

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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June 30, 2024

Volume 44, # 27

Is God First in Your Life?

Jesus said, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Why should we put God first in our lives?

1. Because God is the supreme Creator of all things. Man, and the universe are God's creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth . . . And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . So God created man in his own image" (Genesis 1:1, 26, 27). "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalms 24:1). Since God created us: (1) He is greater than us; (2) we belong to Him; (3) therefore, He has the right to be first in our lives.

2. Because God has always demanded to be first. From the very beginning of time, God has demanded of man to obey Him. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 1:16-17). God expected Adam to put Him first, that is, do what God commanded him to.

God gave Israel a law that demanded of them to put Him first in their lives, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:2). Jesus is simply saying that the law of God has always been and always will be, "seek ye first . . . God".

3. Because God loved us first. "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). The apostle Paul explains this a little further, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). God should be first in our lives because He loved us when we did not deserve to be loved.

4. Because God is our Savior. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3-4). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The disciples of Christ asked, "Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:25-26).

How do we put God first in our lives? Jesus answers, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:29).

Friend, if we want to be saved, that is, go to heaven one day, we must put God first in our lives! Are you?

- Lowell Sallee, via East Lauderdale News, 06/27/2019

"Let Me Die The Death Of The Righteous"

Men take an unrealistic view of death today by taking no view at all. Some try to ignore it away, because basically we are reluctant to let our mind dwell on what we consider to be morbid. However, since it is "appointed unto man once to die" (Hebrews 9:27), we should wisely and soberly approach death with planning and not shunning. As I think about the time that I must die, I think of the words of Balaam in Numbers 23:10, "Let me die the death of the righteous."

Let me die the death of the righteous that my family may be strengthened by my example. Memories of good people are precious and uplifting. A righteous legacy enriches lives to greater duty. There is no regret about "what might have been." Comfort lies in the knowledge that faithful Christians are rewarded in heaven. The wise man of long ago said, "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Ecclesiastes 7:1-4). Ointments were costly in his day. They were counted among the riches of the day. Riches cannot buy a good name, but it will live forever. A good name left to our heirs is better than all the earth's silver and gold.

Let me die the death of the righteous that my friends might have hope by seeing Christianity lived before their eyes. Let me be faithful in living the Christian life. Let me show compassion toward people by caring and ministering unto them. Truly it is more blessed to give than receive.

Let me die the death of the righteous that I might have confidence at death. "Perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18). How sorrowful to come to life's end not prepared for Judgment! What a terrible thought to know the soul is lost forever! What a rejoicing to know the hope of the Christian - a hope both sure and steadfast, a peace that passeth all understanding.

Let me die the death of the righteous that some soul might be led to Christ. The good that men do lives after them. Abel "being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:14). Sermons preached, lessons written, and words spoken live on in the hearts of men. Memories and examples of lives already lived sometime motivate men to faithfulness.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalms 116:15). And so I pray, "Lord when I die, let me die the death of the righteous."

- Jack H. Kirby, via Truth Magazine, 05/18/1978

Live It Down!

David sinned and was shamed. "My sin," he said, "is ever before me" (Psalms 51:3). Paul never forgot his days as a tormentor and persecutor. Because of his awful past, he thought himself unfit to be called an apostle (1 Corinthians 15:9). Did Peter ever forget having cursed and sworn that he did not know Jesus? I think not.

If this is your sad plight, perhaps the following story will help you. Years ago, two brothers were caught and condemned for stealing sheep. As part of their punishment, their foreheads were branded with large capital letters, "S. S."

One of the young men could not bear the stigma. He fled from town to town, but everywhere he went, people inquired about the letters on his forehead. Haunted by his past, he lived on the run as a fugitive, trying to escape his shame and reproach. He died while still a young man, never able to escape the letters seared into his skin and scorched into his condemning conscience.

Meanwhile, his brother settled down in the same community where his crime had been committed. He worked and lived an honest, upright life. He devoted himself to helping and serving others. Many years passed and people scarcely noticed the scars on his face. One day, a stranger moved into town and asked his neighbor about the letters, "S. S." on "that old man's face."

"Well, we're not for certain," his neighbor replied, "but we think it means that he's the Savior's Servant."

So, my dear fellow, suffering servant, however grievous your sins have been, if they are forgiven, you are now wearing the brand of the Savior's Servant. Hence, you may humbly forget those things which are behind and reach forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Philippians 3:13, 14).

- Larry Ray Hafley

Do We Have the Right Kind and Amount?

The command to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith, being such a vital part of our spiritual growth and maturation, provides us with occasions to sharpen our effectiveness in such self-reviews. Checklists are helpful.

4. Do we have the sympathy that will move us to help others bear their burdens?

In response to the question, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29), Jesus answered by telling a story that will never be forgotten. It is known as "The Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:30-37).

Since the question prompting the Lord's reply dealt with the subject of neighbors, the primary lesson is to be taken from the people who neglected the wounded man by failing to be neighbors. The man was in dire straits and desperately needed a neighbor's help. Opportunity to help was presented to three people who were passing that way. The priest failed to demonstrate love for his fellow man, so his hypocrisy shown through and righteousness was defeated by his unsympathetic refusal to meet a need. To a neighbor in need he chose to avoid personal involvement. The Levite also avoided the opportunity to assist this helpless man. Apparently both had forgotten the Lord's charge to them as voiced through His prophet, Micah: "He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8). Being regarded by the public as religious people did not prove them to be righteous with regard to this needy neighbor.

When a Samaritan man approached the helpless victim, he had compassion on him in his time of need. Benevolent kindness came forth in sympathy for another fellow human being, and he demonstrated the love that should have existed in the other two travelers

by taking care of his needs. This is what neighbors do. They take personal responsibility and demonstrate mercy from a good heart in helping others bear their burdens.

All Christians are instructed to "Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2). At various times in life we all may find ourselves in need of a helping hand from our brethren, and needs come in various sizes. Christians help each other in bearing the heavy burdens of life with active compassion in caring for those in need. By doing so, we wear the name of Christ worthily (cf. Romans 15:1; 1 Corinthians 12:26).

Does your sympathy and compassion move you to help others? When a need presents itself, how do you respond?

- Gary Smalley

- * "The best use of life is to spend it for something that out-lasts it!"
 - * "Let God direct your life - He knows the way you should go!"
 - * "Life is a solo - no one can sing your part, but YOU!"
 - * "There is no future in any job - the future is in the man who holds the job!"
 - * "Circumstances may be beyond our control, but our conduct is always within our powers!"
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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)