

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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## I Am Weary!

Rebekah and Jacob plotted to deceive Isaac into believing Jacob to be Esau. In this deception, the blessing intended for the elder was given to the younger. God had a hand in bringing together all of the events and circumstances in this case to the accomplishment of His will. When it was realized that Esau purposed to slay his brother, Rebekah made a request that Jacob might be sent to Padan-aram to seek a wife of "the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother." (Gen. 28:2). Most of you who read these words are familiar with the account in Genesis 27 and 28.

When Rebekah requested of Isaac that Jacob might not remain in the land (to escape Esau's wrath), and take a wife of the local residents, she said, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?" (Gen. 27:46). Just how much more she was interested in finding a wife for her son than in his escaping his brother, we do not propose to know. Nonetheless, her statement concerned the weariness she felt in Esau's marriages. He further

aggravated his parents by taking other "daughters of Canaan" for mates. (Gen. 28:8).

When James Moffatt translated Genesis 27:46, he caused it to read, "These Hittite women tire me to death. If Jacob marries a Hittite like these women, some native girl, what good is life to me?" There are some things that "tire" righteous people. Whatever had been the deceptive practice of Rebekah, she felt the burden placed upon her soul by Esau's foolish actions. So it is today. There are many things that "tire" righteous people. We would like to discuss a few.

'I am weary ...' of people who will not work, but live off society. It is not possible to approach the local university campus without seeing young people begging for handouts. The tax rolls are burdened with individuals who would not "strike a hoe at a snake." They often rationalize, "The government will pay me as much as I can make when I work, so why work?" There are far too many folks like the fellow who was going to be buried alive because he would not work. On the way to the cemetery, a neighbor offered to help save him by donating a bushel of corn to his needs. The man raised up from the coffin and asked if it was shelled. Upon learning it was not, he told the driver to "just drive on." That story would be amusing if it did not reflect a current attitude. The Christian realizes that Paul said, ". . . if any will not work, neither should he eat." (2 Thess. 3:10). The person who cannot work has all of the sympathy we can give him and deserves all the help he can get. But the one who is too lazy to work is another case. Along with thousands of other God-fearing people, I am tired of such attitudes.

"I am weary ..." of parents who refuse to discipline their children. This is not a new problem. Repeated warnings in the Bible of unruly conduct in off-spring are evidence of its continual presence. That does not mean that it is acceptable to God, even though, it may have been the case for hundreds of years. The generation that was reared under the former teaching of Dr. Spock (he seems to have changed) reaped the consequences in the rebellion that took place in the sixties. There is an amount of holdover in the seventies as people give in to the slightest whims of offspring, refusing to instill self-discipline into their hearts. The importance of correcting children was seen even of old. "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Prov. 22:15).

"I am weary ..." of civil authorities who will not enforce the law. Crime is having a field day in many parts of our country. It is unsafe on many city streets. Criminals are able to escape punishment due to the laxity of the judicial process. Skillful lawless lawyers are able to have them become repeated offenders. There must be a better way to handle law enforcement than what has been done. The Bible clearly teaches that it is the duty of civil authorities to punish evil-doers. ". . . for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil" (Rom. 13:4). I am tired of those who take the responsibility, but will not do the job.

"I am weary . . ." of children who refuse to honor their parents. Perhaps this is tied into the previous points. Since respect must be taught at home, if a child is not started right, he will not end up

right (in a lot of cases). When parents do not behave as they should — show disrespect for lawful authority, etc. — is it any wonder their children refuse to render honor to them? True, a child should be able to rise above misconduct of a parent, but such seldom occurs. The honor due parents does not only consist of obeying them when one is young (Eph. 6:1), but seeing to their needs as they grow old (1 Tim. 5:4, 8). Few children consider the heartache they bring to those who love them most by rebelling against parental authority, and taking that out on the Lord by refusing to be faithful to Him. Far too often, young people (and as they grow older) see the kingdom of God as a representation of their parents. To hurt them and show their independence, they refuse the Lord and His church. I am tired of people who think like that — it is time they learned better.

'I am weary ...' of brethren who profess a belief in having book, chapter, and verse for their practices, and do things for which not one ounce of authority exists. Is it not amazing how brethren can apply certain principles to condemn the use of instrumental music in worship and the use of missionary societies in the work of the church, but will not follow through in their conclusions by noting the same can be said of the Herald of Truth, institutional orphan homes, sponsoring churches, church entertainment, and a number of other current innovations? I am tired of certain brethren boasting of their adherence to the Scriptures and advocating, in the next breath, practices that cannot be sustained by God's Word.

When it is said that we are tired of certain things, it does not mean we have reached the point of abandonment and no concern.

Rather, as Rebekah was undoubtedly concerned about Jacob marrying a Canaanite, so we are deeply moved to warn people of going beyond what is written. Our tiredness and weariness is one of wanting those involved to do differently. Isaac acted wisely in refusing to be involved in those things which are wrong. In fact, we hope you will become "tired" and "weary" of all unauthorized religious activities, resolving to make Christ your King, and His Word your rule.

— James Yopp

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## How To Reach The Prodigal

In Jesus' parable of the prodigal son, no one went to the pigpen to reach this lost boy. Yet, there are many erring prodigals today that are stuck in the muck of sin, who need someone to go help nudge him or her back to God.

We all can try reaching the erring child of God wandering in the wasteland of sin before it is everlastingly too late: "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins" (James 5:19-20). All sensitive, faithful Christians should be concerned about their erring brethren, who have been seduced by the glittering bright lights of the far country of sin. It is literally a matter of eternal life or death!

1. **Urgency.** We must go "save others, snatching them from the fire" (Jude 23). In too many cases, a brother or sister at church

becomes erratic in their attendance. This is a warning signal that their faith is faltering. Then, they often stop attending altogether. Then, how long does it take for us to miss them? How long does it take for brethren to go try to reach them? On different occasions, I've had unfaithful Christians tell me that no one else from church has contacted them or tried to persuade them to return to the Lord. We need a sense of urgency to turn a sinner from the error of his way and save a soul from death!

How many elders, who will give account to God for whether they were diligent or negligent in their shepherding of souls (Hebrews 13:17), wait far too long to do anything, if at all, about the erring member? Remember the blistering woes the prophet Ezekiel pronounced on the unconcerned spiritual shepherds of Israel (Ezekiel 34:2-16)?

**2. Love and Compassion.** The father in Jesus' parable had loving "compassion" (Luke 15:20) for his erring son. Compassion moved God to send His son Jesus to teach lost sinners about the way of salvation (Luke 1:78-79). Love is seeking the highest good of our brother. To ignore their sin is not love but a lack of love for their soul and for the truth! Love moves us to speak the hard truth, as Jesus did to the rich young ruler, about what they need to change in their lives (Mark 10:21). Tough love is stronger than our fears of rejection.

Sometimes if a person has gone astray for a long time, we might give up on ever reaching them. Periodic contact to admonish them as an erring brother, even after they have been marked and

disfellowshipped, shows loving concern for their soul (2 Thessalonians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:14).

3. **Wisdom.** We all have responsibility, as opportunity and contact permits, to reach wandering brothers mired in the pig pen of sin. Paul says, "Concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14). "Admonish" means to warn and exhort an erring brother to turn from sin. I think most "out of duty" Christians, if their conscience isn't hardened, appreciate you taking the time to sincerely talk to them about their soul.

Empathize by putting yourself in their shoes (Galatians 6:1-2), to help you use wisdom in "having your speech seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:3). Some become defensive and try to turn the tables and criticize "how" you approach them. Don't let their self-justification intimidate you.

A loving Christian will speak "the truth in love" from the goodness" of a kind and tender heart (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 3:12). We must have "knowledge" of the scriptures to apply it to their situation. Some may have rationalized that their immorality is okay with God. Think of some pertinent verses that speak clearly to their situation and ready to read them with the erring.

It may be good to ask them, "Have you thought about what will happen to you if you die in sin?" You can try to persuade them by appealing to God's "goodness" — all a loving Father has done to save us through the gracious sacrifice of his Son (Romans 2:4).

When I first began preaching in college, I preached a sermon on Jesus' crucifixion that shows God's hatred of sin and his love for the sinner. A brother came forward and was restored to God, after having been unfaithful for over 30 years! The old, old story of God's grace is ever fresh and powerful to touch and turn the heart!

Those who are more hardened need to be reminded that hell is as real as heaven, and they don't need to be lost in hell, but that heaven can be regained (Romans 2:5-11). If they think their sin is worth such impenitent behavior, read with them, as I have, the terrifying description of "the lake of fire" and the fate of the damned (Revelation 20:11-15). Tell them God still loves them. He wants them to come back. Tell them that you still love them and continually pray for their soul's welfare. Thoughts of eternal separation from God and heaven, as well as the pain of eternal torment, can influence them to repent and return to God.

- W. Frank Walton, via *Biblical Insights*, Vol. 3, No. 7

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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*A Wise Request!*" (text: Prov. 30:7-9); Sunday evening: Bi-monthly singing!