

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Return to the Lord

Built in to the message of the prophets was the appeal to repent. These men were sent by God to expose sin and urge the guilty to repent. Often the appeal was framed as a challenge to return to the Lord (Isaiah 6:10; Jeremiah 3:1; Malachi 3:7). For instance, Joel's appeal to Judah was for the people to repent of their sins: "So rend your heart", and "return to the Lord your God" (Joel 2:13). Through the distribution of His judgments (locusts, drought, desolation), God admonished His people to come out of their sin and back to Him. It was His loving purpose to prompt a change in their direction. The essential definition of repentance has not changed through the dispensations. We can, therefore, use Joel's statement as the basis for our understanding of returning to the Lord. And this study can find application for those who have been baptized but left their God.

Repentance is a change in direction. The simple word "turn" shows that to be so. Those guilty of sin (before or after baptism) need to turn; a change of direction is needed. If you've been letting the world influence your thinking, your speech, your conduct, your dress or attitude, you need to change your direction. If you've abandoned the assembly, harbored ill-will in your heart, accepted false teaching, helped false teaching advance, participated in party strife or refused to grow, God seeks a change in your direction. Repentance is a change in your direction, turning from your sin to the Lord (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

Repentance occurs in the heart. Observe the phrase "with all your heart" in Joel 2:12. Everything we do before God ought to be done with a whole heart. Repentance, to be complete and genuine, must come from a whole heart: a heart of reverence for God, love for God; a heart influenced by the cross of Christ. Repentance should be the product of a heart of mature responsibility toward everything that is holy and right. The conviction of sin from the Word should be let in, so that repentance finds its true and good expression.

Repentance is not just a ritual. "So rend your heart, and not your garments". It was customary among the Jews to express their emotions in very public, visible ways. To this day in Middle Eastern cultures, when a family member dies, there may be public weeping

and wailing; throwing dust in the air; beating the breast and the rendering of garments. The problem to be noted here is, the emotion must not be ritualized and confused with true repentance. The fact that someone may cry in public or come down an aisle doesn't assure wholehearted repentance. Repentance is a personal decision to leave sin behind and come to God. It's a decision of heart, productive of good fruit. It may be accompanied by some open expression, but the essence of the matter lies in the heart and the results in life.

Repentance is made possible by a gracious God. "Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love..." If you are alive to hear the Word, be convicted and repent, thank God that you have such a blessed opportunity. Thank Him for the precious blood of Christ. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance". If you're alive today, you can repent. Thank God for the time He has given you to return to Him, but don't presume upon His grace and providence. "He relents from doing harm", but the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. Repent while there is time.

If you are reading this as one convicted of your sin, now is the time to repent. If you just plan to repent someday, that isn't good enough. Ask God to relent, turn from your sin, and enjoy peace with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Warren E. Berkley

Four Reasons We Don't Observe the Sabbath

Why doesn't the church of Christ worship on Saturday? Isn't it supposed to? This is what those among the Seventh-Day Adventists have asked. They claim that we fail to obey God by not worshipping on the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. They claim that we need to continue to keep the Sabbath just as the Jews in Old Testament days did.

When one examines the issue, he will find that there are many reasons we don't worship on the Sabbath. Here are four reasons:

1. God wants us to worship on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42, 20:7, cf. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Hebrews 10:24-25). No command is given for worship on the Sabbath or seventh day of the week.
2. The Sabbath was for the Jews only. This is made evident in the phrase, "this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations" (Exodus 31:13). Whose "generations"

does God refer? The Jews' generations! We are not Israelites. We are not Jews. We were not slaves in Egypt nor our ancestors (Deuteronomy 5:15). The Sabbath was for the Jews to observe, not us.

3. There is no command, example, or necessary implication in the New Testament for Christians observing the Sabbath.

4. The Law of Moses (a.k.a. Law of God) was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-16). Therefore, it is no longer in effect. This includes the Sabbath!

This is not to say we can't worship God in certain ways on the last day of the week. Sometimes brethren meet for gospel meetings on Saturdays, where there's singing, praying, and preaching. This is not, however, a Sabbath observance. This is a day we sometimes choose to meet during the week. The first day of the week is the day mentioned in the New Testament for Christians to worship – not the Sabbath.

- Ethan Jennings, in *The Old Paths*, 12/11/22 [slightly edited – GFS]

The Shortest Funeral Sermon

One of the great men of the Old Testament was Moses. He was born, preserved in infancy, hid by his own mother, reared by Pharaoh's daughter, "And she called his name Moses" (Exodus 2:10). There are a number of outstanding things about Moses.

(1) *Moses was very great in the land of Egypt.* "And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (Exodus 11:3).

(2) *He was the man of God.* Moses is called "the man of God" in 1 Chronicles 23:14. It is a great thing to be called the man of God. To be identified as the man of God is to live after God's order.

(3) *Moses was faithful.* The writer to the Hebrews said, "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant" (Hebrews 3:5). This is not to say that Moses never sinned, for he did.

(4) *Moses made the right choice.* "By faith Moses, when he was come to years refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:24-25). Moses, realizing that sin's pleasure was temporary, cast his lot with the people of God.

(5) *God preached the funeral of Moses.* God said to Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead" (Joshua 1:2). Perhaps the shortest funeral sermon was in these words. Would God say this about you?

- Johnny Edwards

Warnings Must Continue!

Warnings of potential danger and harmful hazards are good and helpful for man in many ways. Identifying and correcting hazards in the workplace has prevented many injuries and fatalities. The exact number of prevented incidents can never be known, but tragedy often provides the incentive to find and implement effective remedies.

The Lord God has always provided warnings of spiritual dangers to the human family through His prophets and faithful spokesmen. Throughout the Bible we learn of clear warnings against falling away from the living God (cf. Hebrews 3:12). Unfortunately, mankind has a history of failure to respond appropriately to God's merciful warnings. His own followers become disloyal and depart from His way.

Adam and Eve fell away from God by choosing disobedience to His command regarding fruit from a certain tree (Genesis 3:11-13). When Noah's day arrived, "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5). In the days of Abraham, his nephew Lot chose to live near Sodom, where "the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD." (Genesis 13:13). In the days of Moses, the people of God "committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves." (Exodus 32:31). God said to Moses, "They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshiped it and have sacrificed to it" (Exodus 32:8). Many years later during the time of the judges the way of God was forsaken as "everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judges 21:25). As the prophets of God were sent to call God's people to repentance, they were resisted, persecuted and killed (Acts 7:51-53). When pronouncing woes upon the Jerusalem leaders, Jesus warned: "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them." (Luke 11:47).

Conditions were no better among the Covenant people when John came, preaching: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2). His job was to prepare the hearts of the people to receive the Christ. They desperately needed to turn around!

Almost two-thousand years after the day when Christ began to build His church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:1-47), divine warnings must continue to be proclaimed by faithful Christians (Acts 20:29-32; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; 5:14). Apostasy from the faith will not stop among men who turn away from the truth to please themselves (2 Timothy 4:3-4). God's people must never neglect diligence in holding fast to God's word; "we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it." (Hebrews 2:1). Only steadfast diligence of this type will make us sensitive in detecting gradual and incremental departures from the gospel.

Let all who have been duped by the insidious nature of the devil's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11) return to the Lord! Let all return to the Holy Scriptures and to God's original plan for salvation from sin. The last two-thousand years of man's history have not proven him faithful! May we learn to speak only as God has spoken (1 Peter 4:11)!

- Gary Smalley

* "Service is not spelled serve-us!"

* "Seven days without prayer makes one weak!"

* "If you pray 'Our Father' on Sunday, don't live like an orphan the rest of the week!"

* "Sometimes the majority only means that all the foolish are on the same side!"

* "People are not your problem, they are your purpose!"

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)