

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A Humble, Tender-Hearted Man

Who is the man? Well, the one I have in mind at this time is that good king Josiah. Even by confining our thoughts to what is said of him in the 34th chapter of Second Chronicles. I believe we can get a lesson from him that will be worthwhile to us, especially if we would try to apply it.

Of Josiah, it is said that "while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David, his father." "He did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, and walked in the ways of David, his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left."

Though we may say of Josiah that he was good, we cannot say so much for Judah and Jerusalem. Iniquity and idolatry filled the land. Read Jeremiah 1-12. And what did Josiah—the humble, tender-hearted man do about all this? It will be of interest to see how such a man will act—what he will say and what he will do under conditions like this.

Here is what he did. "He began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the Asherim, and the graven images and the molten images. And they brake down the altars of the Baalim in his presence; and the sun-images that were on high above them he hewed down; and the Asherim, and the graven images, and the molten images he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them. And he burnt the bones of the priests upon their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem." Who did this? Josiah, a humble, tender-hearted man.

When he had purged the land, he began working to "repair the house of Jehovah his God." "And the men did the work faithfully." During this time "Hilkiah the priest found the book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses." When Josiah had heard the words of the law, "he rent his clothes;" and said, "Great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according unto all that is written in this book."

And Jehovah said: "I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah. Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore is my wrath poured out upon this place, and it shall not be quenched" But to Josiah he said: "Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God ... I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof." What a fine obituary this was.

Friends, do you not admire Josiah for his courage and tenacity? I believe that after having studied this character, I can see more of what it means to be a man of God. I believe I have a clearer conception of what a humble, tender-hearted man is. And as "destructive heresies" and "lascivious doings" flood our country. I believe I know more of what I should say and what I should do about such things to be a humble, tenderhearted man of God.

- Hubert Roach, via The Bible Banner, August, 1942

Justification by Works and Baptism

In the end of Romans 3 and the beginning of Romans 4, we encounter the most famous of Paul's teachings: justification by faith in Jesus. Throughout the context, he contrasts it with justification by works. Abraham was not justified by works, nor was David, nor can we be.

From this magnificent spiritual truth a host of false doctrines have sprung. In particular, many have argued that justification by works means doing anything, but justification by faith means doing nothing. Thus, the argument continues, baptism cannot save us because it's a work. Instead, we should seek salvation by praying to Jesus and acknowledging our need to Him.

There are several Scriptural problems with this claim, but one of the most prominent is its misunderstanding of works in the context of Romans. Paul doesn't use "works" to mean doing anything right. He uses it to mean doing everything right.

This, indeed, is the point of the first three chapters of Romans. The Gentiles can't justify themselves by works because they are sinners. The Jews, even though they have the Law and seek to follow it, are sinners too. They can't justify themselves by works either. Thus, Paul concludes in Romans 3:20 that no one can be justified in God's sight by the works of the Law.

In all of human history, there only has been one man who was baptized as part of justifying himself by works. That one was Jesus. In Matthew 3:13-15, John at first refuses to baptize Jesus because he recognizes that the Holy One is more righteous than he is. Jesus replies, however, "Allow it for now, because this is the way for us to fulfill all righteousness." God's prophet commanded baptism, so Jesus obeyed the command even though He had no need of forgiveness.

Jesus was justified by His obedience, but this only happened because He lived a life of unbroken obedience. Should anyone have the temerity to call Him to account, He could assert His right to spend eternity with God because of His moral perfection. That's justification by works.

However, none of the rest of us seek baptism because we are fulfilling all righteousness. We seek it because we haven't fulfilled all righteousness. We aren't spiritual successes like Jesus. We are failures, and we know it. Our only hope lies in His power to cleanse and redeem, and through baptism, we call on His name, appealing to Him to wash away our sins.

Our baptism isn't part of justification by works. It's not asking for what we deserve. God forbid that I should ever get what I deserve! Instead, we seek justification by faith apart from works through baptism.

Baptism actually does what sinner's-prayer advocates think the sinner's prayer does. In baptism, we don't proudly stand before God and present our spiritual credentials. Instead, we humble ourselves before Him and plead for His mercy, the mercy that we so desperately need and that our loving God is so eager to extend.

- Matthew Bassford (1978-2023)

Share a Quote...

"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. And in that casket of selfishness your heart begins to change. It becomes hard, unbreakable, irredeemable. The only place outside of Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers of love is Hell."

- C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*

The Lamb

Have you ever noticed that there are somewhere around one hundred eighty verses that refer to lambs (young, small sheep)? They are part of the herds that are referenced so many times by the nomadic and agrarian people of the Bible. Sheep, including lambs, were a source of wool from which clothing was made.

In contemplating the greatness of God, Isaiah declared, "Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, In His arm He will gather the lambs And carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes." Here, lambs are carried closely by the Shepherd, painting a picture of their helplessness. In Nathan's parable presented to King David to rebuke his greed, the illustration using the lamb incites David's great emotional response because it symbolizes helpless innocence.

In writing a description of the character of citizens in the kingdom of God, Jehovah's holy mountain, Isaiah stated, "The wolf and the lamb will graze together," (Isaiah 65:25) and "the wolf will dwell with the lamb" (Isaiah 11:6). It is a picture of peace and tranquility that is to be found only among citizens of God's kingdom under the reign of His Messiah. This is where one-time foes dwell together in peaceful coexistence because they have undergone a moral and spiritual transformation. These have been converted and voluntarily place themselves under subjection to the spirit and will of their King, Christ. These have become new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); the old man has been crucified (Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 5:24; 6:14), and the new creature forms within himself a childlike spirit (simple alertness to hear and learn from the Lord, readiness to obey Him, see Matthew 18:3). This description of harmony taken from the animal kingdom should not be removed from its context and taken literally.

When the Lord wishes to convey an image of intensified helplessness and innocence, he calls for this picture of a lamb: "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth." (Isaiah 53:7).

The Lord Jesus depicted the vulnerability of His commissioned seventy disciples in this statement: "Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves." (Luke 10:3).

Most of the passages referring to lambs have to do with sacrifices (Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers). The image reaches its full expression in the coming of Christ, whom John pronounced as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29, cf. v. 36). Paul refers to Christ as the Christian's "Passover" that has "been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7). Peter indicates that the Christian has been redeemed from a futile way

of life by the precious blood of Christ, "as of a lamb unblemished and spotless" (1 Peter 1:18-19). John refers to Christ as "the Lamb" twenty-nine times in Revelation.

- Gary Smalley

* "We do not have to know all the answers to remain faithful!"

* "Today's heavenly forecast: Reign forever!"

* "We often find Him outside of our comfort zone!"

* "Having a sharp tongue can cut your own throat!"

* "We cannot avoid growing old, but we can avoid growing cold!"

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)