

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"I Was Crushed"

"Then those of you who escape will remember Me among the nations where they are carried captive, because I was crushed by their adulterous heart which has departed from Me, and by their eyes which play the harlot after their idols; they will loathe themselves for the evils which they committed in all their abominations. And they shall know that I am the Lord; I have not said in vain that I would bring this calamity upon them" (Ezekiel 6:9-10).

Israel was unfaithful to God by committing adultery with idols. The Lord was crushed by their adulterous heart as their eyes pursued harlotry. Clearly, the rebellion of His people grieves the Lord (Psalm 78:40-42). So, He understands the pain caused when a spouse is unfaithful. He knows the crushing grief of a child rebelling against parental rule and God's will. Experiencing such pain causes some to compromise God's will to avoid the emotional trauma of such rejection. But, a temporary "peace, peace" when there is no peace is not a winning spiritual strategy (Jeremiah 6:14-16). Though crushed, God punished Israel for her sins while leaving a remnant to escape and reclaim their faith (Ezekiel 6:1-8). Our sin crushes the heart of God, but He will not abandon truth to win us back. Instead He calls on us to repent and to return to faithfulness, warning us of eternal punishment if we persist in our sin. May we quickly sorrow over what our sin does to the heart of God and to the hearts of our loved ones, and repent (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

- Joe R. Price

TESTING YOUR PRONENESS TO GOSSIP

Tale-bearing (spreading gossip or rumors) is one of the major sins of the tongue. The following questions will help us to determine our proneness to gossip or associate with gossips:

- (1) Do I spread rumors about other persons? (Read 1 Peter 3:10; Proverbs 11:13; 20:19).
- (2) Do I always have good things to say about others? (Read 1 Corinthians 13:4; Ephesians 4:32; Proverbs 25:11).
- (3) Do I always like to hear reports of a scandal or read the "gossip column", magazines, etc.? (Read Proverbs 26:20; Mark 4:24).
- (4) Do I judge others only on the basis of proven facts? (Read 1 Thessalonians 5:21; John 8:32).
- (5) Do I encourage others to bring their rumors to me? Am I a "sponge" to absorb gossip? (Read Proverbs 26:20).
- (6) Do I precede my conversations with, "Don't tell anybody"?
- (7) Do I keep confidential information confidential? (Read Revelation 21:8, "Liar").
- (8) Do I reveal information about others under the guise of "feeling sorry for the poor person"?
- (9) Do I associate with gossips? (Proverbs 20:19).
- (10) Do I feel guilty about what I say concerning others? (Proverbs 18:8).
- (11) Do I go to the other person first? (Matthew 18:15-20).
- (12) Do I gossip by consent? (Maybe mere facial expression, shift of eyes, remaining silent, slight grin, etc.).
- (13) Do I preface my remarks with, "Joe told me not to tell anybody, but I will tell you if you promise not to tell"?
- (14) Do I think before I speak?
- (15) Do I always try to build a person up in my conversations about him?

- List provided by J.J. Turner, The Book of James, (102-103) [Edited –GFS]

Be Careful With Things Entrusted To You!

Have you ever rented a piece of equipment to help you accomplish a work you planned to complete? We lived in a home that needed some landscape work in the sloping back yard, so we rented a small "Bobcat" to help move dirt. Have you ever borrowed a special tool that you needed to complete a project efficiently? My friend let me borrow a unique tool that allowed me to install the floor on my deck without marring the face of the boards with screw heads.

In these cases and all similar to them one is aware of limitations that exist when using things that belong to someone else. Personally, I have no desire to own and operate an equipment rental service. I have witnessed the carelessness many people display for property that they do not possess. Borrowed and rented things are used with permission

but are not owned by the user, which increases the responsibility that must be demonstrated when others place their property in our care.

Spiritually, there are very significant things that have been confidently entrusted to us, for which we must exercise the utmost diligence in careful treatment and safekeeping. We will be required to answer to the Lord God for how we have handled these:

(1) *God's Word, the Holy Scriptures.* Our Creator, by the Holy Spirit, has revealed Himself to mankind (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), including His prescription for forgiveness of sins through Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21), great spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3) and eternal life with Him (John 3:15-16). The Bible is the means God chose to reveal Himself, and it must not be handled deceitfully (2 Corinthians 4:2). Those who work at teaching and preaching are commanded thusly: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15). "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." (2 Timothy 2:2; cf. 1:13). Everyone must give the greatest attention to preserving the truth (John 17:17; cf. Philippians 1:27-28) as it was delivered to man (Jude 3). Sadly, there are very many presumptuous and careless people who have failed their responsibility for integrity in handling the Scriptures (Galatians 1:6-9; cf. 2 Peter 3:16). We are "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" and we must remember that "it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy." (1 Corinthians 4:1-2; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:4). We betray the trust when we fail to declare to everyone "the whole purpose of God." (Acts 20:27). Nothing must be altered, left out or added. The only prescription to save sinful people has been entrusted to us for distribution (Romans 1:16; Matthew 28:19-20). Do we feel the obligation with which God has entrusted us? Are we faithful stewards in discharging our responsibility?

(2) *The church that Jesus built.* Matthew's gospel records a commitment Jesus revealed to His followers: "I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). The New Testament contains the fulfillment of that plan (Acts 2:47). Being insensitive with the Scriptures certainly contributes to carelessness with regard to the local church. Because many have retained membership in local churches and neglected the degree of diligence required to keep the faith (Hebrews 2:1-4), their resulting misconceptions have allowed them to think of the local church as theirs to do with as they please. Many have forgotten that the church belongs to Christ; He purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28)! He is "head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22); He has "first place" (Colossians 1:18), and retains "all rule and all authority and power" until the end of time (1 Corinthians 15:24). His doctrine is not incomplete regarding the purpose, composition and pattern of function for His church. It must function according to His will! To their shame, many religionists are

using the Lord's church to satisfy their selfish and carnal desires. Since the beginning of the church two-thousand years ago, so very many people have corrupted themselves by becoming dissatisfied with the Lord's way and enticing others who have turned their ears away from the truth to join them in pursuit of their own desires. The Holy Spirit warned God's people of this apostasy in the first century (2 Timothy 4:3-4). The innumerable defections from the faith have multiplied exponentially to the extent that the world has found it increasingly difficult to wade through the doctrinal perversions and human traditions to find the salvation in Christ! Those outside of Christ are not finding the unity of all Christians in one body (Ephesians 4:4) that would potentially provide the incentive for the world to believe (John 17:20-21).

(3) *The eternal spirit of man.* All people "are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29, NKJV), and the "inner man" (2 Corinthians 4:16) is fashioned "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27). We all have human, or "earthly fathers" as well as a "Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9). There is a spirit in man, different from anything physical that cannot come from fleshly parents but only from our spiritual Father. The Lord is the one who "forms the spirit of man within him," (Zechariah 12:1). At the point of physical death, when the spirit leaves the body (cf. James 2:26), "then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7; cf. Genesis 2:7; 3:19). We learn more of man's immortality in the New Testament (cf. 2 Timothy 1:10), where the spirit in man is appraised by Jesus Christ as being of inestimable worth (Matthew 16:26). As God's servant, Stephen, was being stoned to death for his testimony of Christ, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59). The eternal spirit in every person is a sacred trust, and God will hold us responsible for how we take care of it.

Stewardship is the managing of something that is not our own. This was the application that our Lord made when He finished the parable of the unrighteous steward. He said, "And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:12). How are we managing the things that have been entrusted to our care?

- Gary Smalley

* "When one will not, two cannot quarrel!"

* "Far too often, rich parents are poor parents!"

* "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there!" – *Will Rogers*

* "Courage is fear that has prayed for divine aid!"

* "Faith (believing, trusting) in Christ can have meaning only when it follows an *intelligent grasp* of divine testimony, the word of God (Romans 10:17)!"

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)