

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305

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August 28, 2022

Volume 42, # 35

Faith Made Perfect

Not all faith is saving faith, as the Bible clearly illustrates. John writes of certain Pharisees who believed on Jesus but would not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue (John 12:42). Through James, God informs us of a faith that is without works (2:14-26) and calls it a dead faith. Dead, not in the sense of being non-existent, but in the sense of being *non-productive*. In verse 19 this kind of faith is likened to the faith of demons: "Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well, the demons also believe, and shudder." The demons do believe — even to the point of trembling — but not to the point of obedience. So, no matter who owns it or why, God teaches that this *faith without works* is a *demon-like faith*.

In addition to being dead, this demon faith is without profit because it is nothing more than words without deeds. Its worthlessness is illustrated in verses 15 and 16, where it offers mere words to those who desperately need food and clothing. Words of comfort and encouragement are appropriate at times, but not when offered as a substitute for deeds. Like, for instance, when the ladies visitation committee came calling on a sick sister. Marching right through her unkempt house, past the dirty dishes and unmade beds, past the piles of dirty clothes they came to her bedside where all chatted for a few minutes (mostly with each other), then excused themselves with these comforting words: We do hope you get better — be sure and call if there's anything we can do for you! With that they marched out to minister elsewhere. What doth it profit?

What is the profit in a faith that is not functional and that cannot be demonstrated? ". . . show me thy faith apart from works, and I by my works will show thee faith." (verse 18). Works show faith; what one does (or fails to do) is a reflection on what he believes. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of the Thessalonians who became ensamples to all believers in sounding forth the word of the Lord. Of them Paul says, "in every place your faith to God-ward is gone forth" (1 Thessalonians 1:8). They showed their faith! So did Abraham: "Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." (James 2:22). The faith that was reckoned for righteousness in Abraham (Romans 4) was made perfect (i.e., complete) by works. If Abraham's faith was

incomplete without works, how much more the faith of others? No, Paul and James do not contradict. When James teaches justification by works he speaks of works that proceed from faith. When Paul teaches justification by faith he speaks of faith that is accompanied by good works. This is the "faith which worketh by love." (Galatians 5:6).

In view of this, it should be remembered that the demon-like faith of James 2 can never be saving faith. The faith that blesses, saves and justifies is always Abrahamic faith; the kind that is made complete by works. Such is the faith to be rewarded with eternal life in John 3:16 and through which salvation comes by the grace of God in Ephesians 2:8. Saving faith and good works are interdependent and inseparably bound by Divine truth. God bids, "show me thy faith."

- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, September, 1972

Abortion and Deception

Evil causes must rely on lies and deception for their defense. Such is the case with abortion. Let's look at some of the deceptive terms and arguments used by abortion advocates:

In order to avoid the stigma of being pro-abortion they label themselves "pro-choice." This sounds better! The word choice suggests liberty or freedom. This is the image they want you to see. They fail to emphasize that the choice they are advocating is the choice to kill unborn children!

Another deceptive term is "reproductive choice." This is an attempt to equate abortion with acceptable forms of birth control. Abortion is not a reproductive choice, it is choosing to kill that which has already been reproduced! The time to exercise reproductive choice is before conception.

The argument is made that a woman should have the right to control her own body. This is misleading; it implies that only the woman's body is involved. In reality they are demanding the right to destroy a separate human body, that of the baby.

Abortion advocates appeal for sympathy by saying that thousands of women would die in illegal abortions if abortion is outlawed. Question: Which is the greater loss, the loss of thousands who die while killing their babies or the loss of millions of innocents who die with no ability to choose?

There is a legal right to abortion but no moral right. When forced to choose between the legal and the moral, the right thinking person will ever choose morality. Likewise, whenever two rights are in conflict the greater right should always prevail. The right to life is far superior to any perceived "right" to avoid childbirth.

- Marvin Cossey, via *Guardian of Truth*, November 5, 1992

Clippings...

Some Parents Say. . .

"We will not influence our children in making choices and decisions in matters of religion." Why not? The advertisements will. The press will. Their business will. The radio will. Television will. Their neighbors will. Their politicians will. We use our influence over flowers, vegetables, cattle—do you think we should avoid or ignore our children?

- Unknown

The Barrier of Sin

It could be argued rather convincingly that countries need to keep their borders secure. If some measure of discretion is not used to determine who will be allowed to enter and who will not be allowed, then all manner of evil is free to invade and ultimately destroy. For that reason, barriers are good.

In another sense, there are some barriers that are bad. Isaiah wrote by inspiration long ago: "Behold, the LORD's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear." (Isaiah 59:1-2). Those who appreciate the availability of the wonderful blessings from God certainly desire that their prayers are heard by Him! The problem is that man's sins remove him from the favor of God.

This is no new problem for anyone. Long ago Isaiah prophesied of the coming Christ by showing God's people their great need for Him: "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him." (Isaiah 53:6). Isaiah's description of them continues to accurately describe how barriers continue with modern man. People have turned their backs to God and walked away from His righteousness, His rule, His favor and His blessings.

Isaiah said that each had "turned to his own way;" an idea that continues to prevail: "I'll go my way; you go yours." The common principle seems to be that each person is fully capable of arriving at the best course of life in their own minds (without any divine revelations from their Creator). Hence, "Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts." (Proverbs 21:2). However, it must be considered: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel." (Proverbs 12:15). Jeremiah uttered a great truth that mankind desperately needs to learn: "I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself, Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23). We must heed the warning of wise Solomon: "There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25). Only God's way is perfect and right (Psalms 18:30; Isaiah 55:8-9).

People who rationalize that God should accept their conclusions that personally sanction their choice of religion ignore what He has stated about the lack of options in the divine realm. We are not hard-pressed to find "religious" people who are guilty of unbelief, rejection of God's will as stated in His revelation, rebelliousness, negligence, unconcern, procrastination, hypocrisy, and vain formalism in a "show" of religion.

Man would not go his own way in departure from God if he would not exalt his own desires and will against the will of God. This is why Jesus, in showing the way to the Father, said, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me." (Luke 9:23). Many are unwilling to deny themselves by rejection of their self-determined lifestyle.

Among accountable, responsible people, since ALL have gone astray, ALL are guilty. Paul declared: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23). All have missed the mark (sinned), all have disregarded and forsaken Him, thus creating the barrier.

Choosing a way other than God's way erects a barrier between man and God. Solomon warned: "He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, Even his prayer is an abomination." (Proverbs 28:9). "the face of the LORD is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:12). The One authorized to determine the final disposition of all in Judgment is the same One who makes the determination of exactly what is "evil". Man certainly needs an avenue to speak to his Creator. However, God will not answer the prayers of any who are His enemies (James 4:4).

Vain is the life that is lived without God. Such people are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, separated from Christ, without hope, and without God (Ephesians 2:1, 12).

Sins separate people from God and Christ. Is there a remedy? Yes. The remedy is divine forgiveness!

Man is responsible for creating his barrier from God. He would know nothing of this barrier had God not revealed it to him. The remedy is forgiveness that must come from God. Would you agree that it would be the wise course to seek forgiveness through the means that He has prescribed? Inventing our own is not acceptable to Him. May we assist you in your obedience to the gospel of Christ?

- Gary Smalley

* "The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible!"

* "A lot of us would like to move mountains, but few of us are willing to practice on small hills!"

* "When people speak ill of you, so live that no one will believe them!"

* "Habit is a cable; we weave a thread of it every day, and at last, we cannot break it!"

* "The world doesn't need a definition of religion as badly as it needs a demonstration!"

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)