

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305

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April 09, 2017

Volume 37, # 15

The Home Wrecker

Though seldom identified, the sin of selfishness is the culprit responsible for most every problem, heartache, misery, and division occurring in the home. One of the marks of the "grievous times" of which Paul prophesied was that men would be lovers of self (2 Tim. 3:1,2). And, grievous it is when husbands and wives will subordinate family needs to personal preferences; when they think in terms of self: What I want, what I like, my rights, my interests, and my happiness. Such thinking is practically the guarantee of hard times at home. But too few see selfishness as being a personal problem.

As H.W. Beecher has said, "Selfishness is that detestable vice which no one will forgive in others, and no one is without in himself." It is our inclination to see ourselves as the victims of selfishness rather than the guilty. As the unhappy wife I recently read about was heard to say, "My husband doesn't show any interest in what I do. All he cares about is whatever it is that he does at that place — wherever it is — that he works!" (Bits & Pieces, Aug. 83) Such an attitude may describe us more than we care to admit. As God's people we are not ignorant of Satan's devices (2 Cor. 2:11), the deceitfulness of sin, nor its blinding power. Therefore, however remote and unlikely it may seem, we must see the possibility of selfishness in our own lives! Like the prodigal son, we must come to self to overcome self (Luke 15:17). As Paul says, "Examine yourselves..." (2 Cor. 13:5), test your motives with absolute honesty for none can begin to deal with a problem he won't admit. Self-denial is one of the first lessons to be learned by the follower of Christ (Matt. 16:24). Nothing is more fundamental to obedience and righteousness. Without it, no man can truly love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). As Christ's love sacrificed self for the church, so must be the husband's for his wife. It is an unselfish and giving love. Without it, wives cannot be in subjection to their husbands, as unto the Lord (v.22). The very spirit that prompts submission to the Lord should prompt it between husband and wife. Being what the Lord wants me to be means being what I need to be to my mate. Selfishness, then, is a sin against man and God — and, oftentimes, against children.

Accordingly, bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) involves denying self. For instance, rearing children for heaven takes time. Selfishness robs many children of that precious time — under an alias, to be sure. Too busy, too tired, to talk and answer questions, to read the Bible, to pray with them, to take them to worship. But, worse perhaps, are those children who suffer because selfish parents divide the home rather than deny self. It is almost unthinkable that some would trade a good family for a selfish indulgence; for a bottle, for a lover, for "good times." Yet, it continues to happen, even among some claiming to be Christians. In these, and even in more subtle and respectable ways, selfishness is the great home wrecker: May God helps[sic] us to want it purged from our lives.

- Dan S. Shipley, via Plain Talk, November, 1983

Can God Count On You?

Do you love God? How much? Are you willing to be fully committed to him in every way? Is there anything that you would not do for God (Mark 12:29-30)?

We live in a world that is constantly at war, at war with sin (2 Cor. 10:3-6). Whose side are you on? Can God count on you to increase your knowledge of his word so you can defend it against false teachers and their disciples? "You must continue growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). God wants us to go beyond a state of spiritual infancy and advance to maturity (Heb. 5:11-14). We do this when we pray, study, and apply the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). Will you resolve to study the Scriptures on a daily basis?

Can God count on you to defend the truth against every foe? Too many people will defend the gospel if someone they do not like is perverting it. But, if one of their friends perverts God's word, they tend to be very tolerant, or they will make excuses for them. When truth is at stake, we should have no friends except God.

Do you find yourself wetting a finger and sticking it in the air to see which way the wind is blowing before you take a stand on a controversial issue? The Bible says stand! (Eph. 6:13-14; Jude 3).

Can God count on you to take an active role in the work and worship of the local congregation? God has not placed the responsibility for building up the local congregation on the shoulders of only one person. The evangelist's role is to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:1-5); the elders oversee (Acts 20:17, 28-32); the deacons serve (Acts 6:1-6), and

everybody is to work! As the old timers used to say, "Don't no one monkey run no show." In short, everybody's got to work if we are going to grow.

Can God count on you to be uncompromising in the fight against sin, shame, and immorality? When people in the work place laugh at homosexuality, unscriptural multiple marriages, the use of alcohol and drugs among the nations' youths, teen pregnancy out of wedlock, do you go with the flow, or do you plead God's case (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:9-21)? If God can count on you, prove it!

- Ron Daly

"He Restrained Them Not"

The life of the Old Testament figure, Eli, is indeed a remarkable one. Eli was a descendant of Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron and therefore was of the tribe of Levi. Combined in this man of God were the offices of both High Priest and Judge. It was the first time in Israel that one man had held both offices at the same time. But such was indicative of the goodness and righteousness of Eli; it seems everyone respected him. For some forty years Eli judged the nation of Israel. (Cf. 1 Sam. 4.18). His character was one of godliness and devotion but was not without blemish.

Phineas and Hophni, the sons of Eli, were as wicked as their father was righteous. And to make matters worse, Phineas and Hophni were put into the office of a priest even though they lacked Eli's virtue and zeal. (Cf. 1 Sam 1:3). The result was nothing short of extraordinary! The conduct of Eli's children literally shocked the people of Israel. Because of Phineas and Hophni, men came to abhor the offering of the Lord. (Cf. 1 Sam 2.17). Things were very bad; the sad state of affairs was almost beyond description.

But when the aged High Priest learned of the scandals being committed by his sons, he only administered a gentle rebuke. Apparently, Eli had always so corrected his children. Instead of reproofing his boys while they were small, Eli perhaps reasoned with them and viewed their mischievous conduct with but a look of disfavor. But now Phineas and Hophni were no longer children and with them had grown their mischievous habits. The Scriptures assert that Eli was largely to blame. "He restrained them not" (1 Sam 3.13). Eli had failed to restrain his sons while they were young and now it was too-late! As the twig had been bent, so had it grown. Now the sternest rebuke would prove ineffectual. Alas! What a lifetime of waste! All those years of effort and sacrifice in vain. Eli had failed and failed miserably; he had let his sons down when they needed him the most!

The Scriptures urge: "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18). Doubtless, Eli's philosophy was, "Boys will be boys." But someone has well said, "Boys will be boys, but those same boys one day will be men." A child needs discipline and guidance when he is young. Then there is hope. Parents, open your eyes before it is too late! Now is the time to "restrain" your children. Now is the time to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This opportunity of youth, once present, never returns. Father or mother, have you really "restrained" (guided) that wee creature who is so fresh from God? Be honest with yourself. Think of Eli - think of yourself - think of the little ones entrusted to your care. Will you fail them when they need you the most?

- James Sanders

Let a Man Examine Himself

1 Corinthians 11:28

When we examine others, we justify self — but when we examine self, we are more disposed to justify others. Let a man —

- Examine his company (Psalms 1; Proverbs 13:20). Fowl of a feather flock together.
- Examine his habits (I John 2:15).
- Examine his thoughts (Psalms 10:4). "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).
- Examine his affections (Colossians 3:2). "To be carnally minded is death" (Romans 8:6).
- Examine his motives (I Corinthians 10:31). Are they acting for self or God? (Colossians. 3:17).

- Unknown

- > "Only the dictionary puts "success" before "work!"
 - > "If you find life empty, try putting something into it!"
 - > "Life is tragic for the person who has plenty to live on but nothing to live for!"
 - > "The empty tomb proves Christianity; the empty pew denies it!"
 - > "It's been observed that many people use mighty thin thread when mending their ways!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"When Children Leave Home!"*
(Text: Luke 15:11-24); Sunday evening: *"Jesus' First Converts!"* #3 (Text:
John 1:35-51).