

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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A Double Life

You may remember Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which through the years has been adapted into numerous variations from the original, but has commonly been associated with what is incorrectly tagged "split personality." What is meant by that term is a description of at least two different personalities within the same person. Today, the expression "Jekyll and Hyde" is used to refer to a person whose moral character is very much different from one situation to the next.

The *Irish Examiner* reported in July, 2010, that the Vatican told homosexual priests not to lead a "double life" following the publication of a magazine article that showed priests frequenting homosexual clubs and engaging in casual sex.

The Biblical term "hypocrisy" describes one who plays two different roles in life, one good and the other bad. One who hides an evil heart under a mask of goodness is guilty of hypocrisy (Matt. 23:28). We might describe that as being "two-faced." James described it this way, in reference to praying with a mind of faith at one time, and praying

with a mind of doubt at another: “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” (KJV, Jas. 1:8; cf. Jas. 4:8). Deacons are expected to be “not double-tongued” (1 Tim. 3:8). A person who said one thing to one person and another thing to another person, intending to deceive, would be a misfit as a Christian, and even more so as a deacon.

Generally, we detest these conditions in others, while being more accepting of them in ourselves, but the Scriptures clearly condemn this condition in one’s life. [See the Lord’s scathing denunciation of hypocrisy among religious leaders of His day, in Matt. 23.] Every Christian must totally refuse to live a double life!

On the other hand, every Christian has a double life of duty with regard to his responsibility to perform opposite actions, positive and negative, which to some people seems contradictory. We must *love*, but at the same time *hate*, even though the object of these actions is different.

Christians love God (Matt. 22:37), love truth (2 Thess. 2:10) and love brethren (1 Pet. 1:22). The careful Bible student certainly remembers these admonitions when reflecting upon the importance of love in God’s book. But in the high regard for love, many in our day fail to regard equally important admonitions to hate.

Paul taught, “*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.*” (Rom. 12:9). To “abhor” is to hate, to have intense aversion, an utter repugnance and deep intolerance for evil. Do we have that, or have we neglected it?

Jesus praised the church at Ephesus when he said, “Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (Rev. 2:6). Exactly what the deeds of the Nicolaitans were is not stated, but the deeds were evil and closely connected with their “teaching” or doctrine, which the Lord hates (Rev. 2:15). Servants of God have always had to distinguish between doctrines taught by the devil and the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). The Lord has always

condemned those who tamper with, alter and pervert His will rather than obeying it (Gal. 1:6-8; Matt. 7:21-23). Just as Christians cannot serve two masters, "God and wealth" (Matt. 6:24), they must not compromise love for truth by refusing to hate false doctrine. "From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way." (Ps. 119:104).

Friend, are you living a double life in hypocrisy? Stop it today and live a life of sincerity and single-hearted devotion to the Lord. Are you living the double life of duty, being well-balanced in love and hate? Learn what is good from God's word and love it. Learn what is evil and hate it. May we help you today?

-GFS

In The Midst Of A Crooked And Perverse Generation

"Do all things without murmurings and questions; that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:14, 15).

The Philippian Christians had to serve God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. They were neither the first nor the last to find themselves under such circumstances. In fact, every person who ever served God did so "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation," and so must we.

Surely no-one would question the perverseness of the generation in which we live. We are surrounded by indecency. Moral filth lines the shelves of the neighborhood store and video shop. Drug scandals rock the sports and entertainment worlds. Christians working in factories are exposed to bad

language, filthy stories, and rumors of immorality among their fellow employees. Our children attend schools that are filled with wickedness. We are not overstating the case - this is the world as it really is, a crooked and perverse generation indeed.

We face two possible choices as Christians: (1) try to clean up the society in which we live, so that we and our children can serve God without the pressures and evil influences that presently exist. We would not discourage reasonable effort on the part of individual Christians along these lines, but success in any such efforts will be on a small scale. It matters not how hard we work at it, by and large, the world will still be a corrupt world when we die: evil will still exist on TV and in the movies; pornography will still be a problem; corruption will still exist in government; and schools will still have their ungodly influences. Our purpose as Christians is to call people out of darkness through the gospel and into light. We can do that, but efforts to eradicate darkness will for the most part be futile. Fortunately, we have another choice: (2) make up our minds to serve God faithfully in whatever environment we find ourselves. This is the only viable choice for the Christian.

It can be done. Consider Noah's generation when "every imagination of the thoughts of (man's) heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); or Lot's generation when ten righteous souls could not be found in all of Sodom; or Elijah's generation when wicked Ahab served as king in the wicked nation of Israel; or Daniel's generation when as a young man he found himself in a foreign land facing pressures to eat the king's meats and drink his wines (Dan. 1:8); or the apostles' generation when Rome ruled the world and the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees dominated the religious scene. What

were these men doing in such crooked and perverse circumstances? They were serving God! That's what they were doing! The point is this: if these could serve God in the midst of the crooked and perverse circumstances in which they found themselves, and if the Philippians could shine "as lights in the world" in the midst of their crooked and perverse generation, so can we. Our eternal destiny is not determined by the environment in which we live, but by our own determination to be what we ought to be in whatever environment we find ourselves. We must lay aside our excuses, both for ourselves and our children, and make up our minds to say with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). This we shall do, and with God's help we shall overcome.

- Bill Hall
Guardian of Truth, November 21, 1985

- > God must be loved greatly for us to live the life (and die the death) he calls us to.
- > The Little Engine That Could said, I think I can. The Christian says, I know I can.
- > Some people are like armadillos; they lie dead on the highway of life.
- > Satan is a fisherman too. Deceit is his bait. Suckers get caught.
- > Never give the devil a ride! He will always want to drive!
- > We don't change the message, the message changes us.

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Implanting Responsibility in Our Children!"* (text: Luke 12:35-40); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *The Son of David Denounces!* (Mark 12:35-40).

SCHEDULE: Our Vacation Bible School is scheduled for this week, M-F, 7:00 PM, with Dwayne Gandy as our guest speaker. Our Fall Gospel Meeting is scheduled for Sept. 18-23, with Eric Reynolds.