

# The Old Hickory Bulletin

## *Old Hickory Church of Christ*

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## **That Strange Fire**

In Lev. 10:1-2 we are told, “Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, and put incense on it, and offered profane [strange] fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.”

According to Lev. 16:12, for the Day of Atonement, the incense was to be burned with fire taken from the altar upon which the sacrifices were made, fire that was never allowed to go out. We do not know where these two priests obtained the “strange fire,” nor why they chose to ignore God’s instructions, but they did. God told them the fire He wanted. When they used something else, God showed His displeasure.

God has always expected people to follow His instructions just as He gives them. He is never pleased with anything else. Aaron’s sons may have thought, “Fire is fire. Any of it will burn the incense. What difference does it make?” They learned it did make a difference.

The New Testament gives God's instructions about how He wants us to live today. Whether or not we are pleasing in His sight is determined by whether we follow His instructions as well as we can. When God gives us a command, we have no right to substitute something we think is just as good. Nothing we can think of is "just as good" as what God commands. As in an example we studied before, Noah built the ark of gopher wood, because that is what God commanded, and the ark saved the life of Noah's family.

In the New Testament, God says that in order for a person to be saved from sin, that person must be baptized in water (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21). He also says that baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). When God says it is a burial, that leaves out sprinkling. If you think "sprinkling is just as good as burial," remember "that strange fire."

In worship to Him, God commands us to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19; Jas. 5:13). Since God did not command a musical instrument such as a flute, or a drum, or a cymbal, or any other thing we can make, we have no right to add them. If you should think it makes no difference, you should remember "that strange fire!!!"

- A. A. Meeks, Sr.

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# CATCH OF A LIFETIME

There was once an 11-year-old who went fishing every chance he got from the dock at his family's cabin on an island in the middle of a New Hampshire lake. On the day before bass season opened, he and his father were fishing early in the evening, catching sunfish and perch with worms. Then he tied on a small silver lure and practiced casting. The lure struck the water and caused colored ripples in the sunset, then silver ripples as the moon rose over the lake.

When his pole doubled over, he knew something huge was on the other end. His father watched with admiration as the boy skillfully worked the fish alongside the dock. Finally he very gingerly lifted the exhausted fish from the water. It was the largest one he had ever seen, but it was a bass.

The boy and his father looked at the handsome fish, gills playing back and forth in the moonlight. The father lit a match and looked at his watch. It was 10 p.m. -- two hours before the season opened. He looked at the fish, then at the boy. "You'll have to put it back, son," he said.

"Dad!" cried the boy. "There will be other fish," said his father. "Not as big as this one," cried the boy. He looked around the lake. No other fishermen or boats were anywhere around in the moonlight. He looked again at his father. Even though no one had seen them, nor could anyone ever know what time he caught the fish, the boy could tell by the clarity of his father's voice that the decision was not negotiable. He slowly worked the hook out of the

lip of the huge bass, and lowered it into the black water. The creature swished its powerful body and disappeared. The boy suspected that he would never again see such a great fish.

That was 34 years ago. Today the boy is a successful architect in New York City. His father's cabin is still there on the lake. He takes his own son and daughters fishing from the same dock. And he was right. He has never again caught such a magnificent fish as the one he landed that night long ago. But he does see that same fish...again and again...every time he comes up against a question of ethics. For, as his father taught him, ethics are simple matters of right and wrong. It is only the practice of ethics that is difficult.

--author unknown

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## **SEX: MORAL AND IMMORAL**

Many people are surprised to find that the Bible is pro sex. John Boy, on television's *The Waltons*, liked to shock his Sunday School teacher by choosing as a memory verse one of the eye-brow-raising passages. She turned flaming red, cleared her throat a lot, and stammered at the vividness of the Song of Solomon, for example. But in spite of a frequent hyper-prudery on our part, the fact remains that there are such sections in Scripture. God created men and women as sexual beings, and he invested sex with power, beauty, mystery, and profundity. It is a part of the "one flesh" development between a man and a woman, as in

marriage they strive toward the total blending of their personalities.

This is not to say that God has placed no restrictions on sexual expression. He has identified and forbidden sexual immorality, establishing two broad categories which are taboo: all homosexual acts, and heterosexual acts which are pre- or extra-marital.

Perhaps the single, most pointed text covering both sides of this issue is Hebrews 13:4. "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Whether the first part of the passage is a declarative statement or an imperative one - "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled" - heaven clearly shines approval on the sexual relationship in marriage, and just as clearly frowns on any other arrangement.

In the Old Testament, the highly poetic imagery of Proverbs 5 sharply delineates God's will once again. "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love. For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress" (vv. 1 8-20)?

If many people are surprised to discover how glowingly Scripture speaks of marital sex, they are utterly astounded to learn that the Apostle Paul, that "old, woman-hating bachelor," as he has been dubbed by the women's movement, joins in the chorus of

approbation. In fact, he not only joins in, but adds a new dimension to the discussion: the right of women to sexual fulfillment. In I Corinthians 6:18, he urges, "Flee sexual immorality," and notes that it is a sin against one's body, which is the "temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (v. 19).

He continues the discussion in chapter 7, observing that one purpose of marriage is to avoid sexually immorality (v, 2), and insisting that husbands and wives share mutual sexual rights and obligations. "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (vv. 3-5).

Given this balanced view expressed by Spirit-filled men, we need to exercise caution in our teaching on sexual matters. Too often we denounce the evils of sexual immorality without extolling the beauties of the marriage bed. Somehow, we have to strive for the same balance that the Bible manifests.

Since it was not good that man should be alone, God made woman, so that the two could become one flesh.

--James W. Ward, Lost River church, Bowling Green, KY

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- A nominal Christian (if such a term may be rightfully employed) is one who follows Jesus so long as the Master's teachings do not infringe upon his life's practices.
  - Better to be rebuked by God than entertained by the devil.
  - Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.
  - To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Sin: Man's Greatest Problem!"* (text: Isa. 59:1-2); Sunday evening: *"A Great Change!"* (text: Eph. 5:1-10).

**OUR GOSPEL MEETING:** July 27 – Aug. 1, Sunday through Friday, with Jeremy Paschall preaching. Sunday at our regularly scheduled times, and Monday through Friday at 7:00 p.m.