

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Salvation by Experience?

Several years ago I had a conversation with a man who, when he learned I was a preacher, wanted to relate his "salvation experience." He said he looked out his bedroom window one bright, moonlit night and saw in his garden a cross with blood on the center of it. The next morning he investigated further and saw that it was a cabbage head with a ripe tomato right in the center. Since he could not explain how it got there, he took it as a miraculous "witness" to his salvation. Many have told similar "experiences" and based their hope of salvation on them.

Isn't it amazing that people can come up with such opinions, in spite of the fact that the New Testament contains no such case of conversion? No, not one convert in the New Testament ever based his hope of salvation on an "experience" of this nature. While miraculous events did accompany a few conversions, the purpose of them was not to convince the sinner that he had been converted and was accepted by God.

A miracle occurred on the day of Pentecost, but not upon the audience. The miracle occurred upon the apostles and enabled them to speak as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Those converted heard the apostles' preaching, believed and were commanded to "repent and be baptized" for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38).

Philip "preached Christ" to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5) and his message was "confirmed" (Mark 16:20) by "the signs which he did" (Acts 8:6). But the Samaritans received no "experience of salvation." The Bible says, "when they believed Phillip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

Miracles accompanied the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, but the eunuch never knew anything about them. An angel told Philip to go to the Jerusalem-Gaza road, and when he arrived, the Spirit told him to "join the chariot" in which the eunuch was riding. But Philip "preached Jesus" to the man (Acts 8:35), and when they came to a certain water the eunuch wanted to be baptized (Acts 8:36). He was baptized upon a confession

of his faith, not upon the relation of his experience. In the Bible, men heard the gospel, believed in Christ, repented of sins and were baptized.

- James E. Cooper [slightly edited – GFS]

NEGLECT

The second chapter of Hebrews tells of the importance of God's word which He gave to us through His own Son. The writer asks the question, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him." The answer is plain and simple: THERE IS NO ESCAPE. Just as every transgression and disobedience under the Law of Moses received a just recompense of reward, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?

This is one sin that plagues us all - NEGLECT. How many times do we have to say, "I intended to do it, but I just neglected it." Neglect is one of Satan's prize weapons. It doesn't ask you to do evil; it just asks you to DO NOTHING. And if you want to be lost the easy way, this is it - NEGLECT.

The second mention of sin in the early church was NEGLECT (Acts 6:1). Some of the Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. And in the church today, how often we neglect to restore the ones overtaken in faults (Galatians 6:1), neglect to teach those who are hungering for the truth (Philippians 2:16), and neglect to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions (James 1:27). All of us have felt the sting of neglect in our daily Bible study, in our daily prayer and in bridling our tongue. To know to do good and do it not is sin (James 4:17). Be on guard against NEGLECT.

- Oliver Murray

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. (Psalms 33:6-9)

A Man's Enemies

It is certainly no desire of mine to go through life creating enemies by things I say and do! The gospel of Jesus Christ, the "gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15), enjoins us to "Pursue

peace with all men," (Hebrews 12:14a); "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." (Romans 12:18; cf. Matthew 5:9). Jesus came preaching a message to wayward mankind that, if believed and obeyed, would bring peace between God and men (Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:19-23) as well as those with the same kind of precious faith (2 Peter 1:1). However, those who prove worthy of discipleship face this stark reality: "and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD." (Matthew 10:36). Why? If the gospel provided peace, how would the peaceful have enemies?

When the Christ appeared, Light came into the world. But because men loved the darkness of their evil deeds and feared exposure, they hated the Light (John 3:19-21). Those who received the Light practiced deeds of righteousness, which sends an attack command throughout the forces of unrighteousness (1 Peter 2:11). As Christians are commanded to destroy all ideas raised up against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:3), conflict is inevitable; it cannot be avoided. The creation of enemies was certainly not the *purpose* of Christ's coming, but it would be the *effect* of His coming.

Jesus commanded His disciples to separate themselves from all sin and evil (Ephesians 5:3-11; Galatians 5:17). Not only must they live above sin, but they must wage war against all wrong and wickedness as good soldiers of Christ (2 Timothy 2:3-4, 19). Peace cannot exist when unbelievers harden their hearts against God's word (Matthew 13:14-15), while believers strive to live by it and teach it to others (Titus 2:11-15). Truth is certainly opposed to all that is false, and righteousness is certainly opposed to all that is unrighteous. Loyalty to Christ and His gospel makes conflict unavoidable. (Notice the conflict between the devil and Christ in Matthew 4:1-11. Notice further the nature of man's Adversary in John 8:42-47 and 1 Peter 5:8).

There will always be opposition between people who live to please God and those who do not. Every faithful servant of Christ fights on a spiritual battlefield that is stained with the blood of all martyrs, and even the Savior Himself. As the war against Satan, his evil influences and his followers continues, so do the casualties. Even Paul carried the "brand-marks of Jesus", marks of persecution upon his body (Galatians 6:17; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-26). "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12).

Damage to relationships because of the loyalty of one to the truth produces deep and hurtful wounds. Precious friendships are destroyed. Hostile and vindictive brethren cut deeply with their slanderous tongues. Even the most intimate associations can be broken when one is faithful to Christ and another is not. Husbands and wives can be on opposite sides in this spiritual conflict, as can parents and children.

Jesus quoted from the prophet Micah to remind His listeners of the disorder that would follow the introduction of the gospel into the world: "For son treats father contemptuously, Daughter rises up against her mother, Daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; A man's enemies are the men of his own household." (Micah 7:6). Does this mean that family is unimportant? NO! (See Ephesians 5:22 – 6:4). However, one's responsibility to family does not supersede his duty to God (Acts 5:29). Grandparents have been denied contact with their grandchildren, and children have been severed from their parents. There is no choice for the faithful other than to endure it, but the Christian can find comfort in serving God: "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:29). Jesus our Lord said, "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother." (Matthew 12:50).

So, let my enemies be such as those who crucified Christ! Let them be unbelievers who oppose the gospel at every turn. Let them be those who hate righteousness and stand opposed to believers who are determined to live by every word of God. Let them be those who teach false doctrine and slander the righteous. Let them be unscrupulous church-destroyers who fight against the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Let them be those who have chosen to live by the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). Let them be the self-righteous, the rebellious who refuse to submit and humble themselves before the Lord, destroying family relationships. Let them make the choice to be my enemy because I have told them the truth (Galatians 4:16).

Nevertheless, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44-45). I pray for my enemies (cf. Luke 23:34). Can I do other than what my Lord has done for me?

- Gary Smalley

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- * "The man without enough religion to take him to worship may be sure he does not have enough to take him to heaven!"
 - * "If you think that one person cannot make a difference in the world, consider what one cigar can do in a crowded restaurant!"
 - * "Faith is daring determination to go farther than it can see!"
 - * "God does not promise a comfortable journey, only a safe landing!"
 - * "Many don't like to receive old gifts! Please reconsider: there is one for you that has been prepared from the foundation of the world!"
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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)