

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A Matter of Choice

God made man a free moral agent. We are creatures of choice. We have the right and the power to choose day to day activities. This power of choice is expressed in the Bible over and over. Both Moses (Deuteronomy 30:19) and Joshua (24:15) put choices before Israel. But the choices they followed had consequences. They would likely make the choice that suited their own desires at the time and that would best serve their interests. But the choice would set in order chains of events that would not be to their liking.

Today we choose each day the kind of life we want to live, the rule of ethics to govern us and the people we wish to associate with. We usually do this out of selfish concern. But when we do, we also set in order chains of events that bring about end products that we may not like. The social drinker does not choose to be an alcoholic, to lose his job, family and friends, nor to have a damaged liver, but all too often that is what he gets. The criminal does not choose to go to jail when he robs or kills, but that's where he winds up.

When the prodigal son left home to enjoy spending his inheritance, he did not intend to end up in the hog pen, starving and friendless, but it was inevitable with that choice he made. Lot chose to pitch his tent toward Sodom because of the personal advantages it held for him and his family. He did not intend to choose to end up on a mountain having sons born by acts of incest with his own daughters. He did not intend to lose his wife and all his possessions in the destruction of Sodom. But all this he did, because "he pitched his tent toward Sodom" (Genesis 13:12).

We do not intend to lose our children when we become too deeply involved in economic and social affairs to love, train and mature them, but that's the end product of the choice. We do not intend to have delinquent, rebellious children when we chose not to discipline them, to teach them respect for God, parents and others.

No one chooses divorce from the beginning, it is a hard, heart-rending experience. But that's the end product of self-centered neglect. We all want happy occasions with exciting

mates but in our day to day choices we ourselves are not contributing to that end. We blame others when we are at fault. We made choices long ago that resulted in the end product. We like to sow but we don't like to reap.

- Morris D. Norman

Salvation by Faith

The Bible plainly teaches that one is saved by faith. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1). But many erroneously conclude that one is saved by faith ONLY. There is a great difference between the two doctrines: one is from God, the other from man. While the Bible teaches salvation by faith, it also plainly says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24.) "Faith without works is DEAD" (Verse 26). Therefore the kind of faith that saves is not faith only, that is, faith without works (obedience to God). It is the faith that works by love that avails. (Galatians 5:6).

When one believes in Christ he is not saved at that moment, "at the point of faith," but he is given the power (right) to become a child of God. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." (John 1:12). Such an one must work the righteousness of God (Acts 10:35). God's commandments are righteousness (Psalms 119:172). To work God's righteousness is to obey God's commandments which are revealed in the gospel (Romans 1:16-17). If one does not obey the gospel he will be eternally punished (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

To obey the gospel to become a child of God the believer must repent of all sins (Acts 17:30), confess Christ (Romans 10:10; Acts 8:37) and be buried in baptism for the remission of sins (Romans 6:4; Acts 2:38). When the believer is baptized into Christ (Romans 6:3), he becomes a new creature in Christ and all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Such an one is born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5), saved by God's grace and the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:5; Revelation 1:5). The believer must then continue to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7) to receive eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9).

- Earl Fly

Why We Exist

It is highly essential that the members of a New Testament church keep constantly in mind the reason for their existence as a church. The mission of Jesus was to save people

from their sins, to seek and save the lost (Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10). The local church is heaven's sacred expression of the mission of our Savior. It is endowed with the obligation of carrying out His mission. This, indeed, is the mission of every true church of Christ.

It will readily be seen that this mission pertains to the world to come. The scope of this mission is not to make people lead better or happier lives here but that their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 5:5). In a worldly, materialistic age it is easy for members of the church to forget the spiritual nature of our calling and strive to make the church partake of the nature of the institutions of men.

One of the great demands of this generation is ever-expanding social welfare. There are those who would succumb to the temptation to make the church a social institution. The church must supply the social needs of its young people and become a charitable organization concerned with solving the world's problems of poverty and delinquency, so these people tell us. This social improvement endeavor is not the purpose of our existence as a church. The church exists to preach the soul-saving Gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 1:8; Philippians 4:15). We exist to function as God's "spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5) in edifying the saved (1 Corinthians 14:26; Acts 20:28). We assemble to worship God (John 4:24), to study His word (Acts 20:32; 2 Timothy 3:16-17), and to preach the gospel (2 Timothy 4:2). These meetings are not social. We do not come together to honor men, but God. We hold or use property, as a church, only to expedite worship and preach the gospel.

To this holy end we appeal to every member of this church to labor. The perishing things of clay we cannot allow to burden the church or detract her attention from her divinely-appointed mission. God's converted will delight to co-operate in such a mission. The unconverted will find that mission distasteful.

- George Jones, via *Mooreville Memo*, 02/07/1964 [slightly edited – GFS]

Make the Most of Your Time!

Every time we discard the now obsolete calendar for a new one, we give some degree of thought to our personal use of time and planning for the future ("If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." - James 4:15). It is good to remind ourselves of Paul's directive in Ephesians 5:15-16, "Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil." His statement prior to this is eye-opening: "Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you." (verse 14).

The lesson here is vital. There are some Christians who should awake from spiritual slumber or death! How could it be so? They have drifted from the Light of divine truth through neglect (cf. Hebrews 2:1-4). Not many words so quickly fill our minds with regret as the word "neglect!" If sad regret comes it is because we realize the evil that our Adversary has perpetrated upon us, and we "fell for it." To remain engulfed in neglect will prevent us from realizing our blessed eternal home with Christ!

Neglect has companions that are likewise viciously evil: laziness, mediocrity, indifference, and procrastination! The admonition of James 4:17 fights this quicksand: "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." Christ made the precious sacrifice to free us from sin (Romans 6:2, 18). Those with strong aversion to "sin" are the ones with motivation to change course.

Let us beware of relying upon "good intentions" throughout life, realizing that "faith, if it has no works, is dead," (James 2:17). To overcome the evils of these days let us use our time for good. The joy of accomplishment builds self-esteem, and this encouragement is good for all of us!

Let us take encouragement from the response of the officials in Jerusalem when Nehemiah informed them of God's plan for rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and removing its disgrace: "'Let us arise and build.' So they put their hands to the good work." (Nehemiah 2:18). Recall these encouraging words: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58). Let us put our hands to the plow (Luke 9:62)!

- Gary Smalley

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- * "Nobody ever drifted toward God, but lots of folks have drifted away from Him!"
 - * "The person who does not illustrate the doctrine of Christ in his life does not believe it!"
 - * "Christianity is not meant to be merely a fire escape from a world of woe!"
 - * "Forgive. If you remain sore, you will never soar!"
 - * Look up and write down the definitions of the following words: Loyalty. Dedication. Perseverance. Work. After you have carefully defined each word, ask yourself, "What kind of servant have I been this year?"
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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)