

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Bearing Witness

I am told that two elders (?) all of twenty years old, asked their host if he believed the scripture regarding "witnessing;" (i.e., in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established). He answered that he did, and then one young man turned to his companion and asked him to bear witness.

The youth said, "I bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God." Whereupon, the first youth also said, "I bear witness that Joseph Smith was a prophet of God."

Well, that settled it! Joseph Smith must have been a prophet of God for both young men bore witness — or did they??

In genuine trial, does God or the court consider every one who can speak — utter words — a witness? We know better! To qualify as a witness, one must have knowledge of that to which he testifies. John could bear witness of Christ because he had heard, seen, and touched Him; and because Christ had been manifested unto him (1 John 1:1-3). The manifestation of that eternal life was Deity made known in the life, works, and heaven's declarations concerning Jesus of Nazareth (John 5:31-47; 14:7-9). John, like Peter, had been with Jesus in the holy mount (2 Peter 1:16-21) and spoke as he was moved by the Holy Spirit. Now there's a WITNESS for you.

But some have concluded there can be no witnessing or testifying today. This is hasty! We have as much right — and obligation — to be a witness, as did any saint of the past. What we have seen, heard, touched (i.e., what we have come to know), we may tell — testify. If you believe Jesus is the Christ, you may tell others **THAT YOU BELIEVE JESUS IS THE CHRIST**. If you were baptized on July 6th, you may tell others **WHAT YOU DID, AND WHAT YOU FEEL ABOUT IT!!** But don't get the idea that your testimony makes a thing true — or even that your testifying is on a par with that of the inspired Apostles.

Witnessing and Testifying have a sectarian or denominational connotation — enough so that I do not use the words in the current religious sense — because what can be no more than purely subjective, has been used as though it were a voice from God. In fact, this is one of the modern or neo-orthodox concepts of how God speaks to man. A bit earlier, sectarians thought the Holy Spirit moved them to witness in some direct way. Of course, both concepts are erroneous and harmful — leading gullible people to accept as testimony from God something that originated in the mind of the speaker.

Mormon elders may testify THAT THEY BELIEVE SMITH WAS A PROPHET OF GOD, and I would have no reason to doubt their testimony. They are qualified to tell me WHAT THEY BELIEVE, but that is a long way from proving that what they believe is TRUE. When people tell me their religious experience, I believe they had some sort of feeling or experience — there is really no way I could testify that they had not. But I refuse to accept an interpretation of their feeling that contradicts the Bible.

- Robert F. Turner, via *Plain Talk*, January, 1970

MOTIVES IN CONTROVERSY

Lest some misunderstand we wish to say a word about our motives in plainly discussing controversial subjects and pointing out error in our bulletin.

We have no malice or ill will toward anyone. We have no envy, bitterness or hatred. We do not have a contentious spirit, a belligerent attitude or a quarrelsome disposition. We have no "chip-on-the-shoulder" and we are not looking for a wrangle, fuss or argument.

But realizing that truth makes one free (John 8:32) while error condemns (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12), and prompted by a sincere love, interest and concern for all men everywhere, we kindly strive to point out error and present truth. "Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men" with "great plainness of speech." (2 Corinthians 5:11; 3:12). We try to be fair, kind and Christ-like in contending earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).

Sometimes we become one's enemy because we tell them the truth (Galatians 4:16), but it is not our desire or purpose to offend. We regret that it becomes necessary to identify individuals who mislead people (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18), but our love for the lost will not allow us to sit idly by while false teachers lead them to torment (Matthew 15:14).

Hence we shall continue to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12) by disrobing the wolves of the sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15) and exposing Satan's ministers who make a pretense of being God's (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). If the Lord wills, we shall continue to "preach the word", "in season, out of season," reproof, rebuking, and exhorting (2 Timothy 4:2).

- Earl Fly via *LIGHT IN DARKNESS*, March, 1971

Send the Fire Truck!

In a small eastern Kentucky town, the local police chief also served as part of the Volunteer Fire Department. His job was to answer the phone and in the event of a fire was to ring the fire bell to summon all the volunteer firemen in the county.

One Saturday morning, the phone rang and the chief answered, "Fire department." Out of the earphone came the terrified voice of a woman yelling, "Hurry, send the fire truck," and immediately hung up the phone. The chief sat there stunned. "Send it where?"

In a very few minutes, the phone rang again, and the chief again answered, "Fire department." Once more, in a hysterical cry, the voice on the other end of the phone cried, "Hurry! Hurry! Send the fire truck!", and again immediately hung up the phone. The chief was even more perturbed. He ran out into the street and surveyed the scene for a full 360 degrees, looking for smoke. No smoke. Where was the fire? Whose house was going up in flames? Were there children who were in danger? All these things flitted through his mind.

He heard the phone ring again, and on the way back to the station office, he devised a way to keep the lady on the phone long enough to find where to send the fire truck. He grabbed the phone, and yelled, "Where's the fire?" The voice on the other end returned the yell by saying, "In the kitchen!" and promptly hung up the phone once more.

So much of what is called religion is a lot like this humorous situation. Insufficient information leaves people insufficiently informed and the lack of information promotes nothing but confusion. Only the full revelation of God satisfies every situation in life.

There is neither reason nor excuse to not know what the good Lord wants us to know. He has not hidden his message to mankind in coded and confusing language. If we allow it to happen, Satan can corrupt our minds away from the "simplicity" that is in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:3). Nobody can afford to let that happen.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:2-3).

- Dudley Ross Spears

The Sad State that Breeds Rebellion!

Long ago, Jeremiah declared to the people of God, "Now hear this, O foolish and senseless people, Who have eyes but do not see; Who have ears but do not hear." (Jeremiah 5:21). These people were foolish in that they lacked wisdom that would bless them with spiritual discernment. They had become senseless in that their rejection of the knowledge of God (poor judgment) meant that these covenant people would rightly be punished. In the New Testament, Paul described them in this way: "they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21).

The Lord Jesus rebuked the same condition during His personal ministry: "For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them." (Matthew 13:15). He quoted from the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10). It is a description of people who have the ability to comprehend the message from God, but choose not to. Being unreceptive, hard hearts reject spiritual discernment. Unwillingness to accept the truth is the condition of heart that breeds all forms of rebellion.

In both Testaments of the Bible, we find people who had repeatedly heard God's word, but had tired of hearing it. They stopped their ears and closed their eyes, refusing to see its meaning and understand its application. Their stubborn refusal opened the only path for them: rebellion against God. Spiritual darkness prevented them from being forgiven by God. Without change, their future held only divine punishment. God's prophet, Ezekiel, was surrounded by these rebellious people: "Son of man, you live in the midst of the rebellious house, who have eyes to see but do not see, ears to hear but do not hear; for they are a rebellious house." (Ezekiel 12:2).

In every generation, this is the sad state that breeds rebellion against God. Paul encountered it upon arriving in Rome, when "... he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening." (Acts 28:23). Luke indicated, "Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others

would not believe." (verse 24). The disagreement prompted them to leave Paul. As they did, he quoted the words of the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet relating to this sad state (verses 25-27). By such a hard heart, they would miss the healing and salvation brought through Christ!

God's message of salvation has now been sent to all mankind with the offer of healing for all who believe. Is your heart open to receive the gospel of Christ today? May we encourage you to hear, believe and obey God's word?

- Gary Smalley

* "Some people don't always believe everything they hear, but they repeat it just to be on the safe side!"

* "The more love we give away, the more we have!"

* "Kindness is the language the deaf can hear and the dumb can understand!"

* "Happiness is a by-product of goodness!"

* "The Bread of Life *never* becomes stale!"

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)