

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Misplaced Values

Recently I started a sermon with this paragraph: "As you know, I am given to some levity in the pulpit. It is a matter of judgment if this is advisable or not. I think some of it is all right or I would not engage in it. One thing is certain, you remember that part of my sermon! At the same time, you may not recall the seriousness of my message. If I preach on the death of Christ, the audience may go to sleep. If I kindly act the fool, all will stay awake and all will remember the things said. If I expound on a material thing, everyone will become especially interested. If I deal with a spiritual matter, many times it is sloughed off as something relatively unimportant."

Perhaps I was a bit hasty in judgment on saying those things. Perhaps I exaggerated the matter a little. Maybe, with some people, it is the other way around. Some may despise the levity and retain the serious portion of my sermon. But there is, indeed, a lot of "misplaced emphasis" or "misplaced values" as I have headed this piece.

What is your reaction to the subject of eternity? Do you really seriously consider the implications in the scriptures relative to this important subject? The Bible says some shall "go away into everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46). Does that word "everlasting" strike you as a very serious thing? Perhaps one of the saddest things recorded in the New Testament is Abraham's statement to the rich man to the effect that a gulf was fixed and that there could never be any crossing over to the other side. Jesus declared that the hour was coming in which "all that are in the graves shall come forth." Some to resurrection of life and some to resurrection of damnation. In any case the thing under consideration dealt with eternity. Let us put proper emphasis on eternity and strive to be ready when it begins for us.

Take the subject of sin. Do we consider it seriously enough? Remember, the Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20)! Paul tells us that "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 2:23). Sin will separate us from God so that he will not hear us (Isaiah 59:1-2). We had better not treat the subject of sin too lightly. It is

a deadly serious subject. We had better give more time to this matter than we do to material things which are for time only.

What about the terrible cost of redemption? Because He loved us, God was willing to "give his only begotten son" for us (John 3:16). Christ was willing to "taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Christ shed His blood that we might have "remission" of our sins (Hebrews 9:22). How seriously do we consider this love of God and this sacrifice of Christ? Do we give these matters the kind of attention they deserve? Do we place the right value on this demonstration of love?

I pray that we may all re-evaluate our blessings. I hope we continue to enjoy many material blessings as well as spiritual ones. But may we not get our values mixed. Let us not misplace values. It is better to consider now than to regret later.

- A. C. Grider, via *Truth Magazine*, 08/07/1975

Share a Quote ...

Fornication often has many social consequences. Our nation is reaping the harvest of the sexual (fornication) revolution and it is bringing this nation to its knees. The loss of godly influence, the lowering of our national morality, the disintegration of marriages and families, unwanted and non-parented children, justifying the taking of innocent life (abortion), a myriad of sexually transmitted diseases are all consequential casualties in this fleshly warfare of sexual indulgence and self-gratification. Truly, "righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

- Phil T. Arnold, *Guardian of Truth*, 07/15/1993

Continual Devotion to the Apostles' Teaching

A great multitude of people gathered about the apostles of Christ on the first Pentecost after Christ's resurrection. Three thousand of that number were "pierced to the heart" by the preaching of Peter and the rest of the apostles. "So then, those who had received his word" obeyed the commands, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;" (Acts 2:37-41). The result? "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." This group of believers was "the church" (cf. Acts 5:11; 8:1), which Jesus had promised to build (Matthew 16:18).

What about those otherwise good moral people, those citizens of the great and holy city of Jerusalem, someone's father, mother, or dear grandparent who "believed" that Jesus

was sent from God but didn't think obedience was really necessary? They just were not included in the number: "those who were being saved"! The Lord did not add them to His church! They had not obeyed the commands as preached by the Lord's apostles!

But what about those who obeyed these divine instructions in order to have their sins forgiven, who were saved and added by the Lord to His church? Just as they had initially received the commands from the apostles (Acts 2:41), "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42).

The New Testament is clear that continuous, steadfast devotion to the truth is required from all Christians in order to be faithful to Christ. We observe it here when the church began; the apostles kept on instructing the people with "many other words" relative to salvation. We see it later as the gospel of Christ spread throughout the world (Acts 11:23; 16:15; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:9; Revelation 2:10).

As seen, the Lord is the ultimate decision-maker as to who is saved (He sees the heart of each one, 1 Samuel 16:7). He knows when saving faith is genuine (John 2:24-25). He knows the difference between mere lip-service and genuine obedience to the faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26). Consequently, "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47, NKJV).

As the initial teachers in the church's beginning, the apostles of Christ executed the Lord's commands to "make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . . [and] teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;" (Matthew 28:19-20). Notice that they were not free to originate their own teaching. They were to preach the doctrine of Christ (cf. 1 John 9), which was provided to them through the Holy Spirit, as the Lord had promised (John 14:26; 16:13). These instructions from heaven were required so that all new disciples would know divine truth. Upon that basis, they would worship and serve the holy God of heaven acceptably. If they wanted to be saved from the consequences of their sins, they were required to obey what the apostles commanded them. If they wanted to remain faithful to the Lord, they had to continue to follow the apostles' instructions. The scriptures indicate that this is precisely what they did: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching . . ." (Acts 2:42).

Today we have many religious groups claiming allegiance to Jesus Christ. But such claims are not possible. Faithful Christians are identified by comparing belief and practice with the doctrine of Christ. It remains true, as it was in Acts 2, that when believers accept, obey and abide in the doctrine of Christ, He adds them to His church. This is the only way that their identity as people belonging to God can be established. The only way for anyone

to prove that he is acceptable to the Lord is by abiding in the doctrine of Christ (i.e., "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching").

Unfortunately, the Lord Jesus loses followers when His requirements are faithfully preached. Many people prefer to follow their own desires (2 Timothy 4:3-4). Many neglect to pay close attention to the gospel of Christ and drift away from it (Hebrews 2:1-4). Continuing steadfastly demands great effort. Many are unwilling to expend such diligent effort and ridicule the faithful for retaining the standard of sound words (2 Timothy 1:13) and "holding fast the faithful word" (Titus 1:9). Just as Paul indicated to Titus, "For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, . . . teaching things they should not teach" (Titus 1:10-11).

Abiding in Christ is not as easy as some would have us believe. Christianity is far from a "do-your-own-thing" religion. It takes great dedication to habitually search the scriptures (cf. Acts 17:11), and great courage to faithfully teach and practice the doctrine of Christ. It takes humility of attitude to have brotherly discussions with people who differ in understanding of God's word, but the faithful must welcome investigation as servants of Christ. We must do our very best to understand what the Lord intended to teach by His words. Paul instructed: "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). Christians are truth-seekers; they study seriously, strive to understand thoroughly and apply His word faithfully. These directives prove difficult for those with no desire to study the Bible. Those determined to be faithful are exceptionally unique, certainly not routinely plentiful.

Friend, are you learning the doctrine of Christ? Are you abiding in the apostles' teaching? Let us encourage one another to be faithful to the Lord!

- Gary Smalley

* "God sometimes allows us to be put on our backs in order to make us look up!"

* "The face of Jesus must be very near our own when the thorns from his crown of suffering are pressing our brow and hurting us!"

* "We can sometimes see more through a tear than through a telescope!"

* "Always keep your head up – but be careful to keep your nose at a friendly level!"

* "The road to knowledge begins with the turn of a page!"

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)