

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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The Price of Discipleship

Jesus never offered material things nor an easy life to influence any one to become His disciple. On the contrary He made it plain that the cost of discipleship was very high. Being divine He knew that to follow Him in His teaching would cost great sacrifice. He must be first in the heart and life of all who would be His followers. "Now there went with him great multitudes: and he turned, and said unto them, if any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have wherewith to complete it? (Luke 14:25-29.) He teaches here that we must make Jesus first in our lives. Our dearest loved ones must take second place in our hearts and lives. He teaches that one planning to build a tower should count the cost before he undertakes to build. To follow Jesus now is to do what He wants us to do and as His word teaches us to do. Jesus never repealed nor modified the terms of discipleship. The prevailing teaching is that we can be His disciples merely by thinking kindly of Him in His person as He was while here. Faithfulness to His teaching is the only way to be faithful to Him.

On another occasion when a multitude was attracted to Him by curiosity and "loaves and fishes," He said unto them: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in yourselves . . . Upon this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life and we have believed and know that thou art the Holy One of God. (John 6:51-56.)

Young man, if you had been there what would you have done? Would you have joined with Peter saying: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."? Jesus is not here in person, but His "words of eternal life" are still here. And the crisis is still here. Your decision is the same in principle as it was when Jesus spoke. The apostles must turn away from His word as did the multitude or make the sacrifice and remain faithful to

Him. They chose to stand with the few, and Jesus' words of eternal life. There is a strong current today in turning away from the words of Jesus in many things. Institutions are again supplanting the church as they did during the last century.

The tests of discipleship that Jesus gave while here were not just for His personal ministry as many seem to think. They are for today as they were when Jesus was here in person. We must be willing to endure any hardship that is necessary to be loyal to Him. Loyalty to Jesus is loyalty to His words. It is likely that it requires as much faith and courage to be His disciple today, as it did in any former period. It is so easy and pleasant to drift with the current in this age of big movements and show. This is a day of mass-movements and glamour. The denominations are in competition with each other and the world for the "spotlight." Many preachers and churches of the Lord have "caught the spirit of the age." Their "vaccine of faith" was not strong enough to repel the virus of human wisdom. The crisis is testing the faith of everyone. The issue is plain to all who wish to see. IS THE CHURCH OF THE LORD SUFFICIENT IN AND THROUGH WHICH TO DO ALL THAT GOD WANTS US TO DO? Are we "complete in Him" who is the head over all things to the church? Or can we improve on the greatest work of God — the church? That is the issue. It is not what should be done. It is a question by whose wisdom we should do God's work — by the wisdom of man, or by the wisdom of God? It is exactly the same principle that was involved during the last century.

Many tried to be neutral then, and some are now deceiving themselves into thinking that they can remain neutral. There is not a neutral position between the words of Jesus and the teaching of men. Men must choose between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man.

God told Gideon to assemble an army to defend their homes. Thirty-two thousand volunteered. God said: "Proclaim in the ears of the people that all who are fearful and afraid may go home." Twenty-two thousand were so scared that they "turned back." Dear reader, if you are "afraid" to defend the church of the Lord against every attempt to model it after the denominations you would do well to "turn back" now.

The promoters of things to supplant the church thought at the start that the opposition was only a "little breeze" that would soon "blow itself out." Those who defended the church as it is revealed in the New Testament, seemed to think that certainly most brethren would see that the things troubling the church were not only unscriptural but also in direct opposition to what they had so earnestly taught and, therefore, would cease to press such things. How self-deceived were both groups? This generation will not see the end of this battle between truth and error. The spirit of innovation-ism is unfair and ruthless. It is not influenced by the word of God, the plea of peace and unity of the church of the Lord. If the reader thinks these statements are too strong, I reply that I went through a quarter of

a century during the last apostasy. Some of the readers of this writing have already had mild experiences and will have stronger experiences as the years pass.

A word to you who have enlisted for the duration: Every possible effort will be made to turn you away from your stand for the word of the Lord. Flattery, big salaries and popularity will not be easy to resist. With many, the financial sacrifice will be the greatest. Every unfair means will be used to crush you. You will be charged with being opposed to caring for widows and orphans. It will be said that you do not care if they starve. You will be called trouble makers and church splitters.

Your strength lies in the truth you stand for; and in your faith, courage, and not least, your Christian deportment. The truth, God, Christian deportment are the side that will win before the Throne of Heaven.

If every church now in existence should depart from the truth (which will not happen — for several thousand will remain true), there are enough preachers of faith and martyr-courage who could and would rebuild the church of the Lord in large numbers in a single generation. There is a larger number of such men today than was saved from the last apostasy. The few saved from the last apostasy rebuilt the church to great numbers. With the same faith, courage and willingness to sacrifice it can be done again. Keep your eye on the word SACRIFICE.

The seed of the kingdom, the word of God, is still here; and the soil, the hearts of men lies fallow ready to receive the word of life. I am persuaded that God has "reserved" several times seven thousand who have not and will not bow the knee to human institutions. I am persuaded that He is able and will raise up many more who will spend and be spent for the glory of the church of the Lord.

Grieved? Yes, to sleepless hours and tears. Discouraged? NEVER. That word is not in the vocabulary of those "who walk by faith." Please pardon a personal word by a 91 year old man. I was in the battle of the last century for more than a quarter of a century. I have been in this that is now being waged from the beginning. I do not recall that I was ever discouraged for a single hour. My faith in God; in his word; in the glory of the church in its purity, and the final triumph of truth has been my refuge.

"Every plant that my, heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up."

- W. W. Otey, in *The Gospel Guardian*, February 20, 1958

WHAT WOULD YOU DO!

For many years a merchant conscientiously used a measure which did not hold what the government standard required. He was honest and had no intention of defrauding those who purchased from him. He took the word of the man who sold him the measure and never thought of having it tested. When the merchant passed on, his son's attention was called to the fact that his father had unknowingly failed to give full measure to his customers. Could the son be honest and continue to use the measure?

Are your religious practices in harmony with the Bible which is our standard? When you study the Bible and find that some practice of your loved ones did not come up to the standard, would you be honest if you continue as they did? The Word of God declares, "To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17).
- Unknown

- * "If people knew as little about how to handle fire as they do about to handle the Bible, every town in the world would burn to the ground tonight!"
 - * "It's harder for folks who run around to keep straight!"
 - * "Hypocrisy works two ways: it makes the bad man hide his badness for fear of the good man, and the good man hide his goodness for fear of the bad man!"
 - * "People are not honored for what they receive, but for what they give!"
 - * "Every child has a right to be both well fed and well led!"
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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)