

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Love Thyself

The first command of all is to love God. But the second command is to love thy neighbor as thyself. The world desperately needs people who love themselves. A person can easily become his own worst enemy.

Godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6). In spite of this inspired statement, we seek to conquer and out-do everyone else. Consequently, our lives have become complicated and complex. We are striving after the wind; we are spinning our wheels. When life shall have closed for us, we probably will have accomplished (and accumulated) little, and will leave that little behind to be forgotten. In so living we have opposed the very basic principles of Jesus. The end is disastrous. We will not be able to bear it - and yet we must.

Simplicity is the essence of a good life. Truth is the essence of simplicity. The pressure of public opinion, and our desire to be publicly approved, kill truth in our lives. One governed by public opinion has a conscience owned by others. God does not hold the public responsible for your conscience, but He does hold you responsible.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . they that mourn . . . the meek they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . the merciful . . . the pure in heart . . . the peacemakers . . . they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake . . ." These are not popular principles. But the man who loves himself will want to understand them, imbibe their influence, and enjoy their blessings.

One needs to adjust his life to his own ideals (properly learned) rather than to public opinion. This is the royal road to contentment and happiness. Pretense is a confession of inferiority. Simplicity is a display of humility. Simplicity is also the fortress against the non-essentials of life that enslave us.

Vainglory is our enemy. It can cause a lukewarm church with good physical properties to sit back and say, "We are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." It

can cause elders to overlook the individual souls of the flock. It can cause preachers to tickle the ears of the members. It will cause all those who are governed by it to be lost. We need to love ourselves.

Simplicity as used in this article is not to be associated with weakness. Neither is it to be associated with the "hear no evil, see no evil, and do no evil" concept. It is a strong force that helps us to remove lying, deceit, treachery, and selfish and low ambition from our lives. It looks truth straight in the eye, and will muster the courage to obey even if the whole world around us does lie in wickedness. (We need the faith of Noah, and of Moses.)

Love thyself! Would such a person allow his brain to be continually affected by the "bottle" and "pot"? Or, by anything else of like nature? Would he not learn what is important, and what is not important? Would he not try always to seek the good and refuse the evil? Would he not try to look upon the trivial cares, sorrows, worries, and failures of life as interruptions rather than life itself? Would he not want Christ to be the impelling force in his life (Galatians 2:20), even to the point that he could take joyfully the spoiling of his goods, knowing in himself that he would have in heaven a better and an enduring substance? See Hebrews 10:31-39.

Christians must learn to sift through the rubbish of life to get the real things of value, just like miners discard tons of dirt to get the precious metal. And yet, God has told us what is important. We must learn to live down what the world is trying so hard to live up to. What all of us are longing for is not found in the world. It is in the church, the kingdom of Christ. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15). People are looking for peace in the wrong way, and in the wrong place.

Jesus said the person who would humble himself as a little child would be the greatest in the kingdom (Matthew 18:4). "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11).

The greatest story that has ever been told is of the Life that served humanity (even those who nailed Him to the cross). Among the last words to be uttered by Him before His death were: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What a contrast! He knew what life was all about, but they did not. History continues to record that same contrast. Jesus loved the Father, Himself, and His neighbor.

- Raymond Harville (while at Mt. Pleasant, TN), via The Sower, April, 1977

Let Us Do Good!

Perseverance in good works is a purpose that God has in mind for every Christian. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10). Disciples do not gloat in self-glory by what they do, they honor God and His design for their lives. The "fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ" is for "the glory and praise of God." (Philippians 1:11). As Christians "walk" . . . "in Christ Jesus," the light that is in them shines forth in a world of darkness (Matthew 5:14-16). This is God's purpose and intention for His children.

Accordingly, as opportunity presents itself, people of God should fully use every occasion to serve the Lord by doing good. Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). He is our Master. Paul admonished, "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." (Galatians 6:10).

The good that we do because God has been gracious to us is not stifled or halted because we undertake a consideration of someone's age, nationality, race, economic class, education, sex or anything else. Those considerations should not create boundaries for us, just as they did not for our Lord. If we let them, it is sin (James 2:1-9). There is, however, a sphere of special concern in this passage: "those who are of the household of the faith." The concept is much like parents, whose first obligation is to their children, but not to exclusion of good works to their neighbors and to all.

There will always be people and circumstances that tempt us to cease good works, but Paul's admonition must be remembered: "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." (Galatians 6:9). This persistence is needed when we "go the second mile" (Matthew 5:41), when our good works are snubbed (Matthew 5:44) or when we are mistreated (1 Peter 2:12; 4:4; 3:9, 13). Perseverance is needed to return good for evil (Romans 12:17, 21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15). Good works must be maintained (Titus 3:8, 14).

One day in life, an opportunity to do a good work will present itself to you, and this opportunity comes only once. We must cope with regrets of life that so many times we have been at the place to do something good and we did not do it. Maybe we felt timid or shy. Maybe it was awkward for us. Maybe we thought of someone else who would or should act. We failed – even in the simplest acts of goodness. We subdued the impulse to give someone something they needed, to bless someone with a gift that was good, to write someone a note or letter, and even to speak a special word of kindness, gratitude, thankfulness or encouragement.

We could add to our lives the regret and lament for allowing such opportunities to disappear by our inaction, or we could begin a new resolve to be more open-eyed and more responsive. Building lives characterized by good works will glorify our heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16). Dorcas "was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did." (Acts 9:36). "Women making a claim to godliness" are characterized by "good works." (1 Timothy 2:10). Widows among God's people were to have "a reputation for good works" (1 Timothy 5:10). The wealthy were "to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share," (1 Timothy 6:18). The man of God has been "equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). Young men are "to be an example of good deeds," (Titus 2:6-7). All of the redeemed must be "zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:14). We must even "consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds," (Hebrews 10:24).

Are you walking in good works? Are you persistent, looking for opportunities? Are you resolved to do good deeds to others?

- Gary Smalley

- * "Behind everything there is an unseen force that is not subject to the investigations of science!"
 - * "Action is the only true test of faith - and love!"
 - * "Christ did not come to make life easy, but to make men great!"
 - * "He who is poor in faith will bankrupt hereafter!"
 - * "What a person does is the result of what a person is!"
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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)