

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF ELDER HUGH HUDSON

By

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II Tim. 4:6-8

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On Sunday afternoon, April 28, 1996, Elder Hugh E. Hudson received the call and passed over to be with Christ. Elder Hudson was the pastor of the Liberty Missionary Baptist Church of Indianapolis, Indiana. I extend my sympathy to the family of this dear brother and to the Church which he pastored.

How can you describe a man to those who never had the privilege of meeting him? However inadequate my efforts, I must make the attempt. I feel a debt of gratitude because I was privileged to know this Brother and learned to love him greatly in the few years since we first met.

Elder Hudson and I first met on the tenth day of November, 1985. He performed the wedding ceremony for my son Javie and my daughter-in-law Kim on this date. Brother Hudson had been a friend of Kim's family for several years. At the wedding my wife met him first and came to me and said "*This preacher believes the doctrines of grace!*" When we were introduced the first question he asked me was: "Do you believe in *means*?" I did not remember this detail, but he reminded me of it. He often mentioned it because his position on God's Sovereignty agreed with the Bible--that there is no "Violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." He believed and preached the *whole counsel* of God. It was his position that the sinner is responsible and God is Sovereign. In addressing sinners he would tell them of the glory of Christ, and His power to save. He would exhort them to flee from the wrath to come. He loved to dwell on those precious invitations to weary , heavy laden sinners.

Elder Hugh Edward Hudson was born on Sunday September 14 th, 1941 in Red Boiling Springs, Tennessee. Hugh lived in the place of his birth until he was nine years old. At this time his parents John J. and Vetrice West Hudson and his brother and Hugh moved to Indianapolis, Indiana.

Brother Hugh Hudson knew what Brewerⁱ meant when he wrote:

Against the God who rules the sky
I fought with hand uplifted high;
despised the mention of his grace,
Too proud to seek a hiding place.

The call of God's sovereign grace arrested Hugh at the age of fifteen. The arrows of

distress were driven deep into his heart, ⁱⁱ In God's purpose and grace He called Hugh with that effectual and irresistible calling which our Lord describes in Jn. 6:37: "All the Father giveth to me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

But thus the eternal counsel ran:
Almighty love, arrest that man!
I felt the arrows of distress, and
found I had no hiding place.

Ere long a heavenly voice I heard,
And Mercy's angel-form appeared;
He led me on, with placid pace,
To Jesus, as my Hiding-place. ⁱⁱⁱ

Not only was it the Lord's purpose to save Hugh Hudson, but He also chose to put him in the ministry. Within a few years after his calling to salvation the Lord called him to the gospel ministry. He preached his first message in April, 1961 at Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana.

His response to this high calling of preaching the gospel was deep and abiding. In all our discussions about the ministry, preaching, pastoring with its lofty mountain peaks and dark valleys he always manifested a Heaven-sent, Spirit-called love of the ministry. He found his greatest joy in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. He stood in awe before the Lord who called him.

He entered heartily into the spirit of the Apostle Paul:

For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

From this calling he never wavered. His armor was fully intact when the angels carried him home!

Elder Hudson spent most of his life in the Middle Tennessee Baptists. He served as Moderator of the Bethel Association for four years. The Liberty Missionary Baptist Church which he was pastoring at the time of his death was at one time in this Association but is now an independent Church.

Brother Hugh told me how he learned the doctrines of grace. In his study of the Scripture he constantly found the doctrines of grace clearly revealed. Because of the pronounced Arminian apostasy among Middle Tennessee Baptists (which Hugh witnessed growing like a detestable vine) the doctrines of grace were not palatable to him. But he could not dismiss these doctrines from the Scripture. They would not go away. While he firmly believed that God was sovereign, he also believed the sinner was responsible. He believed that God commanded all men every where to repent. He believed the gospel was to be preached to every creature. But how to unify both of these Bible teachings was a problem. Furthermore, he knew of no one who Believed *both doctrines*. He knew some who believed in God's sovereignty. He knew others who believed in the sinner's responsibility.

Sometime in the early eighties he got a subscription to *The Berea Baptist Banner*. He never learned how he received this subscription. Through this paper he began to drink in the *whole counsel of God!* And what before had been tedious and tasteless became joyful and savory. He often told me of how thankful he was for this paper. He believed the hand of the Lord used *The Berea Baptist Banner* as the means to open his eyes to the whole counsel of God.

About a year ago Hugh told me he wanted to have a meeting on the doctrines of Grace at Liberty Missionary Baptist Church. He wanted to take a public stand on these truths and to try to awaken the preachers and churches of the Bethel Association of Middle Tennessee Baptists to these doctrines which he so dearly loved. The Middle Tennessee Baptists^{iv} used to believe these doctrines, as most of their confessions declare. Brother Hudson desired to see these brethren and churches come back to the truths they held in days gone by. And thus he purposed to cast his bread upon the waters.

He knew that this move would cost him dearly in friends and fellowship. But he never wavered. He believed strongly that the truth of God was worth any sacrifice one might have to pay for it. As a true soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ he set his face like a flint for the defense of the gospel. He was not ashamed to declare the whole counsel of God. The Liberty Missionary Baptist Church voted to hold this meeting. This meeting *fell* in May of 1995, and his *friends fell away* like leaves on a windy day!

Two of the churches of the Bethel Association wrote letters disfellowshipping him for the doctrines of grace and for what they called *pulpit affiliation*. They tried to get other churches to do the same. But those men who led this attack against him would not meet with him to discuss the issues preached in the Liberty Seminar, as to whether they were Biblical or not. He longed to see Middle Tennessee Baptists return to the *Old Landmarks* set by their fathers. He wanted them to walk in the *old paths*, but like the Jews of Jeremiah's day they said: "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee."^v

I have no doubt that the way his brethren treated him after he held this seminar, shortened his life. Just a week before he died he was in my shop and told me he had been off work on Tuesday of that week. He had been dizzy. I asked him if he had the flu. He replied, "No. I think it is the stress from my job." He had been afflicted with shortness of breath ever since I first met him. We now know that he had a weak heart. And while the job he had may have stressed him some, nothing was as hard on him as the way his former friends treated him. They never called or contacted him unless they met him at a funeral a wedding or the like. May the Lord forgive them! These wounds he received in the house of his friends!

Not only did they not communicate with him, but they accused him of believing what they knew he did not believe. He cheerfully accepted the doctrines called Calvinism. He was a full *five-pointer*. Like Paul he boldly and publicly stated: "... After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets..." But they accused him of believing that the gospel was unnecessary, that it did no good to use the means of the gospel or prayer. They claimed that he believed that broken

hearted sinners couldn't be saved because they were not God's elect. They also tried to make it appear that he embraced the false doctrines of some who do not believe in preaching to the lost. These were bitter things to his soul for no man believed more in the use of means than he did. In spite of the way his friends treated him, he never became bitter. He led the Liberty Baptist Church through this difficult time with a true shepherd's heart. He was more concerned with the truth of God than the lies men were telling on him. He told me one day when these things were pressing hard upon him that he would not let these controversies consume the time and energies of the church. He led them on to green pastures and still waters and so gave evidence of the great pastor he was. As he put it, "We have more important things to do." Truly the words of the Master still hold: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."^{vi}

"Should storms of seven-fold thunder roll,
And shake the globe from pole to pole,
No flaming bolt could daunt my face,
For Jesus is my Hiding-place."^{vii}

Brother Hugh Hudson was a kind and gracious brother. When he differed with you on any subject, it was always in such a way that you knew he loved you even when he didn't agree with you. I remember one incident which will illustrate this. He, Brother Del Wilson, a deacon of Liberty Church, and I had gone to a fellowship at New Testament Baptist Church of Goshen, Indiana where Elder Medford Caudill was pastor. Brother Del drove and I rode with them. Brother Hugh preached and I believe I followed him. Brother Hugh was an Amillennialist. In my message on *Things Creation is Waiting For*, I mentioned the Millennium as being future and that we were waiting for it. After the services when we were about to leave he said relative to my statements on the Millennium as being future, "You are going to have to ride home in the trunk!" I can still see the smile on his face as he said this.

He would often challenge you on some doctrine (which he believed as well as you did) just to see how you would respond. He would present every argument of opposition to what he knew you believed. Many times he did that to me on some subject when I did not know what he believed. After I would make the best defense I could, he would smile and say "I agree with you. I just wanted to hear what you had to say about it." This is the way he sounded you out.

His position on the church was as sound as a twenty dollar gold piece. He believed that each NT Baptist church was *a church of the Lord Jesus Christ*. He knew nothing of the so-called invisible church except from the writings of misguided men. To him the church was local and visible and essentially and necessarily so. He believed that each church was autonomous and consequently it was wrong for any other church to try to lord it over another church.

He believed that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was founded by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the days of His earthly ministry. It was his deep conviction that the Lord promised that churches built on that divine model would be preserved through all the ages until He returns with a shout. He believed that *the saved* were added to the church, therefore they were not already *in the church*. Church membership, he firmly believed, was a transaction which takes

place on earth not in heaven. He taught that salvation does not make you a member of the church, but makes you a candidate for membership.

He preached his last message three weeks before he died. His theme was *Heaven!* Brother Carthel Wilson told me that some of the members told him then that Brother Hudson was telling them "Goodby" in that message.

A few more rolling suns, at most,
Will land me on fair Canaan's coast,
Where I shall sing the song of grace,
And see my glorious Hiding-place.

Brother Hugh Hudson was a great man of God. The cause of God and truth lost a faithful servant when we lost him. He was a soldier of the cross of Jesus Christ. He could say with all truthfulness: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

His body sleeps in Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Glens Valley just south of Indianapolis, waiting for that glorious resurrection. Like Paul, he fought a good fight, he finished his course, and he kept the faith!

He was a special and dear friend of mine. I miss him greatly. We are parted for awhile. By the grace of God I expect to meet him over on the golden shore where

...God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."^{viii}

ⁱ "Hail, Sovereign Love, *Gadsby's Hymns*, #134.

ⁱⁱ Acts 2:37. "And hearing, they were stabbed in the heart..." *LITV*, Jay P. Green, Sr.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Gadsby's Hymns*, Ibid.

^{iv} See *History of Middle Tennessee Baptists*, by J. H. Grime.

^v Jer. 44:16.

^{vi} Mt. 5:11-12.

^{vii} *Gadsby's Hymns*, Ibid.

^{viii} Rev. 21:4.