

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

*841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305*

November 20, 2011

Volume 31, # 47

MURDER!

The shame of any society: murder! Murder is wrong! Murder is sin (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17; Rom. 13:9)! The possessor of superior wisdom recorded it: "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to *any* people," (Prov.14:34). What awful disgrace we bear!

The US Department of Justice survey of crime victims shows more than 6.6 million violent crimes (murder, rape, assault and robbery) are committed each year in our beloved country. Homicides in our homeland are still among the highest in the industrialized world: 14,748 recorded murders, one every 35 minutes in America the beautiful. America is baseball, apple pie and murder – we barely noticed. With 55 million innocent murdered

since *Roe v. Wade*, Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot look like Boy Scouts.

There is a foul smell on this earth that won't go away, a stench that even with strong detergent, will not wash off! The notorious coward Pilate tried to wash off the guilt and responsibility for shedding blood of the innocent by scourging and crucifixion (Matt. 27:26), but self-declaration and attempts at self-appointed vindication with a mere wash pan never dispose of responsibility for shedding innocent blood. Among the seven "things which the LORD hates, ... which are an abomination to Him: ... hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:16, 17).

The vile stench caused by the deeds of the manslayer never escape notice by the God who sees all: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do," (Heb. 4:13). There will be an accounting: "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God," (Rom. 14:12). From those who shed blood, and their supporting accomplices, it is required! (Luke 11:47-51; cf. Matt. 27:25; Acts 7:51-53). With crystal clarity, the Apostle John spoke plainly, "... you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him," (1 John 3:15b).

Laws in our nation prohibit murder. But because the law reveals what is wrong, that knowledge does not always turn the offender away from the crime. There will be those who violate law: "...those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching," (1 Tim. 1:9-10). Those who violate God's law, "the perfect law, the law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25; 2:12) should tremble in fear of God

(Rom. 3:15-18; Luke 12:5)! But we are seeing a new generation of people who have absolutely no sense of eternity, believing that death is simply a termination of personal existence. Incidents of murder-suicide will continue to increase in places where politicians, educators, scientists and various activists continue to fight the influences of the Bible, ridiculing its principles of divine judgment and accountability to man's Maker. If there is no eternal, conscious doom for the wicked, then rebels will have no remorse for violent killing and no fear of inevitable dying.

Like other wicked deeds, murder begins in the heart of people, a fact also shown by the accompanying adjective in the phrase "*premeditated* murder." Of the seven abominations mentioned earlier, one is "A heart that devises wicked plans," (Prov. 6:18a). Jesus said, "but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man." When questioned further by His disciples, He helped their understanding: "Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated? ... That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." (Mark 7:15b, 18b-23). One who murders has previously consented in his heart to do it!

When Jesus taught on the subject of murder, He went back of the commission of the evil act to forbid the anger and the disgraceful words which always precede murder and are likely to lead to murder (Matt. 5:21-22). He cuts off the abominable evil of murder at its lowest root. One who

never allows himself to generate hatred and to select dishonorable words to launch against someone will never commit the act of murder.

Premeditated homicide, murder, splatters its permanent stain onto the lives of other people! Late on the night of Thursday, April 11, 1985, a knock at the back door woke me. As I turned on the porch light I saw the police uniform and my heart sunk. The ten o'clock news report of a 23 year-old Columbia man murdered in Nashville, with identification withheld pending notification of the family had an ominous sound, but my eye lids prevailed in closing. Now it was real. Murder, something that had always been "out there" was now "in here," and its stain splattered on my family. Worst of all contemplations: my murdered brother was not a Christian. My parents lost a son and agonized over the gory details ferreted out by news reporters in the heart of Tennessee. It wasn't an "accident." It wasn't what followed a diagnosis of "terminal." It was the heart of another human being who allowed himself to first, accept the thought, and then do the deed of murder. Our family and friends were shaken to the core. A soul more valuable than the world was lost!

Last Sunday night, November 6, 2011, 29-year-old Trinity Glass Sledge was gunned down in her home while her 10-year-old daughter watched. She then saw the manslayer, her mother's estranged boyfriend, shoot himself, resulting in his Tuesday-morning death. Trinity, who was struggling to overcome difficulties of her past, had attended evening worship with the people of God, but had once again left the assembly without responding to the invitation of Christ. The small community of north Alabama, where she lived and was known, will never be the same. Once again, the permanent stain of premeditated murder splatters its filth on the lives of her family and friends. And it makes life feel rotten. Next month's newspapers will have other headlines, but this family will still be locked into the repeated

remembrance of day-after headlines that tore into their hopeful hearts. Their spirits are broken (Prov. 15:13b). They are crushed in the aftermath of horrible tragedy.

Who is capable of such a heinous crime? Who robs us of our family members, stealing their lives prematurely and sending their spirits back to God unprepared to meet Him? You cannot detect capability merely by looking at someone, for the potential to act is in the hidden man of the heart (1 Cor. 2:11a). Who is capable of such a dreadful wrong? Any man is capable! Man's will has free course, and he is unrestrained in thought, too often following his own desires. Any controls placed on man's thoughts must be self-directed, self-imposed. We become what we think. Truly, as Solomon declared, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is," (Prov. 23:7a). How effective are we at self-control?

At times, the media is flooded with the controversy of how to deal with guilty murderers. The public fight over the best way to treat the symptoms would have prompted my Grand-mother to respond, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." How can we prevent the sin of murder? If the action is to be prevented, the thought of doing it and also the desire to do it must be eliminated from the heart. Whatever is in the heart that would lend support to, promote, entice, encourage, incite, provoke, inflame, rouse, goad, spur, egg on, stimulate, motivate, lure, charm or beguile one into the actual commission of the act must be eradicated. Heart-evil must not be pampered. It must be destroyed immediately and decisively! Jesus never described a simple "easy as pie" plan that would transform the heart into what it needed to be; the effective action required is radical surgery! "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you" and "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you" (Matt. 5:29, 30). Such

drastic measures are better than going to hell (Matt. 18:8-9)! Sin is destructive. It must be put to death (Col. 3:5).

Murder and other sins are prevented at their source when evil thoughts are not allowed to take up residence in the heart. Rather, the heart is exercised unto godliness in the Apostle Paul's admonition: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." (Phil. 4:8-9). We are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). We are to be renewed in the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:23). We must have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5). The law of God must be put into our minds and written in our hearts; God will be our God and we will be His people (Heb. 8:10). The gospel of Christ must be in the heart; we must receive it, believe it, stand in it and we will be saved by it (1 Cor. 15:1-2). *May God help us to guard our hearts from thoughts that hatch hellish sin!*

Victims of violent crimes: be careful what you allow yourselves to think! Do not allow hatred and bitterness to find a nesting place in your hearts. The sins that follow evil thoughts will drag you to hell! Take Peter's advice: "Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler" (1 Pet. 4:15). Let the ones who suffer "entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right" (1 Pet. 4:19b). "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas.4:7-8a). The fear of the Lord will keep you from evil (Prov. 16:6b). "The effective prayer of a righteous man can

accomplish much.” (Jas.5:16b). “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16).

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November 10, 2011

You can help:

Trinity Sledge Memorial Account
c/o Bank Independent
P.O. Box 5000
Sheffield, AL 35660

SUNDAY’S LESSONS: Sunday morning: “*Standing in the Breach!*” (text: Ezek. 22:29-31); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *The Great Commission!* (Mark 16:14-18).