

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

October 08, 2023

Volume 43, # 41

"Workers Together With God"

"For we are laborers together with God . . ." (1 Corinthians 3:9). "We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1). These passages introduce a vital subject, one that needs to be better understood, and even better put into practice.

Jesus set an example of work (labor) while He was upon the earth doing the work that God gave Him to do. He said, "I must work while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4). He was, indeed, a worker of the kind which pleases God; one willing to do that which was commanded Him (John 8:29; 12:49). Further, He said, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not" (John 10:37). Therefore, Jesus was a worker, a laborer with God, His Father.

Too many today could not be so described. Therefore, it behooves us to think seriously concerning our relationship and our responsibility because of this relationship. Among some other things this means that we are not to be shirkers; such seek to evade their duty and work. Neither are we to be players; too many are doing no more than playing at religion - even the religion of Christ. Time is too valuable to be wasted in such a way. Nor are we to be idlers; such are no more than drones, sluggards, loafers. Neither would gossipers fit the description of workers; such idly pass the time, and become involved in this destructive sin. Thus, emphasis is placed upon our being workers in the kingdom of God. To conclude that worship is all that is required of the child of God is to fail to understand the entire duty of God's people.

Another matter of importance suggested by this language is that of working together. And, this working together means with God and others. This impresses the idea of unity, harmony; not "I" but "We." And, it further teaches that we are not to work against Him. Thus, if we will see to it that we work in unity and harmony with God by learning His will and doing His will, then the greatest work on earth will be accomplished; and it will be preparation for eternity by all those engaged.

The word or expression "with," in this thought means in "some particular relation to; especially implying company, association, or connection;" this can be seen from the instruction of Christ in John 15:1-6. Too, it means, "Not against; not ahead of; not behind." The whole idea is that of full cooperation and fellowship (2 John 9; John 14:23). Are we working with God?

Not to be overlooked in this matter is the one with whom we are to work. This is truly an essential matter. We could be workers together, and still not be workers with God. We must, therefore, be certain that as we work together that our work is in keeping with, is according to, the instruction of God. What it amounts to is this: we could be united in error, as are many people in the religious world. If we are to work with God, we must study His word, learn His pattern, and then work accordingly; then, and not before, are we "laborers together with God." We need to realize that there is no neutrality, no middle-ground, no middle-of-the-road (Matthew 12:30); so we must labor in the proper realm (in Christ), and according to the correct pattern (God's word) if we are to succeed in pleasing Him. To be blessed we must work together with Him. Without Him we are nothing, and can do nothing (John 15:5). When we do work as He directs, He is honored and glorified, souls are saved, and we prepare for that inevitable meeting with Him in Judgment.

Now, before saying "there is nothing I can do," stop and think seriously. Even though it may not be as great as you have seen others do, or as great as you may want to do, remember that before one can do great things, he must learn to do little things, and do them well! There is work for all to do, for each of us; but let us not forget that we are to be workers together, united, and with God; respectful of His authority and of His way.

Let each member of the body of Christ find something that he is able to do in the service of God, and begin now to do that! We can work with Him, and with all others who are following His divine plan. Do we really need anything better? The fact is there is nothing better; there is nothing that begins to be anywhere near to as good as His way! Surely all should be content with His way!

- Eugene Crawley, via *Guardian of Truth*, 02/04/1982

Can A Good Man Be Saved and Not Be A Member of the Church?

In the title of this article, I'm not using the word church in a denominational sense. The Bible knows nothing about a denomination. Our question for discussion is: "Can a man be saved and not a member of the church the Lord had in mind when he said, 'Upon this rock I will build my church'" (Matthew 16:18)?

The Bible teaches that a man must be a member of the church described in the New Testament. Notice the following reasons:

1. There is an example of a good man having to obey the gospel (Acts 10). In verse 2, it is said that he was a devout man, a God-fearing man, an alms-giving man and a praying man. In Acts 11:14, it is said he had to hear words whereby he and his house could be saved. He is an example that a man cannot depend on his moral goodness. He obeyed the commands and was added to the church, since all the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:47).
2. Redemption is in Christ (Ephesians 1:7). One can't be in Christ without being in the body of Christ. The church is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23); so one can't be in Christ without being in the church. A penitent believer is baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26-27). He is also baptized into the body (1 Corinthians 12:13). This shows that to be in the body is the same as being in Christ. If one is saved out of the body of Christ, he is saved without being connected with the head. Christ is the head (Colossians 1:18).
3. Reconciliation to God is necessary to be saved. One is reconciled to God in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18). It is said that one is reconciled in the body of Christ (Ephesians 2:16). So if one is saved outside of the body, which is the church, He is saved without being reconciled to God. Who can believe it?
4. Those outside of the body are aliens (Ephesians 2:12). He is without God, a stranger, without hope and without Christ. Can that kind of a person be saved? Paul said that those in the body of Christ are fellow-citizens with the saints (Ephesians 2:19).
5. Finally, the church, which is His body, is the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15). Members of His church are heirs (Romans 8:16-17). They are God's children. Will God save any other than His children? Does God have children outside of His family?

- B. G. Hope [slightly edited – GFS]

Longing for the Christian's True Home

The Hebrews writer described people of faith, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who did not live to fully realize the fulfillment of the promises that God had made, as "having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance" (Hebrews 11:13). They saw these sure promises with the eyes of faith; they knew God could not lie. They welcomed them; they were favorably disposed to embrace them as great blessings even though they did not live long enough to fully receive them. Their faith was alive on the day of their deaths;

they trusted that their descendants would receive what was promised. For this reason, they regarded themselves as "strangers and exiles on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13).

Those who serve the living God are portrayed as wanderers in a foreign territory ("aliens and strangers" – 1 Peter 2:11). Why? It is because this world is not our true home, because we take the long view and see beyond our present circumstances of this life. Jesus taught us to look into eternity with God. We must lay down the mortal and put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). Abraham, the great example of faith, was a nomad who never settled down permanently in one place. He lived his life on the move (cf. Genesis 23:4). Christians embrace the concept that earth is only a temporary home.

All faithful servants are strangers here, and hardship goes along with being a stranger. Haven't you felt the suspicion and even contempt from those who are wedded to this world? All their lives, the patriarchs were strangers in a strange land, foreigners in a land that was not their own. They were outsiders. They lived in tents, not houses. They endured ill-treatment with the people of God (Hebrews 11:25), receiving torture and wandering in deserted areas. They were destitute and afflicted, but they gained the approval of God through their faith (Hebrews 11:39).

Just as these who lived in faith trusted and welcomed whatever God had in store for His faithful followers, the faithful today "desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them." (Hebrews 11:16). The day is coming when God's people will no longer be strangers and exiles! God will place them in His city, the goal of their quest and the satisfaction of their desires. They long for it; they are homesick for it.

This life is departed in joyful expectation without desire to go back. "Oh, for a home with God, a place in His courts to rest!" God has rewarded His faithful followers in the past, and He will again!

- Gary Smalley

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- * "Nothing lost matters if you save your soul; nothing saved matters if you lose your soul!"
 - * "Plenty of folks give the Lord credit, few give Him cash!"
 - * "Money is a great servant but a terrible master!"
 - * "Make the Golden Rule your daily rule!"
 - * "No Brainer: Whom Do You Believe, Jesus or Darwin?"
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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)