

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Urgency in Forsaking Sin

The Bible is full of many valuable lessons. A study of God's Word shows sin is dangerous, deceptive, and destructive. That is why it is important to quickly leave Satan's snare (1 Tim. 3:7; 2 Tim. 2:26). The longer a soul remains trapped in sin, the harder it is to get free of its hold. Wise people will recognize this and do their best to avoid sin in the first place. When a person has sinned, he should exercise urgency in forsaking it for his soul's sake.

The generation of Israelites that forsook Egypt and followed Moses through the wilderness reveals the true nature of sin. They had heard the voice of God at Mt. Sinai and promised to obey (Exod. 19:8; Deut. 5:22-29). However, with few exceptions, they did not. The writer of Hebrews said this about them:

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Beware, brethren, lest there be

in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:7-13—NKJV).

Notice that unbelief is called evil. It leads one to depart from God. The cure for unbelief is exhortation using God's Word. The exhortations need to be frequent (even daily). The time for such reminders and encouragement is now—not tomorrow or the next day. Tomorrow may not come (Prov. 27:1). When listening to God's Word one must choose to obey or he will disobey and harden his heart.

Sin is deceptive and hardens one's heart to the outcome. Sin says, "There's no hurry!" However, staying in sin makes it harder to leave (Prov. 28:14; 29:1). It is truly amazing how often man will justify his sin. At first, he may admit it is wrong but thinks it is not too bad. In fact, the sinner often thinks he can "manage" his sin. What a lie! At that point, one has engaged in self deception and is on the way to being thoroughly ensnared by Satan. Choosing to remain in sin can dull the senses to the soul's destruction. When the heart becomes hardened, it no longer feels the pangs of a tender conscience. This is why it is so dangerous to play with sin. Eventually, one's conscience may be seared (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Searing living tissue kills the nerves so that there is no more pain felt. With no pain, there is no incentive to repent because everything seems fine. In the Scriptures hardness of heart is linked with impenitence (e.g., Rom. 2:5). Such souls are said to be "treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Indeed, this is a terrible condition to be in.

Not surprisingly, Jesus had a lot to say about hardness of heart. On one occasion the Lord was both angered and grieved by the hardness of hearts among the people (Mark 3:5). Even the disciples suffered from this problem. This, in turn, led them not to understand a spiritual point Jesus was making (Mark 6:52; 8:17). After the resurrection the Lord rebuked the eleven for their hardness of heart because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen (Mark 16:14).

Sadly, the hard hearted will not enter God's promised rest (heaven) because of sin and unbelief (Heb. 4:7-9). Brethren, take heed to yourselves. If you are in sin right now, get out while you still have time.

- Douglas Hoff

Narrow or Broad

Like many others I have a fondness for toy train sets. I like to visit places where these sets are on display. I have had various sets of my own through the years, but never of a very high quality. I found out quickly as a boy that you could not mix and match these various sets together very well. If the track is too wide or too narrow the train will not run. Therefore, it is very important that the track is just right for the train. Nothing more and nothing less. Sometimes we hear people say that we are too narrow in our teaching. Was Noah too narrow when he taught that unless you were in the ark you would not be saved? Was Samuel too narrow when he condemned Saul for sparing a few animals for sacrifices? Was God too narrow in His dealings with Nadab and

Abihu or when He disallowed Moses from entering the Promised Land?

Our love on the other hand should be broad enough for all men. We should be broad in preaching the Gospel to every creature, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The truth of the matter is, we need to be as narrow or as broad as the Scripture allows us to be. In other words we are as narrow as Jesus is. Jesus was narrow in His view of truth (Mat. 15:6-9; John 8:32; 17:17), in His view of false teachers (Mat. 7:15-16; 13:22-23; 23), in His view of salvation (Mat. 7:13-14), in His view of worship (John 4:6-8, 21-24), and in His view about who He is and His authority (Mat. 7:28-29; 26:55-56, 63-64; 28:18). When we stand for the truth we are like the train where the wheels and the tracks are the same; they work together for good. Jesus is our perfect example and we should be as narrow minded as He is.

- Curtis L. E. Graves

Why Good People Go Bad

When a model Christian falls into scandalous sin, everyone is shocked. But we shouldn't be. If it could happen to King David, it can happen to any one of us.

"Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon" (2 Sam. 12:9).

Few Bible characters occupy the role of epic hero as fully as David. He was a fearless warrior, a leader of men, yet possessed of a gentle heart that composed some of the world's greatest poetry. David displayed a remarkable ability to look past the flaws of individuals and see the potential within. He could shrug off personal attacks from his enemies with a grace that few today can match.

Yet this mythic figure also provides one of the darkest chapters in the biblical record. He committed adultery with his neighbor's wife, killed the neighbor to cover up the deed, then married the widow. It was a despicable crime that in most societies would result in a death sentence.

Nathan's rebuke of King David was sharp and angry. But we are interested here in the question that Nathan posed to David: Why? How could a man with so much talent and such a sterling character commit such an outrageous crime?

Nathan's question has been repeated countless times throughout history by those who have witnessed the moral collapse of other great individuals. A gospel preacher with a rock-solid reputation for soundness gets involved in an affair and leaves his family for the other woman. A sweet and godly lady who teaches Bible classes and cooks meals for shut-ins is discovered to have been also cooking the books at her accounting job, embezzling thousands of dollars from her employer. You can probably provide your own stories of scandal involving people who were considered above reproach. In every case, the same question is first in everyone's mind: Why?

The stories of David and all those who have followed in his footsteps are a sobering reminder of how very fragile the boundary is between a life of godliness and one of debauchery. Everyone of us is perfectly capable of crossing that line. If David, "a man after God's own heart," could do it, who are we to think it could never happen to us? The failures need not be of the hypocritical variety, either. We can go completely off-track in the conviction that we are doing God's work (witness Saul of Tarsus, who killed Christians in the name of God).

The grim truth is, anyone of us can experience a spectacular fall from grace, and the more smug we are in our self-righteousness, the more susceptible we are to a stealth temptation. That's why the writings of the apostles are filled with militaristic jargon that convey the desperate nature of our struggle against sin (fight, war, weapons, armor, etc.). We are engaged in a life-long conflict against a cunning adversary. Slip up for one careless moment, and we can become the next juicy tabloid headline.

The life of the Christian is not for the lazy or faint of heart. It is a life of constant warfare against the wiles of one who is determined to bring us down. And the greatest battles are not "out there," but the ones we must fight in our own hearts; for it is on that field that the war will be won or lost.

- David King

- > "Worry is the darkroom in which negatives can develop!"
 - > "Gratitude to God should be as regular as our heart beat!"
 - > "To the truly spiritually-minded person, every day is Sunday!"
 - > "Trials refine our faith like fire refines gold. How rich we become depends upon how long we can stand the heat!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Purpose of Marriage!"* (Text: 1 Cor. 7:1-5); Sunday evening: *"We Are God's Fellow Workers!"* (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1).

GOSPEL MEETING 2016: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 24-29, with Josh Thornhill, of Wildersville, preaching.