

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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February 25, 2024

Volume 44, # 09

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### Two Are Better Than One!

The word of the Lord recognizes how much we need each other. The church was purposed in the mind of God before time because the All-wise saw the need for it in human relationships. Loneliness can be a terrible and destructive thing. Other human contact, especially if it is with like-minded people with a desire to do the right thing, can be entirely wholesome and good. This is what the church as an organization and agency in human society is mostly about. As the Scripture says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

So, two are better than one because when one falls, the other can help him again to stand. We must remember this, when we consider why the church must be a part of our lives, and why we must not let this precious cooperative relationship slip from us by abandonment.

Two are better than one because one may help to bear the burden of another. How many times have you heard someone say, "This is almost more than I can bear." Often we can sympathize that what they must bear is nearly more than one person can deal with alone. But the wonderful thing is that we never ought to have to bear our burdens alone. Of course, we know the Lord helps up at such times. But it is a great boon to our souls to know that we have brothers and sisters in Christ who share our grief and pain, and help to love us through those trying times. As Paul wrote: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Observing the law of Christ involves sharing the burdens so heavy upon our fellow Christians.

Two are better than one because the prayers of one may benefit another. Those who pray for us are our "helpers." They may be confined to a bed or wheelchair, but if they are supportive of the work we are doing through their prayers, then they are friends of the first order. Paul spoke of the prayers which the Corinthians uttered on his and his fellow laborer's behalf, with fond appreciation and deep love: "Ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication; that, for the gift bestowed upon us by means of many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 1:11).

Two are better than one because the great work of the gospel is too much for any single individual to accomplish. Paul spoke of the work that he and Apollos did together, even though they were at Corinth at different times and under wholly different circumstances. Still he viewed himself and Apollos as working together toward a common goal. Paul had converted the majority of those whom Apollos later instructed: "I planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32).

Two are better than one because there is moral and spiritual strength in numbers. The presence and encouragement of our brothers and sisters in Christ is a source of spiritual strength to those of us who attend the worship activities with regularity. One who is a member of the body of Christ feels that he is a part of something wonderful and good. There is a feeling of belonging to something important. And there is a feeling of being associated with someone (Christ) who is worthy of all of our praise and admiration. Being a member of the church is a thing to be thankful about, grateful for, and ever overflowing with thanksgiving because of. As Paul stated: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Two are better than one because when we work together with one another in the church, we are working together with God. At times we tend to view the church as a wholly human relationship, a segment of the overall community or society that we live in. But it is not so. The church is His fold, His holy temple, His royal priesthood of believers, His blood bought and Spirit filled body. It was His intent that through this means men and women might enter into covenant relation with the Father and serve as spiritual stewards in common cause with the Lord himself: "And working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Corinthians 6:1).

- Daniel H. King

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## **God Shows Mercy Upon Whom He Chooses!**

When we study the things of God, we must always keep this truth in mind: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The God of heaven will graciously forgive even the vilest sinner and those that have terribly dishonored Him if they will turn back to Him in humility and repentance. This is merely one way that vengeful men do not think like He thinks.

Being supremely divine, the Lord God possesses foreknowledge. ". . . I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';" (Isaiah 46:9-10). When He makes choices in demonstration of His holy will and righteous judgment is man justified in calling into question His fairness? Absolutely not! Paul expressed it this way: "What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be!" (Romans 9:14).

Some people might take the liberty to accuse the Lord God of injustice, for example in the case of Jacob and Esau. But it must be remembered that He possesses divine characteristics so lofty and above mankind that it is folly only to man's detriment to ever call Him into question! He possesses supreme power and has every right within His own nature, wisdom and standards to carry out His purposes in whatever way He wills or chooses.

Consider the Lord God's clear statement to Moses: ". . . I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion." (Exodus 33:19, which is quoted by Paul in Romans 9:15). Whatever God determines is right! No man successfully questions God, nor is he able to prevent God from showing His mercy and compassion to whom He will.

To whom will God show His mercy and compassion, expressing such by forgiveness and acquittal from sins? Paul shows in the context of Romans 9 that divine forgiveness will not be realized on the basis of man's own conclusions or actions: "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy." (Romans 9:16). Again, divine mercy is bestowed according to God's good pleasure, independent of human will and man's meritorious works. To the expectant Jew who was relying upon his own heritage but rejected God's Messiah, he would have no basis upon which to accuse God for accepting Gentiles who believed in Christ.

Who will receive God's compassion and mercy? "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion." (Proverbs 28:13). The Scriptures show that it is in keeping with God's purpose and plan to offer forgiveness to all, including Gentiles: "Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7). The problem being attacked in the context of Romans 9 has to do with God working out His plan through whom He chose as opposed to the Jews erroneously attempting to determine the basis upon which God should forgive Gentiles (cf. Acts 15:1, 5). They had no right to make this determination (cf. Acts 15:9, 11).

However, today since the way of salvation through Christ has been opened, God's forgiveness is conditioned upon the *willingness* of man to accept it. "And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." (Revelation 22:17). Further, the Bible student will notice that man's running in order to obtain *is required* today: "Run in such a way that you may win." (1 Corinthians 9:24). Men can and do so easily err when they determine the basis upon which God forgives. They misuse this passage when they claim that it teaches salvation from sin requires no adherence to any conditions. Heaven calls upon men to accept and obey the conditions that Christ expressed in His gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:14).

Does God forgive? Yes! Upon what basis today? Upon belief and obedience to the gospel of His Son (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8; John 3:36; Romans 1:5; 16:26; and Hebrews 5:9 are eye-openers!) [See Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.] You wouldn't want God to consider you as Israel became, would you? — "All the day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." (Romans 10:21) — Would you?

- Gary Smalley

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- \* "If heaven is your destination, do you have a reservation?" (See 1 Peter 1:4)
  - \* "If He is worth possessing, He is worth proclaiming!"
  - \* "He who fears God has nothing to fear!"
  - \* "God doesn't call the qualified; He qualifies the called!"
  - \* "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (John 7:24)
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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)