

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

December 11, 2022

Volume 42, # 50

We Are Pilgrims!

We often sing the song, "*Here We Are But Straying Pilgrims*" # 213. How true, for Peter said, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). And beforehand he had said for them to "pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1 Peter 1:17). Let us consider four things in reference to our being strangers and pilgrims:

(1) We are only here for a short period of time, at the most. I know for youth this is hard to understand. But be assured as you grow older you will realize this truth. The very word "pilgrim" means one who is "sojourning in a strange place, away from one's own people" [W.E. Vine]. So for a short period of time, we are away from our heavenly home and Father. Since we know our stay here is short we should try to accomplish as much as possible for God and our own souls.

(2) Time passes fast. A favorite song of mine is: # 463, "*Hold To God's Unchanging Hand.*" Why? Because "*Time is filled with swift transition, Naught of earth unmoved can stand, ...*". How true the saying: "Yesterday I was young; Today I am old". Be advised: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

(3) As pilgrims we are not to plan a career of this world. As Song # 230 goes: "*This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru ... and I can't feel at home in this world anymore ...*". Truly our purpose here is to seek the Kingdom of God. We are not here to engage in the sinful acts of the world, not to become a part of this world truly. As Jesus said: "My kingdom is not of this world." We should say, "I may be in the world, but I am not of this world."

As the wise man said: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

(4) We should be planning for what is to come when we leave this earth: not completely for "Today" on this earth. We should prepare to face the Judgment Day and for our spirit to return unto God. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but

after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27). "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Notice Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." [ESV].

Yes beloved, someday our pilgrimage will end and we will face "the judgment seat of Christ". Will we be ready for that Great Day that is coming? Song # 283.

- Wendell M. Powell, via *The Charlotte Lamp*, Vol. 2, No. 18, 9/9/2012

A Crushed Head and A Bruised Heel!

History's first sin had just been committed, dooming humanity to the curse of death. God calls the guilty parties before Him for judgment. Adam points the finger at Eve, who in turn points the blame on the serpent. This leads God to start in descending order by first calling the serpent to account. Hear the sentence God renders:

"So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, you are cursed more than any livestock and more than any wild animal. You will move on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.'" - Genesis 3:14-15 (ESV).

Fast forward into history to see the fulfillment of this prophecy. Satan surely knew it was coming, for his demons were forever fearful of being "tormented before the time" (Matthew 8:29). However, it is a fact that if the angels desired to look into the future to see how God would bring about His plans (1 Peter 1:12), and Satan was an angel who rebelled against God and will be sent to hell in chains (Jude 6), then it stands to reason that the Devil is not omniscient. He is not like God, who can see the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). He was a rebel with a cause – to stage a coup.

This leads me to draw a conclusion about the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15 where the Seed (Christ) would strike the head of Satan, while Himself being struck on the heel. The latter would be a temporary inconvenience, while the former would be a fatal blow. I don't for a second think Satan ever saw this one coming. I believe he was totally blindsided. I am persuaded that he did everything within his limited power to create the events leading to Calvary, dancing with delight as he watched Jesus die, thinking he had gained the last laugh and exacted revenge for being cast out of heaven.

Think about it. What did Luke tell us in his gospel about Judas as the disciples were taking the first Lord's Supper? "And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people. Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve" (Luke 22:3-4). Satan wanted Jesus to die! What did Jesus tell Peter just a few minutes after Satan had entered Judas? "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that

your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." (Luke 22:31-32). Again, Satan wanted Jesus to die!

It is my conclusion from these verses that Satan believed he was victorious when Jesus died at Calvary. Everyone thought so, even His dispirited apostles. Christ had been crushed to death. For three days the Devil had his "15 minutes of fame." But the resurrection wiped that smile from his face. Suddenly, what looked to be a death blow was only a scratch, a mere bruise.

Conquering death Jesus arose triumphant, destroying both the power of Satan, and dealing him a fatal head blow. For about 36 hours Satan experienced the thrill of victory, but now he knows only the agony of defeat. His fate is sealed. Thank God for Christ's bruised heel.

- Rick Lanning

Rule and The Kingdom

"... and if Satan casteth out Satan he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. But if I by the Spirit of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (Matthew 12:26-28).

Two "kingdoms" are in existence: God's and the Devil's. The nature of each and how I become a part of them is vital to our understanding.

A baby is born and in a safe relationship with God (Ezekiel 18:20). Its death, while certainly sad, does not bring a sorrow that cannot be consoled (2 Samuel 12:23) for it is "safe in the arms of Jesus."

But as the child grows, his relationship with God changes. While a "young man" (Psalms 119:9), at some "age of accountability" (Ecclesiastes 11:9-10), he begins to allow the will of Satan to rule in his heart and life. He freely chooses the Devil over God, becoming obedient to his will, and thus a part of the kingdom: the rule of the Devil (John 8:44).

As this man matures, however, he comes to appreciate that God doesn't want men to die in sin (2 Peter 3:9). He further learns of the "good news" that God sent His Son to die for the sins of men (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). Once again he exercises his free will in obedience — this time to the will of God. In so doing he becomes a part of the kingdom: the rule of God over hearts submissive to His will. This obedience involves, initially, a real change of heart toward all past sins (Acts 17:30) and immersion in water to wash them away (Acts 22:16). This same submissive attitude toward God will cause him to "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7), dead to continuing in sin (Romans 6:1-14), because he allows God's seed, His will, to abide in him (1 John 3:9).

But after a period of faithful service, the world pulls, his faith weakens, and love grows cold. Once more the will of the Devil becomes his will. Once more he becomes obedient: Once again he is in the kingdom: now doing the will of the Devil (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). In his apostasy he is once again what he was before: a son of the one obeyed (Romans 6:16), no longer worthy to be or be called God's son (Romans 8:14; Luke 15:19, 21).

However, this man is not beyond hope. Successful efforts are made to strengthen his faith and rekindle his love (2 Corinthians 2:5-6). His allegiance changes. Once more he renounces the will of the Devil and obeys the will of God. Repentance and prayer reflect an obedient attitude once more. God again rules in his life. Once again he is part of the kingdom (2 Corinthians 5: 7-8).

Two kingdoms: God's and Satan's. Not "institutions" but relationships entered into and sustained by the submission and continued obedience of our spirits to the will and rule of either our Father (Romans 1:9) or our adversary (Ephesians 2:2); for we can have but one Master (Matthew 6:24). May His will be ours and His kingdom within us (Luke 17:21).
- David Smitherman, via *Plain Talk*, December, 1982

Good Medicine!

“A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones.” (Proverbs 17:22).

A pleasant acquaintance from years ago contacted me recently to inform me that her husband has been diagnosed with cancer. After thirty-eight years of marriage, her world is falling apart.

In his affliction, he is depressed, irritable, bitter, and curses the weakness of his body. He has been brought low by his plight and feels betrayed by life. His sadness has contagiously spread through his family; gloom and gray clouds linger in every situation and hang over every person. For them, the joy of life is withering and failing.

The suffering and death of Christ could have been an occasion of permanently producing a broken spirit among His disciples, but it did not. What was the key? He, "for the joy set before Him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). There was no joy in crucifixion, but there was joy in resurrection!

One of the many great blessings we find in the word of God is the path to Christ, and the attending joy that is a characteristic of abiding in Him. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." (John 15:10-11). God is the one who fills "with all joy and peace in believing" (Romans 15:13). Christ in the heart is joy in the heart. Joy in the heart is good medicine!

- Gary Smalley

- * "Don't face the New Year or any day without facing Christ!"
 - * "Faith is daring the soul to go beyond what the eyes can see!"
 - * "Don't have anything to be thankful for? Check your pulse!"
 - * "Some people are like rocking chairs – full of motion, but they make no progress!"
 - * "Killing time is a slow method of committing suicide!"
-

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)