

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **Obedience and Forgiveness**

Jesus tasted death for every man. "Whosoever will" can enjoy the forgiveness (salvation) of God. Yet, Jesus said that many will go the broad way to destruction and that few will go the narrow way to life (Matthew 7:13, 14).

There are a number of things necessary for the sinner's salvation. These include God's grace, mercy, gospel, Jesus' death, etc. Also included is man's faithful obedience. Without obedience faith is dead (James 2:26). This is the sinner's obedience in becoming a Christian and the Christian's obedience in maintaining fellowship with God. The sinner's, faith must be strong enough to lead him to repent and be baptized into union with Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26, 27). If his faith is not strong enough to obey, it is not a saving faith. Those who obey not the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The Christian's faith must be strong enough to cause him to walk in the light. At best he will sin, but we have an advocate with the Father, and when we confess our sins He will forgive (1 John 1:6-10; 2:1-5). Prayer is a wonderful privilege of the Christian. The person who claims to have fellowship with God while he walks in darkness (sin) is lying John says.

Obedience to the truth by both sinners and saints is necessary to obtain forgiveness of sins. Without forgiveness both are lost (Revelation 21:27; 2:5). One cannot sin with impunity. God is going to punish sin and the sinner (Hebrews 12:25-29). All men can be saved, but, only those who obey God's grace (which teaches us how to serve God) will be saved (Titus 2:11, 12; John 12:48).

- Raymond E. Harville (1932-2010)

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### **The Effects of Sin**

One brief verse of scripture in the life of Samson contains a powerful sermonette on the effects of sin: "But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes, and brought him down

to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house" (Judges 16:21).

Here we see (1) the blinding effects of sin; (2) the binding effects of sin; and (3) the grinding effects of sin. Today, sin has these same effects. Consider the following carefully.

### Sin's Blinding Effects

Over 30,000 people (90 per cent adults) go blind each year in the U.S. and Canada for various reasons. How sad to see one who is physically blind. But a much sadder picture is that of one who is spiritually blind! Spiritual blindness in the Bible was ascribed to the watchmen who failed (Isaiah 56:10); to the deceitful false teachers like the Pharisees (Matthew 15:14); and to those who willfully reject the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4). Today, spiritual blindness can be attributed to these and many more things, ranging from prejudice to tradition.

### Sin's Binding Effects

That sin enslaves is made clear by the statement of Paul in Romans 6:16 where he states that one becomes a "servant" (slave) of sin by yielding to it. The Galatians had been "in bondage under the elements of the world" (Galatians 4:3). Even the worst of sinners would not deny that sin enslaves. It stifles noble impulses and leads men into captivity. It corrupts the affections and paralyzes the will. The bondage of sin is seen in the drunkard who says he cannot quit, the dope addict, the fornicator who knows he is doing wrong but continues in his sin. When a person admits that he is doing wrong but refuses to repent, he is a slave to sin.

### Sin's Grinding Effects

Just as a large round grindstone becomes smaller and smaller as it is used to grind tools, man becomes smaller and smaller by sin. One definition of grinding is "to wear down" (Webster). The burden of sin becomes so heavy that it wears one down to the lowest state. Sin will grind a husband or wife into a cheater; a truthful man into a liar; a zealous Christian into a lazy one, etc. The stream, the fire and the storm leave their marks on the landscape. In like manner, sin, as it courses its way through one's life, grinds one down to the lowest possible state morally, socially, and physically.

When we ponder these threefold effects of sin, it ought to cause us to take inventory of our own lives. No doubt we will realize that sin has its effect upon us as it did upon Samson of old.

When man cries out for deliverance from the bondage of sin, God answers by providing for us a Savior (Matthew 1:21). From the threefold effects of sin, He offers a threefold salvation. From its blinding effect, God offers the light of the gospel and Jesus Christ, the Light of the world (Psalms 119:105; John 8:12). From sin's binding effect, Jesus provides the truth which He said will "make you free" (John 8:32). From sin's grinding effects, God offers forgiveness. Obedience is the condition (Romans 6:17-18). When one obeys "that form of doctrine" he is free from sin; its power, its stain, and its guilt.

- Austin Mobley, via Truth Magazine, 10/07/1971

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## "SET THINE HOUSE IN ORDER"

Many times we have planned, and made arrangements for expected guests, sometimes having weeks, or even months, to set things in order. But how many times have you suddenly learned that otherwise unexpected visitors are to arrive in a very short time? You rushed around to "set the house in order," to tidy up things. Even if you manage to get things looking "decent," chances are that you are not nearly so pleased to invite your guests in when they arrive, as when you had been forewarned earlier, and therefore had more time to "get ready."

### But That Is Not The House Of Which We Ask!

Although we cannot expect God to give us a special warning, as He did Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1), He is, in His Word, warning us to set our spiritual houses in order. He shows us what it means to be ushered into eternity, either prepared or unprepared, in Luke 16. Lazarus had made proper preparations, and was at rest "in Abraham's bosom," while the rich man had failed to "make ready," and therefore awoke in flaming torment!

So many of us have things "deranged" in our spiritual houses: Envy, strife, bitterness, etc. have moved into our hearts, crowding out the "furnishings" of love, forgiveness, sober thinking, meekness, etc. Still others, through *unfaithfulness*, indicate they are not really concerned about the appearance of their *spiritual* house. And, of course, there are so many, many others, some of whom will read this, who have made no preparation at all. They have not obeyed the gospel of our Savior! (See 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

*Stop!* Take a good look at your spiritual house. The Lord will return without warning, other than found in His word, and then you will find that it is too late to "straighten up things!" Have you obeyed the gospel? *Are YOU living faithfully to Christ?* Would you be happy to have Christ come and find your house in its present condition? If not, then *why do you wait?*

"Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." *Do it now!*

- Charles G. Maples in Gospel Guide, March, 1981

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## Are You Taught Of God?

God, being sovereign or supreme over His entire creation (which includes mankind), has not left us without any responsibility and accountability to Him. Man cannot defer or evade this responsibility. No appeal is possible. Thus, it is imperative that men be taught of God in order to understand what He requires.

God is the only source from which truth originates (Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 33:4; 96:13; John 17:17). The purpose of God in revealing His truth to mankind is to draw them to Christ. Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." (John 6:44-45). People must allow the Bible to teach them. This is the Father's way of teaching them. Being taught of God will direct people to Christ, "the way, and the truth, and the life;" (John 14:6). He is the One who gives eternal life (John 10:27-28). Jesus said to His Father in prayer, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (John 17:3).

The specially selected apostles of Christ received the inspired ("God-breathed") words from God by way of the Holy Spirit, who enabled them to speak and write accurately (John 14:26; 16:13; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13). The unified message which they taught came directly by revelation, not by studying other books and not by consulting other men (Galatians 1:12). Believers teach (speak and write) today, not by receiving direct revelation from God, but by studying the Bible, the revelation He has already provided. Any claims from people living today that they have received a direct revelation from God to them are absolutely false. Those who became disciples of Christ in the first century were dependent upon the revelation given by the apostles (Ephesians 3:3-4; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Today, we are dependent upon that same revelation which was given once for all time, "once for all handed down to the saints." (Jude 3).

God's prescription for providing salvation for men and women is through teaching. His apostles were commanded to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15). Those who believed their teaching and were baptized were promised salvation (verse 16). Their Lord instructed them to "make disciples of all the nations,

baptizing them" and "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you;" (Matthew 28:19, 20). Teaching did not cease once disciples were made.

Salvation from the consequences of sin is within the reach of every person who is willing to learn of it (Matthew 11:27-30). God is the teacher; the sinner is the learner. The Bible is the means by which God teaches.

Friend, do you have "faith in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13)? In view of "the righteous judgment of God," which is yet future for all of us, have you obeyed the truth (Romans 2:4-10)? Are you receptive to the teaching from the Bible?

- Gary Smalley

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\* "Never give the devil a ride – he will always want to drive!"

\* "A clean conscience makes a soft pillow!"

\* "If God is your co-pilot – swap seats!"

\* "Praise is both the reality and activity of a life in tune with God!"

\* "One of the great tragedies of life is not unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer!"

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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)