

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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When Sin Becomes Trivial

People sometimes indulge themselves in wickedness to the point that it no longer seems wicked. The danger of sin is that it can easily deceive us and eventually lull us to sleep so that our former awareness of God's will and sin's violation of that will becomes foreign soil to us.

Daily exhortation is the Lord's means appointed to prevent the process of hardening exerted by sin's deceitfulness (Heb. 3:13). "...lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." The Lord said that the heart becomes hardened, calloused, by sin because of its deceitful quality. There is something about sin, any sin, all sin, that is deceptive. While we seem to be faring well and enjoying ourselves, basking in the adulation and esteem of others, sin is hardening our hearts. It is through this process that sin becomes trivial, a light thing to us.

In 1 Kings 16, near the end of the chapter, we have an example of sin becoming trivial in the day of King Ahab. Ahab served as king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in that long line of wicked kings after Jeroboam. Not one of his predecessors had deviated from the ways of evil launched into by Jeroboam. For years these kings had practiced evil instead of righteousness in leading the people of the nation. Is it any wonder that Ahab did wickedness "more than all who were before him" (v. 30)? Sin had become the usual way of life for all of the leaders of the

nation. Verse thirty-one says that he took as wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and that he went to serve and worship Baal in a temple that he had built in Samaria. The Lord's explanation as to how such departure from God could take place is found in the same verse: "as though it had become a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." Sin had become trivial to him.

Remember that a calloused attitude develops slowly, so that the person is hardened in his feelings, insensitive in his response to those influences designed by God to prick and goad him to do right.

The warnings of God mean increasingly little to him as the hardening process proceeds. When sin becomes trivial to one, it usually spreads contagiously so that it is then trivialized by many; in fact, the trivializing of sin becomes almost institutionalized.

I hope this thought scares us to avoid sin. It is not the harmless plaything that we sometimes think it to be. It can paralyze us spiritually and damn us eternally!

When our attitude toward the vulgar and irreverent speech so common in our world declines so that we begin viewing it as not so bad after all, we need to wake up. When we start thinking that one's clothing has little to do with his godliness, so that we start experimenting with styles and garments bordering on indecency, we need to wake up. When we start thinking that our children's popularity and acceptance are more important than the positive influence for good that they should exert, then we need to wake up. When we allow the ungodliness and abounding iniquity in the world to dampen our zeal to save the lost and to set examples for good, we need to wake up. When we permit the loose thinking in the world and in the church to drift into our attitude and practice, no longer striving to hold fast to the pattern of sound words set forth in the Scriptures, then we need to wake up. Sin is becoming trivial to us, and the sad thing is that we don't even realize it.

“And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rom. 13:11-14).

- Bobby L. Graham, via Guardian of Truth, March 6, 1997

It's What We Make Of It

An old man was sitting on the porch of the community store when some settlers came by in their horse-drawn wagon. "What kind of people will we find in this area if we choose to make our home here?" asked the settlers. "What kind of people did you find where you came from?" the wise old man queried. "Terrible," was the reply, "hard to get along with." "That's funny," said the old man, "we have the same kind of people here. If I were you, I would probably move on."

After awhile, another load of settlers stopped. The questioning began much as before, but this time the settlers could hardly say enough about the wonderful people they had left behind. To which the old man replied, "That's funny—we have the same kind of people here!"

People are pretty well what we make of them; and so is a job, a community, or life in general. We often hear of someone who "has had a rather unhappy life," but then we think of others who have been faced with equally severe losses and trials who have not had unhappy lives at all. They have learned that *"life is what we make of it."*

The apostle Paul comes immediately to mind. No one could have been more deserving of love and appreciation: "I labored more abundantly than

they all," he wrote (1 Corinthians 15:10). Yet, no mere list of sufferings adequately describes the heartaches, disappointments, and setbacks experienced by this one man. Friend and foe alike contributed to his hurt. "What an unhappy life!" someone might think. Unhappy? No one wrote of "joy" and "rejoicing" more than did Paul. He found joy in his sufferings in behalf of others (Colossians 1:24; Philippians 2:17). He found joy in his hope of glory (Romans 5:2). Paul was a happy Christian. Paul had learned that life is what one makes of it. He had learned where real happiness lies—that real happiness comes from qualities that are within, not from circumstances that are without; that real happiness comes through Christ, not through ideal surroundings. So, from his Roman imprisonment, he could write: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. ... I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11-13). Paul could take what, for others, would have been an unhappy life, and "through Christ" make a happy life out of it.

What Paul teaches us concerning life, Barnabas teaches us concerning people: people are often what we make of them. Barnabas could see hope and promise where others could see only failure and hopelessness. He looked for the best in others; he believed in others; he could extend the helping hand; he was truly "the son of exhortation." If the view of some toward their fellow-man was basically, "You aren't - You can't be - You won't be," Barnabas' view was, "You may not be now, but I know you can be and you will be." And people not only looked better when they were with Barnabas, they became better. People rarely rise above what is expected of them. People are to a great degree what we make of them.

This writer had occasion several years ago to visit a friend dying with cancer. He found the patient alone. Totally absent from his room were the morbidness and gloom generally expected under such circumstances. The friend spoke of how wonderful life had been; he expressed gratitude for his good wife, his son, his daughter-in-law, his brothers and sisters in Christ; he spoke of his faith and hope; then he spoke of his funeral, of his lost friends who would be there, of his excitement in knowing the gospel would

be preached to them, and of his confidence that their hearts would be touched. The faith that had sustained this friend in life was shining most brightly in death. In death! Yes, even death is what we make of it.

Faith is the key—the ability to lift up our eyes from the cares and worries of this life "to the hills, from whence cometh our help;" to see life in its relationship to eternity; to see life and people and job and community and death through the eyes of one who has been transformed into the image of Christ rather than through the eyes of one who has no hope. Such faith is worth more than all the gold in the world.

Strange as it may seem, the question, "What kind of people and life and job and community do you find where you come from?" requires more self-evaluation than evaluation of others. Improving others starts with improving me!

- Bill Hall, via Christianity Magazine, May, 1987

*Elders: Gregg Needham,
Gordon Percell & Gary Smalley*

Evangelist: Gary Smalley

Sunday AM: 9:30 & 10:30

Sunday PM: 5:00

Wednesday PM: 7:00



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)