

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Jackson, TN 38305

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December 11, 2016

Volume 36, # 50

The Truth About Sin

Several years ago, the title of a book that was published asked the question, *Whatever Became of Sin?* Well, I must confess in a world where evil men and imposters proceed from bad to worse (2 Timothy 3:13) it does seem as if the word "sin" has disappeared from the human vocabulary. Even today, this seems to be finding its way into the church.

My responsibility as a Christian, and most certainly as an evangelist, is not to join the majority in a world of evil who would seek to circumvent the issue or attempt to whiten up the blackness of sin. My obligation and yours as a disciple of Christ is "do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light..." (Ephesians 5:11-13). Just what does sin do?

Sin hurts God. Too often when people sin they begin by mourning over the consequences of their sin, such as disgrace, poverty, disease, and emotional discomfort, rather than shedding tears because they realize they've sinned against a holy God. When David had been confronted with his sin, he confessed to God, "Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight" (Psalms 51:4). David declared later in (verse 17), "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." David's heart was broken because he realized he had broken the very heart of God. Sin hurts God!

Sin hurts others. In my estimation, it's selfishness to the core when people argue that their refusal to submit themselves to God only negatively affects them. What utter foolishness. Try reasoning this way with parents who shed tears at the funeral of their fourteen-year-old son whose life was taken due to the drunk driver who thought his drinking wouldn't hurt anyone but himself. Try convincing a broken-hearted woman whose

world is devastated by the adultery of her husband, and now she is forced to explain to her three children why daddy left her for another woman. Sin hurts others!

Sin is expensive. How much pain and heartache could be avoided if only people would recognize the high price of sin. Sin is so expensive. Sin will take you farther than you wanted to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you ever intended to pay. Sin is expensive!

Sin will be dealt with by God. Too many ignore sin and its wages (Romans 6:23) and think that somehow their sins will go unnoticed or be overlooked by God. Too many want to sow "wild oats," and then pray for crop failure. God's spiritual law of sowing and reaping doesn't work that way. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:7-8). God will deal with sin and the sinner who refuses to repent. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Don't kid yourself, your sins will be brought into judgment; even those things that others don't know about. "For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:14). Sin will be dealt with by God!

Sin can be forgiven. What good news! Not that we have sinned, but that God in His grace will abundantly pardon any and all sins if we will truly confess them and forsake them. "For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, and abundant in loving kindness to all who call upon You" (Psalms 86:5). Is there any message that brings hope like the good news that God forgives?

When all is said and done, the tragedy of sin is best seen in the price God was willing to pay for its removal. If sin is trivial, Christ's death is trivial. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ..." (1 Peter 1:18-19). Only Jesus is the answer to our sin problem, and that's the truth about sin!

- Paul Smith

Attention To Detail

I am an artist and I want to paint a picture of some trees, mountains and maybe a small pond. The painting will be a winter painting and I want to put snow-caps on the mountains. I also want to have the sun barely peeking out of a small cloud. The vegetation in the painting must be diverse as well. I want the trees to look unmistakably like oaks. I want the pond to be in the middle with only a few trees to its left and many more trees to its right. If I want my painting to depict such a scene; I must be meticulous in my details.

It is unfortunate that the world doesn't view its responsibilities to God with such meticulous detail as the artist mentioned above. Even some whom claim to be Christians do not understand the necessity of observing even the smallest details. Details such as instrumental music in worship, a woman's role in the assembly or a church kitchen - are they really that big of a deal? Before Jesus died and validated the New Covenant, He said concerning the Law of Moses, "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19). Admittedly, the Jews under the Mosaic Law made up Jesus' audience in this discourse, but perhaps He was instructing them to obey God's law because it was God's law. Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus' statement is to be accepted no matter what covenant one may be under. We should pay particular attention to even the smallest details of His commands. If we teach this, however, some will object.

Even in the time of Isaiah, he was preaching God's precepts to people, but they did not want to hear the details. The ruling party of Judah was so wicked that they mocked Isaiah's preaching by saying, "To whom would he teach knowledge and to whom would he interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast?" (Isaiah 28:9). In other words, these corrupt leaders considered themselves above the detailed yet simplistic teaching of the prophet Isaiah. They mock him further, "For he says, 'Order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here and a little there'" (Isaiah 28:10). The leaders weren't just mocking Isaiah, but also God, for the prophet was revealing God's word. Isaiah said God would indeed speak to them but not with words of warning as He had spoken before, but with invasion (Isaiah 28:11-13). Isaiah's message became more powerful when he asserted that God's word will be as simple yet detailed just as they had mocked (Isaiah 28:13). Judah's moral decay was evident by the rulers' attitude toward the Law of Moses. They had considered the teaching of Isaiah and others as unnecessary details with which they need not be bothered.

Jesus spoke of some who would claim to be His disciples, but He would tell them "I never knew you; depart from me" (Matthew 7:21-23). Jesus also said, "Why do you call Me,

'Lord, Lord' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). These people, at the very least, realize that Jesus is Lord and they are asserting their allegiance to Him. At the final judgment, Jesus will tell others, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matthew 25:34). What is the difference between the two groups? The former probably views the "small things" as inconsequential and even bothersome. The latter group probably walks in the path of God's commandments great or small and they delight in it (Psalm 119:35). Do you?

- Will Dilbeck

Treasures on Earth

In working to provide for our own, the Lord's work and others in need, we can be tempted to make wealth our goal in life. Answering the call of temptation (as is true of so many in the world), we decide to do all we can to make lots and lots of money so we can buy all the things we want. Well, do you have all you want? No? Will you ever have all you want? No! Why set your affections of the mind on the things of this earth?

Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21). The Apostle Paul said, "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth." (Colossians 3:2). Christ gave this warning: "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." (Luke 12:15).

- Gary Smalley

- > "Take responsibility on your shoulder, and it will leave no room for chips!"
 - > "Statistics show that for every 100,000 people killed by liquor, one is killed by a mad dog. Yet we shoot the dog and license the liquor!"
 - > "The hand of an old faithful friend feels good and it refreshes the soul!"
 - > "It is more blessed to count your blessings than it is to count your woes!"
 - > "The poorest way to judge a preacher is on the basis of popularity. The world's only perfect preacher was crucified by popular demand!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *“Question Box: Why Are There So Many Interpretations of the Scriptures?”* (Text: Matt. 22:23-33); Sunday evening: *Part 2 of morning lesson.*