

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## Old Hickory Church of Christ

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July 21, 2024

Volume 44, # 30

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### When Feeling Bad Is Good

To feel bad about doing bad is bad, but it is far worse when you don't. In fact, when a man no longer feels regret or guilt for his wrongdoing, he has reached the very bottom of the barrel of moral degradation. Such are those described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:18, 19. He says they have become "alienated from the life of God, because of the hardening of their heart..." — a condition resulting in their being "past feeling". This is the final and worst state of wickedness to which mortals can fall. It is the ultimate in moral bankruptcy. To be "past feeling" is to be dead to all that is good and decent and uplifting. It is to be so dominated by sin as to lose all sense of shame and to live without regard for the consequences of evil, either to self or to others. But men do not sink to such depths overnight.

Today's most calloused conscience was once, many, many sins ago, a tender and sensitive moral alarm. Back then, its warnings were felt with disturbing uneasiness — even if unheeded. But, repeatedly ignored and suppressed, its pangs gradually diminished to the point of being barely bothersome. Then, finally, it becomes incapable of being aroused even by the vilest deed. It is past feeling; it is dead. Having come to this state of miserable wretchedness, men give themselves up to lasciviousness, "to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:19). And, if I mistake not the lesson of Romans 1, this is where God gives them up to what they themselves are determined to have. (v.24, 26, 28). What else remains for those who refuse to know God and heed conscience?

So, if you can still feel bad when you do bad, that's good — but it's better, of course, to refrain from what offends the conscience to begin with. Not that conscience is the standard of right, but when properly enlightened by the word of God it becomes a reliable guide and a strong ally. Any conscience should be heeded, but the truth-set and God-oriented conscience gives a new dimension to morality. Wrongdoing brings sorrow and regret even to the non-Christian who violates a tender conscience — but it does not bring godly sorrow, and there is a vast difference. Only godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation (2 Corinthians 7:10). So, the Christian not only feels bad about doing bad, he

feels bad for the right reason — because he knows he has sinned against God! It seems to me this is the "conscience toward God" mentioned in 1 Peter 2:19; 3:21. Without such a conscience there can be no genuine repentance and, consequently, no salvation. The correlation between repentance and maintaining a tender conscience is obvious. When godly sorrow works repentance, it produces the change of mind and conduct that puts man right with both God and conscience — and, thereby, preserves its effectiveness.

So, feeling bad about doing bad can be beneficial, if we will allow it. The question is not whether we will do bad (sin) — or even whether we will feel bad (sorrow), but rather whether our sorrow will be of the "godly sort" (2 Corinthians 7:11). Realization that we "have sinned against heaven" will ever bring us back home to the Father as it did the prodigal. This is hurt that helps.

- Dan S. Shibley (1929-2011), via Plain Talk, November 1979

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## **Christ Built One Church!**

Jesus said "I will build my church." Anybody can see that this means ONE church (Matthew 16:18). He went on and said, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against IT." Again, it is evident that ONE and only one church is indicated.

Paul said the church is "his body" (Ephesians 1:22-23). Now if we can know how many bodies He had we can know exactly how many churches there are. We know there is "one body" (Ephesians 4:4), hence, there is ONE church.

People try to salve the conscience by trying to believe that we may "take choice of churches" when there can be no choice! Choice is not offered to us in the gospel of Christ, since our Lord built ONLY ONE!

The Lord purchased HIS church with HIS own blood. He adds the saved to that one church (Acts 2:47). He is the HEAD of that church and the Savior of it (Ephesians 5:23).

Why would one want to be in a church built by some MAN when he can be in the Lord's body?

- A. C. Grider [slightly edited – GFS]

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## Religious Assumptions

The story is told of a lady who walked into a pharmacy and asked the pharmacist if he had a cure for the hiccups. The pharmacist said, "I sure do," and immediately and unexpectedly yelled, "Boo!" at the top of his lungs. Well, this nearly scared the lady half to death! She looked at the pharmacist and asked, "Why in the world did you do that?" The pharmacist said, "Because a good scare will rid a person of hiccups." The lady then said, "But I don't have the hiccups. My husband does, and he's out in the car!"

Oops! Now, there's an illustration of how we can get in trouble by making assumptions. Assumptions can be costly. However, the greatest cost regarding assumptions occurs in the spiritual realm. How many people assume they are believing and practicing the things that please God while having no certain knowledge that they are? How many people believe things they have never read and studied for themselves?

We need to stop trusting in our feelings (Jeremiah 17:9). We need to stop using our favorite preachers as authority for what is right or wrong (1 Kings 13:18). We need to stop looking at what others are doing and deciding on that basis that it must be fine (Exodus 23:2). Instead, we need to ask, "What do the Scriptures say?" (Romans 4:3). We need to obey Paul's instruction and "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). We need to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10) and we cannot do that while leaning on assumptions.

Our world is filled with people who pledge allegiance to Jesus but are assuming that their religious practices are acceptable to him. Many will stand before God and have to explain why they did things God did not command, nor did they come into his heart (Jeremiah 7:31). It is a sobering thought to think of the number of people who may someday stand before God and offer as their only excuse, "But I thought . . ."

- Steve Higginbotham

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## Who Can Come to Christ?

"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).

Let us answer the question in the light of what the word of God reveals. Who can come to Christ? The one whom the Father draws. How is one drawn by the Father? By being

taught of God. Being crystal clear, "Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father," comes to Christ!

There was a time when radio preachers asked people to put their hands on the radio to receive salvation! Some tent-meeting preachers invited people to come and be touched by them so salvation could be imparted by way of a "miracle." The Bible instructs people to understand the gospel by reading it (Ephesians 3:4-6), "So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17). According to an apostle of Christ it is "the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15; cf. Psalms 119:130; Nehemiah 8:8).

When a teenager desires a Driver's License it is not available through a mail-order catalog, and it is certainly not handed over to him by a State Trooper. One must read and learn the rules of the road and the laws of his state sufficiently enough to pass an examination. One must read, understand and comply. If not, no License will be issued.

In order to receive salvation, one must read, understand and comply with the gospel of Christ. If not, no salvation will be granted. One must be taught of God before he can do what God would have him do. As David prayed in Psalms 25:5, "Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation;" and "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name." (Psalms 86:11).

Concerning Jesus Christ, who obeyed His Father in every detail, "He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation," (Hebrews 5:8-9; cf. John 8:29; Matthew 4:4). One cannot obey what he does not know! Will you be taught of God?

- Gary Smalley

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\* "The well-rounded character is square in his dealings!"

\* "Wisdom never pretends to be wise; foolishness often does!"

\* "Excuses fool no one but the person who makes them!"

\* "It is evident from the actions of some men that the Lord did not take the bone out of man's head to make woman!"

\* "Yes, there are people today who would die for Christ!"

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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)