

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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### "To See Ourselves . . . "

Can a man be what he, in reality, is not? It's a tricky question, so give it time to 'soak in'. Can greatness spring from the small and mean; sweet water from a bitter spring?

I believe the answer is "No!" Our true character is not the veneer we wear externally, and by which casual acquaintances think they 'know' us; but "the hidden man of the heart". We may pretend beautifully, convincing many people and almost convince ourselves; but what we are, deep inside, will prevail. That noble philosopher, Popeye, was correct in asserting, "I am what I am, and that's all I am."

Is this a shocking revelation to you? Haven't you really suspected it all along? Jesus said, "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." And again, "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" (Matthew 7:18, 12:33-35). The authority of truth is involved here -- what really is asserts itself through every cloak of sham and pretense. Many lives are storms of confusion and conflict, as people try to live at cross-purposes with themselves; to be (in the eyes of others) what they are not. Nor is this charade always a deliberate deception. Many have lived a "false front" so long that they can no longer "know themselves" honestly. We see in ourselves what we want to see; and this conflict of the heart and our false front makes a scrambled mess of our lives. Verily, "What fools we mortals be!"

At this point it would be easy to draw some false conclusions. One may say, "All right, I am not a great man, nor even a good man, and there is nothing I can do about it. I will be true to myself, and live out my life in smallness and meanness." Another, having caught a glimpse of a better life, and desiring heaven, may become despondent. "I have tried and failed. I am hopelessly lost!"

Historic theologians say man inherited a depraved nature from Adam, and is incapable of anything good. They would leave the true nature of man as they believe it is -- dark and evil -- and simply hide it beneath a cloak, the righteousness of Christ. To be brutally frank,

they would make His righteousness our false front. This is a popular conception, with some scriptures that seem to favor it; but I do not believe it accurately presents the truth.

Genuine Christianity is not a plot to make us appear something we are not. Instead, it gives us the opportunity to be what God wants us to be.

Jesus Christ makes possible the forgiveness of our past sins and continues, under proper circumstances, to forgive our faltering steps. This, alone, is marvelous; but there is more. Christ places before us the divine image, and we may be "changed into the same image from glory to glory" — "partakers of the divine nature" — "conformed to the image of His Son" (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 8:29). Further, this change begins now, in the Christian life (2 Corinthians 5:17).

It seems God has greater confidence in man, despite man's sin, than most of us have in ourselves. True, our lives are transformed only through trust in Him, but God holds man capable of having such a trust -- of receiving His truth and conforming to its demands (John 6:44-45). Too long have we listened to this Calvinistic pessimism -- "born in sin, wholly and totally depraved". Man was made in the "image" of God (Genesis 1:26-27; 5:3; 9:6), and was intended to be "crowned with glory and honor." (Study Hebrews 2:6-18.) His original state was purity, not sin; and although we are far fallen from such purity "for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12), we retain the capacity to be touched by the love of God. We can DO better, because we can BE better than we are.

The gospel God gave is admirably suited to the man God made. No one had to tell the Creator the depths to which His creatures had fallen; and yet God loved us. With a sacrificial love that defies understanding, He gave His only Son to die for us. His Holy Spirit revealed, in its fullness, His message of love which, through the Apostles and Prophets of the New Testament, is preached unto us. And by this gospel, man is invited to come. These things clearly imply man's ability to hear, believe, and obey.

If we are unaware of our sinful condition we are deceived by our own pride. If we cannot understand God's truth we have shut our eyes. If we do not obey, our stubborn will rejects. But deep inside, God-likeness longs to answer the heavenly Father's call.

- Robert F. Turner, via Plain Talk, May, 1966 [slightly edited – GFS]

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# Is It Anybody's Business How I Live?

**1. It is God's business.** He sees and knows all that I do. All that I do must be to His glory (1 Corinthians 10:31 – "whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.").

**2. It is Christ's business.** He died to purchase us with His blood. We belong to Him. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – "you are not your own . . . you have been bought with a price"). Belonging to Him we have not the right to join our bodies to a harlot. Both our bodies and minds should be kept pure and undefiled for habitation of the Holy Spirit (cf. Ephesians 2:19-22; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 John 3:3).

**3. It is the business of my neighbors.** If I do anything that infringes on his rights, I am duty bound to cease. We are our brother's keeper (cf. Genesis 4:9). We must not cause him to stumble (Mark 9:42). To do so is a sin "against Christ" for which we are responsible (1 Corinthians 8:12).

**4. It is the church's business.** When one member suffers, all suffer (1 Corinthians 12:20-27 - "God has so composed the body . . . that the members may have the same care for one another."). When a member conducts himself in such a manner as to bring reproach against the church, all suffer. In 1 Corinthians 5, we learn of fornication in the church at Corinth. This Scripture commands the church to withdraw themselves from the ungodly offender in order to bring about his repentance (1 Corinthians 5:13 - "Remove the wicked man from among yourselves."). Paul's letters also indicate other sins for which the church is to exercise discipline.

Yes, it certainly is somebody's business HOW I LIVE.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:13-16).

- Unknown, via The Instructor, November, 1970 [edited – GFS]

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## Personal Desires and Human Will Shape Our Identity!

Personal desires are the strongest motivating factor for the thoughts and actions of people. They shape the human will. Every parent is presented with this segment of life

when raising toddlers. Little Johnny refuses to share his toy truck with a neighbor; little Sally won't allow her friend to hold her doll. Parents have the responsibility to patiently instruct, train, guide and encourage their children while they are under their care so that they will be in a position to be persuaded by the power in the gospel of Christ to live righteously before God. The goal is to help them desire to please the Lord God, bending their will to His. With the proper "discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4), they will mature into righteous lives that glorify God, strengthened, balanced, and refined by the wisdom which comes only from God.

When our children become mature enough to make important decisions on their own, we want their personal desires to reflect a love for God and His ways. Is there any stronger influence for righteousness than this? Certainly they can be brought up such that on their own initiative they choose to "hunger and thirst for righteousness" (Matthew 5:6). If our children, aided by us, can incorporate the human will that God gave them to arrive at the point where they are "willing to do His will" in all things (John 7:17), they will come to possess "the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul praised young Timothy for this very knowledge and learning from the Scripture inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:14-17). He became a whole-hearted servant of the Lord, and so can our children.

"Indulging the desires of the flesh" (Ephesians 2:3) is the lifestyle of most people. As a result, they are "dead in . . . trespasses and sins," and God rightly charges them with "disobedience." (Ephesians 2:1-2). But He provides mercy in Christ (verses 4-10). The devil is our adversary (1 Peter 5:8) and sin is our defiling bondage (John 8:34). We dare not die in our sins as unbelievers in Christ (John 8:21, 24). God's Holy Spirit has searched His mind and revealed His desire and will for mankind in spiritual words that have been diligently recorded for our benefit (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). These are the words we must teach our children in order to guide their desires and willpower into the righteousness of God, "the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith," (Philippians 3:9). Christ "bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness;" (1 Peter 2:24).

First, have you cleaned your hands? Have you kept the ways of the Lord? Have you kept His ordinances and statutes? Have you walked in such a manner that He regards you as blameless? Have you kept yourself from iniquity? Are you righteous? Have you helped your children in this regard? The Lord will recompense you (Psalms 18:20-24)!

- Gary Smalley

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- \* "Truth loses its power and beauty when colored!"
  - \* "The man who does as he pleases, seldom pleases the Lord!"
  - \* "Don't just be good, be good for something!"
  - \* "God answers all prayers! He answers yes, no, and wait!"
  - \* "Many people have the right aim in life, but a lot of them never pull the trigger!"
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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)