

Noteworthy

Prayer Requests: Jo Anderson (*at Scott Lake Health and Rehabilitation*), Joe Brown (*ongoing medical*), Mildred Church (*shut in*), the Day family (*Robyn's father has cancer*), Linda James (*at Northdale Rehab Center, 3030 Bearss Ave., Tampa, FL 33618, Rm. 59B*), Paul Lloyd (*rehabilitation in Toledo, Ohio*), Linda McKenzie (*tending to mother's health*), Butch Morgan (*shut in*), Louise Mosely (*recent passing of her sister*), Dottie Reynolds (*ongoing medical*), and the Wisdom family (*with the recent death of Larry's sister*).

Family and friends: Marvin Brown (*from Plant City, cancer*), Ruth Fogel (*Jill Boyette's mother, cancer*), Ned Hicks (*Larry Hicks' father, ongoing medical*), Brian James (*cancer*), Diana Marcum (*Arlene Turner's sister, cancer*), John Marschall (*Bob's father*), Lyndell McReedy (*Cindy Hicks' aunt*), Betty Parrish (*Diana Jordan's mother*), Johnny Wisdom (*Larry Wisdom's brother, recovering from heart surgery*).

Out of Town: Charles & Vernita Goodall, Neil & Ahrea Miller (*5/10-25/19*).

Group Meeting: Group 2 will meet next week after the evening worship service.

Men's Bible Study: The 4th Sunday of each month at 5 pm (*May 26th, next week*).

Home Study: The final class will be *May 27th (next week)* at the home of the Wisdom family.

Ladies Bible Class: Will resume in the fall at a date TBD.

Remember and encourage others who are struggling physically and spiritually.

Assignments for Worship Service

Wednesday Night: 5/22/19

Song Leader: Clay Sadler
 Opening Prayer: Mike Sadler
 Invitation: Sherman Johnson
 Announcements: Larry Wisdom
 Closing Prayer: Steve Parker
 Recordings: Colby Sadler
 Usher: Larry Wisdom

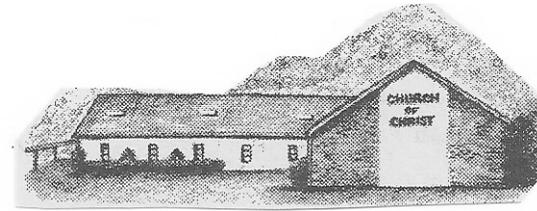
Sunday Evening: 5/26/19

Song Leader: Jeff Lanning
 Opening Prayer: Clay Sadler
 Lord's Table: Trent Stevens
 Announcements: Larry Hicks
 Closing Prayer: Timothy Payne
 Recordings: Keith Marschall
 Usher: Gus Johnson

Sunday Morning: 5/26/19

Lord's Table: Trent Stevens (B)
 Jerry Williams (C)
 Serving: David Williams
 Ed Lawson
 Song Leader: Larry Wisdom

Opening Prayer: Joe Brown
 Announcements: Larry Hicks
 Closing Prayer: Steve Parker
 Recordings: Colby Sadler
 Usher: Gus Johnson



**Lakeland Hills
 Leader**

LAKELAND HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST

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ELDERS

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SERVICES

Sunday
 Bible Study 9:00 A.M.
 Morning Services 9:50 A.M.
 Evening Services 6:00 P.M.
 Wednesday
 Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

DEACONS:

Robert Marschall
 Michael Sadler
 Moses Stevens
 David Williams

EVANGELIST:

Ian Rice (863) 213-9795

"Fury of Fire"

The readers of what we call the Hebrew letter were a people in great distress, convinced of the lordship of Jesus Christ, but overwhelmed by the persecution and ostracism that came with it.

To dissuade them from abandoning their faith in the son of God, the now anonymous writer assembled a number of arguments around a theme of the superiority of the new covenant to that of Moses. Like all disciples, they had the free will to choose faithfulness or apostasy, and the stakes involved their very salvation and eternal fate.

Were there no possibility that the believer could fall away, the Hebrew letter would not even exist. The writer did not address people that could be described as "never saved in the first place." They were "*holy brothers*" who shared in the heavenly calling, but only on condition of holding securely to their confidence and hope (Hebrews 3:1-6). They were served by the same high priest as any obedient believer and could boldly approach God's throne of grace through his mediation (Hebrews 4:14-5:9). Dullness of hearing and severity of persecution had weakened their resolve, but the writer continued to have confidence they would actively persevere (Hebrews 6:9-12, 10:35-39).

His confidence, however, was not derived from a theological hypothesis about the impossibility of apostasy, but from the inarguable majesty of the gospel. Rather than lock the believer into a salvation he might one day wish to forsake in exchange for a return to the ways of the world, the gospel's maintaining power is invested in its superiority, not only to Moses, but to the passing pleasures with which the tempter would entice (Hebrews 11:23-26).

The warnings against apostasy – a very real possibility – are stark within the Hebrew letter. The believer who abandons his faith and dies outside of it is destined for a punishment equal to the one who never believed at all:

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. (Hebrews 10:26-27)

That was written to Christians just like us, Christians who sometimes contemplate what it would be like to sample the devil's delicacies, or to live the apparently blissful life of the decadent. A fury of fire is kindled at judgment to consume all "those who do not know God and ... those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). That furious inferno, however, is even more disgraceful for those who "have escaped the defilements of

the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, ... [and] are again entangled in them and overcome" (2 Peter 2:20 ESV). Peter says, "the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them" (2 Peter 2:20-21).

The creeds of men commit a great crime against those who seek in them comfort and assurance, but find instead false security, leading to indulgence and complacency. Indeed, every Christian will stumble at times and require repentance and a renewal of mercy, but making a practice of transgression and living in it habitually is a denial of faith that invites retribution (see 1 John 1:5-10, 3:4-10; Titus 15-16, 1 Timothy 5:8).

The Hebrew writer cautioned his wayward audience against the folly of falling away, regarding it as crucifying the savior afresh and subjecting him to the contempt of the cross all over again (6:4-8). He compared the apostasy of a disciple of Christ unfavorably to a Jew who would set aside the Law of Moses to live in idolatry and sin:

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? For we know him who

"Everyone Else is Doing it"

Sometimes people attempt to justify their sinful conduct on the basis of "well everyone else is doing it." If "everyone else" is dressing immodestly, what are we going to do? If "everyone else" is going to a "must see" R-rated movie, what are we going to do? If "everyone else" is lying, stealing, or cheating what are we going to do?

In the days of King Nebuchadnezzar, "everyone else" was bowing down and worshiping his golden image (see Dan. 3:1-7). But what did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego do? They said "let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods..." (Dan. 3: 18). These men loved the Lord and courageously served him regardless of what everyone else was doing.

May we too have the courage to be different. Brethren, "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2). God's children are not to follow in the sins of others, but are to lead others out of darkness and into the light.

~ David McPherson

said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29-31)

All these warnings are written to Christians, believers straddling the fence between the trials of righteousness and the acceptance of their unbelieving neighbors and kin. We sometimes find ourselves walking the same tightrope, caught between the difficulties of maintaining a life of faith and the imaginary escape that comes with throwing it all away. The creed that tells us we are immune to stumbling is a deceiver and spoiler.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; (Hebrews 12:12-15)

The writer added urgency to his warnings to the Hebrews by reminding them that, "our God is a consuming fire" (12:29). Christians, for whom the world has not lost all its luster, need to be reminded of that just as much as the atheist and the disobedient believer. The threat of apostasy remains very real and only abiding faith in Jesus can keep you from stumbling and falling from grace (see Jude 24, Galatians 5:1-6).

~ Jeff Smith