

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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SIN IN ACTION

All of God's commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). Any act contrary to God's commandments is unrighteousness. "All unrighteousness is sin" (I John 5:17). We become righteous only by acting in harmony with all of God's commandments. The Scriptures say of Zacharias and Elisabeth, "They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord." (Luke 1:6). We are instructed to be righteous just as they were: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age," (Titus 2:11-12).

"Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (I John 3:4). "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9). We must respect and obey all commandments of God, even when some so-called "Bible teachers" teach that such is not necessary. Paul instructed Timothy: "If anyone advocates a

different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited *and* understands nothing;" (I Timothy 6:3-5).

Performing religious practices for which there are no divine commands is sin. Since faith comes by hearing God's word (Romans 10:17), and "whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23), then every act for which there is no "Book, Chapter, and Verse" is sin. Such sins as this create and perpetuate religious division, which is an abomination unto Him (Proverbs 6:16-19; I Corinthians 1:10).

Sometimes we think of sin only as something a person does (an action), but the Bible shows that we also sin by failing to act. "Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17). Remember the man who failed to use his talent? Jesus said, "Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 25:30).

One may not only be guilty of sin by his actions, but he may also be guilty of sin by an improper use of the mind. One's motive of heart may become evil. Jesus said, "but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28). The Bible teaches that "The devising of folly is sin," (Proverbs 24:9). In our thinking we may be worldly, selfish, unloving, irreverent, rebellious, impure, etc. All such is sin, and we are foolish to think that the thoughts and intents of the heart do not matter

(Hebrews 4:12). If we are to please God with our minds we must heed Paul's instructions: "destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ," (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Sin will cause people to be lost (Matthew 25:41, 46). Any rejection of Jesus Christ is sin. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins." (John 8:24). Friend, if you are guilty of sin, believe on Christ. Purify your soul in obeying the truth (I Peter 1:22). May we assist you today?

- GFS

Past-Tense Christians

Many years ago a woman became interested in Bible study. Something came up in her life — a chance conversation, the death of a loved one, a rumble in her church — that made her take a hard look at herself, and realize that she had little personal knowledge of God's will. So, she got in touch with a Christian who had a reputation for knowing the Bible, and the studies began.

Soon she was led to consider the true meaning of salvation in Christ, and non-denominational Christianity, and she agreed to being baptized. I put it this way purposefully, for God must judge how fully she understood and obeyed the gospel of Christ.

But she had the opportunity. She worshipped with the saints for awhile and seemed to grow spiritually. Then, company came, her husband wanted to take a trip, a dozen other things intervened, and her interest cooled. Perhaps the efforts to revive this interest were inadequate — elders and other saints came too late, with too little — but efforts were made, and rejected. She began to resent such efforts as butting into her private life. So, she forsook all assembling with the saints, dropped personal contacts with them and the work of the Lord, and returned to her former worldly affairs.

Now, is this woman a Christian? (That means, is she a follower of Christ, Christ-like?) She gives the will of Christ no precedence in her life. She is morally clean, a good neighbor, a welfare worker, etc.; but this is her desire, and is not done **because** it is Christ's will, nor in order to be like Him. (Note Jas. 2:10-12)

She ignores teachings of the Lord which she does not consider necessary. We might charitably remember her past life and say, "She was once a Christian!" but I regret having to say this — for her **sake**.

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. (2 Pet. 2:20-f) **My heart aches for the past tense Christian!!**

Don't Jump To Conclusions

Elkanah, father of the Old Testament prophet Samuel, had two wives, Hannah and Peninnah (1 Samuel 1). Peninnah had children, but Hannah was barren. In a mean-spirited way, Peninnah "*provoked*" Hannah because of her infertility. When Elkanah and his wives went up to the house of the Lord to worship, Hannah prayed silently to God, vowing that if He would give her a son, she would give the child to the Lord all the days of his life.

The priest Eli observed Hannah praying, seeing her mouth move, but not hearing her words. Eli concluded that Hannah was drunk and rebuked her, saying, "*How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!*" When Hannah explained that she was praying with great grief, Eli recognized his error and blessed her.

We all fall prey to Eli's mistake from time to time. In order to make sense of the world around us, it is necessary for us to assign meaning to the actions of others. We observe someone's behavior and we frequently draw conclusions about that person based on their action. Actually we respond to the meaning that we assign to the action rather than the action itself. And sometimes, like Eli, we make assumptions which are invalid. Even if we succeed in being objective in our judgment, frequently there is more than one possible explanation for one's behavior. Eli's inappropriate rebuke was the result of his error in assigning meaning to her action.

It is not difficult to see how all this applies to us. A friend or neighbor does something and we begin assigning reason to their action. "He said that for the purpose of hurting me." "She did that just to spite me." "I know that she said that about me, even though she didn't mention me by name." Often the truth is that the

speaker had no such motives. Unfortunately, friendships are sometimes destroyed because someone made unwarranted assumptions about another's actions or speech.

This danger of making unwarranted assumptions also exists in our study of the Scriptures. It is easy to insert our own thoughts as we decide what the Bible is teaching us. If we are not careful, we will accept the opinions of other men without realizing that the Bible does not actually say such things. For an excellent illustration of this, ask your friends what kind of forbidden fruit Adam and Eve ate in the Garden of Eden. Why, an apple, of course! Where does the Bible identify the kind of forbidden fruit? We must differentiate between God's speech and our assumptions.

How can we avoid this pitfall of accepting incorrect conclusions? With respect to the Word of God, the careful Bible student will read and re-read the Word. He will test his religious convictions by that which he has read. Avoiding unwarranted assumptions could possibly save some friendships and perhaps our soul also.

- Allen Dvorak

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"A Realistic Look at Sin!"* (text: John 8:24); Sunday evening: *"An Open Door!"* (text: Acts 14:27).

SCHEDULE: Our Fall Gospel Meeting will be July 29-Aug. 3, with Aaron Andrews.