

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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DO YOU WANT THE BLESSINGS?

In the Old Testament, Exodus 19 records the arrival of the people of Israel at Mount Sinai following their deliverance from Egypt. Moses went up the mountain, where God spoke to him for the purpose of establishing His covenant with Israel. God described the nature of the covenant and the conditions upon which it would be honored: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel." (Exodus 19:4-6). The people responded to the conditional offer for a covenant relationship in this way: "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" (Ex. 19:8). Then we are told, "And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD."

Transgression on the heels of commitment: A short time later, we are informed of tragedy among the people: "Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, 'Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'" (Ex. 32:1). Why, such a short time after making agreement to enter a covenant relationship with God, and

committing to do “All that the LORD has spoken,” did these followers of God turn away from Him and sin so grievously? Aaron made them a golden calf and the people “offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.” (Ex. 32:6). Those who had solemnly vowed to obey God’s commandments were now guilty of incredible evil!

Creature or Creator? Had they paid no attention to God’s commands, “You shall not make for yourself an idol,” (Ex. 20:4) or “You shall not make *other gods* besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves.” (Ex. 20:23)? The Apostle Paul described this situation in the New Testament: “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image ... For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, ...” (Rom. 1:21-23a, 25a). Why did they do it? The apparent explanation is that they wanted the good things that God gives, the blessings and privileges, but they did not want any obligations or duties to accompany them. They were willing to have God lead them out of Egyptian bondage and destroy their enemies in the Red Sea, but obeying the commands of God was a different matter; they wanted freedom from that obligation. Their actions made it obvious that they were only giving “lip service” to God when they vowed to obey all that God said.

Do you want God’s blessings? Do you want to enjoy “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,” (Eph. 1:3); do you want to enjoy “redemption through His blood,” and “forgiveness of ... trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,” (Eph. 1:7); do you want to enjoy “the hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2; 3:7)? Most certainly you desire these good blessings from God, but tragically, so many people repeat Israel’s recklessness. People want to be saved from the consequences of sin, but on **their** terms! People want to be members of the church, but members of the church of **their** choice! People want God to look upon them with approval, while they live as **they** please!

Don’t make the same mistakes! Yes, “Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6), but a sacrifice of our wills, our hearts, our lives to Him is required (Rom. 12:1). Friend, can we help you avoid the tragic mistakes of Israel in the

wilderness of Sinai? Can we help you be courageous enough to commit yourself to the Lord in keeping His commandments? Can we encourage and help you transform “lip service” into genuine love for God and obedience to His will? Let us help you today!

- GFS

ARE YOU BACKSLIDING?

This term describes the person who gradually turns away from God and His word. The expression was often used by Old Testament prophets in reference to the Jews, who were ever forsaking God to serve idols. Backsliding does not describe the man who sullenly and peremptorily draws back from God. It suggests a slow but steady departure, moving farther and farther away as time goes by.

Backsliding is as much a problem for Christians today as it was for the Jews of old. The same forces that brought about the backsliding of the Jews are still in the world, and are mightily at work in the church; namely, love of the world! Here are five examples:

1. When Christians lose their desire to Worship and begin to miss the services of the church.
2. When preaching makes people mad, instead of making them humble and penitent.
3. When Christians become obsessed with worldly activities, neglecting spiritual activities.
4. When Christians would rather be with worldly people, than with the people of God.
5. When brethren fail to read the Bible, and no longer enjoy the privilege of prayer.

- Unknown

Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He does not bear;
Never a sorrow that He does not share—
Moment by moment, I'm under His care.

—Whittle

- Those who are content are never poor; those who are discontent are never rich
- So teach us to number our days, That we may present to You a heart of wisdom. -Psalm 90:12
- Only one life; Twill soon pass. Only what's done for Christ will last.
- Time is not yours to dispose of as you please; it is a glorious talent that men must be accountable for as well as any other talent. - Thomas Brooks
- A heart-felt religion is one where Gods law is written on the heart.
- *"The backslider likes the preaching that wouldn't hit the side of a house, while the real disciple is delighted when the truth brings him to his knees."*
— Billy Sunday

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Scriptural Qualifications of Deacons!"* (text: 1 Tim. 3:8-13); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *How Much Do You Want Goodness?* (Mark 10:17-22).