nor do we refer to a faith of despair, a blind "leap of faith" which is no faith at all. Bible faith is based on evidence (Rom. 10:13-17). God's word has been confirmed by demonstration of its divine source, so that we have reason to believe in the reliability of the message (Mk. 16:17-20; Heb. 2:1-4; 1 Cor. 2:4-5). And our hope of life after death rests upon an empty tomb and reliable witnesses.

The Hebrew writer says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." But faith sees more than a physical beginning in this. Accepting a Creator not only removes the theory of a "chance" beginning, it gives creation a purpose. We are here because an all-wise God had a reason for our existence. Life is not an exercise in futility. In faith we have goals, we accomplish predetermined ends. It is faith that tells us what this life is all about.

We say we "believe" - and surely we do to some extent. That is tested in an elementary way by our willingness to obey initial commands of God. Then, when to further live by divine authority we must part with friends and earthly gain, our faith gets a more severe test. We talk and write about faith, and hope; and we quote words of comfort - to believers, who are bereaved or troubled. But the real test, the "moment of truth," comes when we are about to turn loose of this life and the ties that have identified and made us what we are. When I am the one who steps into the unknown, and must trust in that which is not seen, I will go in despair, or I will know what faith is all about.

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, June, 1981

Who Shall Be Saved?

It is by God's grace and mercy that men are saved (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5). The Lord wants all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9; Titus 2:11), yet only a few will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14; cf. Matthew 25; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 21:8, 27). WHO, THEN, SHALL BE SAVED?

Those who hear Jesus shall be saved (Matthew 17:6; John 5:34).

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13; Matthew 7:21).

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16:16).

Those who enter the fold by Christ "shall be saved." (John 10:9).

"He that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Matthew 10:22).

Although God wants all to be saved, each one must do the Lord's will in order to be saved (Acts 10:34-35; 2:40; Hebrews 5:9).

- Jimmy Thomas (1932-2020), via Mooresville Memo, March 6, 1964

Share a Quote ...

Regarding James 1:21, "receive with meekness the engrafted word" (KJV) ["in humility receive the word implanted" – NASB], please consider this comment: "The soil for the word of God is meekness, which in the context means submissiveness to the divine will and at the same time gentle consideration for others, the very opposite of the egotistic, argumentative, antagonistic, malicious spirit of the one who is swift to speak and slow to hear, who vents his wrath on those who do not acquiesce to his opinions."

- James M. Tolle, Notes on James, p. 17.

DID CHRIST DIE IN VAIN?

To die in vain is to die without success or result; it is death with no benefit, no accomplishment, no significance, or no value. What a great waste it would be for one to die in vain!

In the New Testament we read of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who was put to death by His enemies. From this fact it is understandable how some could conclude that Jesus did not accomplish His purposes because He was rejected of the Jews and put to death. The Scriptures, however, do not support the view that Christ failed to establish His kingdom, but rather indicate that His death was in accordance with the divine purpose and foreknowledge of God: "this Man (Jesus the Nazarene - vs. 22), delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." (Acts 2:23). Jesus' death was not in vain!

Jesus died on the cross for a purpose! "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation." (Romans 5:6-11). Paul here reveals that Christ's death was in order to benefit sinners, giving them opportunity for justification, salvation from the wrath of God, and reconciliation. Other passages clearly show the wonderful blessings that are available to all men because of the death of Christ: both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in one body (Ephesians 2:16); redemption (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 9:12); sanctification (Hebrews 10:10); "to put away sin" (Hebrews 9:26); to establish a new covenant which would provide eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15-17). Surely, in view of this teaching, no true believer can say the purpose of God in Christ was brought to naught through rejection and crucifixion! Christ did not die in vain!

Christ did die in vain IF what some believe is true! For example, if righteousness can be attained through the Law of Moses (or the Ten Commandments), then Christ died in vain! Such is Paul's declaration in Galatians 2:21b, notice: "for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." If man can be righteous, obtaining justification when serving God under the Mosaic Law, then Christ need not have died to deliver us from the Law. The Law could not bring justification (Galatians 2:16; 3:11; 5:4). The Law was given until Christ came and brought justification through faith in Him (Galatians 3:19-29; cf. Hebrews 9 and 10). Christ died to take the Law of Moses out of effect!

Furthermore, Christ died in vain IF there is no resurrection from the dead. God raised Christ from the dead (Acts 2:30-36). Peter and the apostles spoke many times about the purpose of the resurrection of Christ: "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5:31; cf. 13:29-39; 17:31). By the resurrection of Christ, all true believers have the hope of resurrection also (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). "But if there is no resurrection of the dead,

not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain." (1 Corinthians 15:13-14). Christ died to be exalted by God. He was exalted; therefore His death was not in vain!

Again, Christ died in vain IF one church is as good as another. Christ's church was purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). If all the churches started and perpetuated by men, for which Christ's blood was not shed, are as good as Christ's church, the ONE He promised to build (Matthew 16:18) and for which his precious blood was shed, then one might easily see that Christ's death was in vain. His death was not without tremendous value, but rather was the price paid to purchase and sanctify HIS PEOPLE, THE CHURCH!

Furthermore, Christ's death was in vain IF people can be saved outside the church which was purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28; cf. Ephesians 1:7). Redemption is only obtained by the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). The redeemed ARE the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are no redeemed outside of the body of believers over which Christ is Head and over which God has made Him Savior (Colossians 1:13-14, 18; cf. Ephesians 1:14, 22-23; 5:23)! But if one can be redeemed without the precious blood of Christ, then Christ died in vain.

I was talking to a man who said that he believed that the only thing necessary to go to heaven was to love our fellow man. Friends, if this is the only requirement, Christ's death was needless, for men were positioned to do this without Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Christ died to save you and me (Romans 5:6-11; 1 Peter 2:24). He did not die in vain as far as I am concerned, for I have obeyed His gospel, taking advantage of His offer of salvation (Hebrews 5:9). Friend, Christ has died in vain as far as you are concerned IF you do not take advantage of what He has done for you! May we assist you in your obedience to the gospel? Christ is "the source of eternal salvation," "to all those who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

- Gary Smalley

* "People seldom improve when they have no other model than themselves to copy after!"

* "The light of friendship is like the light of phosphorous, seen plainest when all around is dark!"

* "Men best show their character in trifles, where they are not on guard. - It is in insignificant matters, and in the simplest habits, that we often see the boundless egotism which pays no regard to the feelings of others, and denies nothing to itself!"

* "He that has tasted the bitterness of sin fears to commit it; and he that hath felt the sweetness of mercy will fear to offend it!"

* "Don't brag about what you are going to do tomorrow. Someone may ask you what you did yesterday!"

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)