

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"If Any Man Wills . . ."

Rest assured that when Felix heard Paul "concerning the faith in Christ Jesus" (Acts 24:24), he heard exactly what he needed to hear and he heard it from one of the most competent and informed teachers of that time. In his case it was not a question, as when we teach, as to whether the most appropriate things were taught or whether enough was said or whether it was spoken in the proper spirit. And, judging from his response to what was heard concerning "righteousness, and self control, and the judgment to come" (v. 25), a terrified Felix got the point. But, regrettably, he dismisses God's servant and, with him, God's truth with the pitiful answer, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me." (v. 25) So far as we know, that convenient season and salvation never came to Felix. Felix was lost! But why?

Certainly not because God wanted it that way! When the apostle Peter wrote that God is "not willing that any should perish" (2 Peter 3:9), that surely included Felix. When Jesus said that "God so loved the world" John 3:16), that too included Felix. Felix was no less the object of God's great love and concern than was the apostle Paul. Jesus teaches us that the soul of Felix was worth more than the whole world (Matthew 16:26). Then He proved it by dying on the cross for all men — for Felix. Through the Holy Spirit, men like Paul were divinely directed into all the truth (John 16:13) and were told to preach it unto all the world (Matthew 28:20) so that sinners like Felix may learn words whereby they might be saved. (Acts 11:14) Yet, in spite of God's will, His love and His every provision; in spite of the efforts of an inspired apostle, Felix was lost! — and he was lost by choice! He chose to sow to flesh rather than the spirit; to serve self rather than God. And, even though God regrets such a decision, He nevertheless respects it. He allows man to do as he pleases, even when he chooses to spurn God's grace and reject His salvation, as did Felix. This is, as some have termed it, God's "permissive will". John 7:17 clearly shows the two wills involved in salvation: "If any man wills to do His will . . ." While it is true that environment and circumstances may and do influence one's character, in the final analysis every man is what he chooses to be. As someone has well said, "Our character

is but the stamp on our souls of the free choices of good and evil we have made through life." Spiritually, Felix was what he chose to be — and so are we.

True, we don't always like to take credit for what we may have become. Some blame God; others blame God's people; still others find countless excuses with which to salve their consciences, but none of this changes anything. We are still just about what we want to be in our relationship with God. Facing up to this fact would help put things in perspective for a lot of the unfaithful. Felix and all like him will find that their choices are not without consequences. He who chooses to sow to the flesh will reap accordingly, Galatians 6:8. God's sovereignty is vindicated in judgment. He wants you saved. The question is . . .

- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, June, 1980

They Watch For Your Soul

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." (Hebrews 13:17).

No greater responsibility ever rested upon any man than that which rests upon elders of the church. They are commissioned by our Heavenly Father to be pastors and shepherds of the flock in a locality. They watch for our souls.

These men must be good men, full of love for the church and love for the welfare of souls. They must have certain qualifications, if possessed, will qualify any man as being worthy of double honor.

If the elders had only to care for the souls of the faithful, it would not be a difficult task. But they are charged with the rest of us also. The weak must be strengthened. The fallen must be lifted. The ignorant must be enlightened. They must not lose faith in us, even after we have lost faith in ourselves. They are not only charged with teaching us what the Bible says; they are charged with getting us to do it!

An elder is not perfect. He isn't even immune from criticism. But this is no reason why "open season" should be declared upon a man when he is selected to serve as an elder. When an elder, for our sake, seeks to strengthen or correct us, it is because God has charged him with doing it. It should give no offense to any child of God, and should not be the occasion of strife.

Selecting elders is an enormous responsibility for any congregation. Too little thought is used in choosing. Too little knowledge of what an elder is really supposed to be in a congregation is evident. Great care and much prayer should accompany any selection. The future of any congregation is pretty well destined by the men it chooses as its elders. The shoes they wear are mighty big ones, and the load they carry is heavy.

- Reuel Lemmons, via The Reminder, 07/22/1990

And a Homophobe

"Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:16).

God gave the name "Christian" to the disciples of Christ (Acts 11:26). The word "called" in Acts 11:26 refers to a Divine calling. Thus, the name "Christian" (meaning "of or belonging to Christ") was a name that originated with God. As the disciples of our Lord (Christians) carried on the work of our Lord to seek and save the Lost, the name Christian became one their enemies used in derision. False accusations were made about Christians in the first century. Christians were accused of committing hateful acts against humanity. Is it any wonder that the ungodly and immoral carry on in the same manner today? Peter wrote warnings to Christians that false accusations against their characters were going to be made. He warned that they would be falsely accused of criminal acts. Peter insisted in 4:15 to not let any of those accusations be true. Yet, if their enemies were going to derisively accuse them of being Christians and even make that a criminal charge against them, to not be ashamed of such.

Over the years, I have been labeled and called many hateful things because I have repeated what God has revealed in the Bible about sin and sinful lifestyles. God condemns homosexuality (read Romans 1 and actually study other passages). Because God condemns the homosexual lifestyle, it is my duty to point that out. If I refuse to do so, then I will be held accountable at the Judgement Day.

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." (Ezekiel 3:18).

So, this is "Pride Month," a month our Country has set aside to honor and glorify a shameless and sinful lifestyle (Homosexuality). Yes, shameless and sinful. So, call me a "Homophobe" for pointing that out if you will. "Homophobe" meaning one who is afraid of those who are homosexual. Actually, I am not afraid of the homosexual. I am afraid for

them. Enough to try to warn them if they do not repent, they will end up eternally in a very bad place that they do not want to go to. Neither do I want them to go there. So, we will continue to warn the drunk to quit their sin. We will continue to warn the thief to quit their sin. We will plead with the drug addict, the adulterer, the liar, and every other sinful habit that consumes man to repent or perish (Luke 13:3, 5). We will continue to warn of the ugliness of any sin that takes God's beautiful creation (human beings) and turns them into Hell bound slaves of the Devil. If my doing that work offends you and you find it comforting to label me a "Homophobe", then so be it. Now, have at it. I am not afraid. Respectfully.

Please join us for Bible Study and worship each Sunday.

- Keith Hamilton

The Lord's Visual Aid!

I love and appreciate the Bible class teachers. They are seldom shown the appreciation that they deserve. So many of them, in spite of the technological advances of our age, are dedicated to depicting Bible characters and events using the (seemingly ancient) flannel-graph board. They skillfully use cut-outs of characters such as Moses, Noah, Abraham and Daniel along with other objects such as an altar, brazen serpent, wedge of gold and Aaron's rod to make the pages of God's word artistically come alive. The use of the visual aid is such a time-honored method of effective teaching.

Much older than the flannel-graph, the Lord has excellently used graphic teaching aides of His own: creation. Concerning His marvelous creation and its effectiveness in instructing mankind, David wrote, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." (Psalm 19:1). In creation, God has revealed invisible attributes of Himself so very clearly that those who fail to see with the mind's eye and understand "through what has been made" are "without excuse." (Romans 1:20). There is no excuse for any nation to forget the Creator! Paul declared to the people of Lystra, that the Lord God "did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:17).

Creation is the canvas on which God has painted His attributes! Which ones? "His eternal power and divine nature." Nothing less than divinity could have been responsible for producing the orderly universe! With this thought in mind, let it lead us to worship: "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!" (Psalm 8:1).

- Gary Smalley (all Scripture quotations, NASB, 95)

- * "Bite your tongue before your tongue bites others!"
 - * "Be careful of your thoughts—they may become words at any time!"
 - * "A soft answer has often been the means of breaking a hard heart!"
 - * "Sharp words can dull respect!"
 - * "Kind words are always the right kind!"
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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)