

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **Dealing With Life as a Christian**

While some differences may exist between those trying to live for God in the first century and those of us trying to do it today, in many ways things are still the same. We still have to take life one day at a time. Consider an example from then in Acts 12:1-11.

#### **Problem**

In Acts 12:1-4 we find an example of Christians facing a problem. Herod arrested several of them, harassing some and killing James. The Jews delighted so much in his deeds that he decided to arrest Peter as well and planned to kill him.

And we think that we have problems! Some Christians have a problem putting the assemblies of the saints ahead of the activities of the world (Philippians 2:21). Others have a problem resisting entertainment that is not wholesome and pleasing to God (Psalm 101:3). If we cannot overcome these and similar problems, then how would we hold up if faced with the problem of being arrested and even killed if we confessed the name of Christ?

#### **Prayer**

When faced with a problem, the early Christians turned to God in prayer (Acts 12:5). They prayed constantly and fervently. They realized that they needed help dealing with their problem and that God was the ultimate source of help.

How do we respond to a problem? Do we let it draw us closer to God or drag us further from Him? The Psalmist says, "It is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God" (Psalm 73:28). "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

#### **Peace**

Even though death was imminent, Peter was at peace and could sleep (Acts 12:6). He knew that as long as he put God first in his life that even if he lost his life there was no need to lose sleep or worry (Matthew 6:25-34).

If we will turn to God in fervent prayer when problems arise, then we can be at peace. We can gain His peace which is beyond our comprehension and will guard our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:6-7).

### **Power**

God demonstrated His power when He sent an angel to rescue Peter from prison (Acts 12:7-11). Peter's chains fell off his hands, he walked right past the guards, and the gate leading to the city opened by itself. He knew God was with him.

While He may not miraculously deliver us from death, God will still demonstrate His power in our lives and give us His peace if we will constantly take our problems to Him in prayer. That is the only way to effectively deal with life.

- Troy Nicholson

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## **A Very Private War!**

Throughout history war has plagued mankind. In every generation there are "wars and rumors of wars." Wars are born out of conflicts between people. Sometimes they are national, sometimes civil, always personal. Like it or not, we are all at war. We fight wars against great odds sometimes. Sometimes the wars are more like skirmishes or border disputes. But they, too, are still wars. Internal struggles are some of the most intense forms of warfare.

We fight against ignorance. Not many of us know the true state of things - and even if we did, things change. So, we strive to stay up. Ignorance has always been a bane to man's progress. And all of us have some of it. No man knows much, "except as he ought to know." Will Rogers had it right when he said, "We're all ignorant, just in different fields." Study is the offensive weapon against ignorance (1 Timothy 2:15). It's necessary that we know God and His way in order to combat the stratagems of the Devil. We can hardly win a single battle if we are "ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). And so, we arm ourselves with the panoply of God so that we are ready to fight when the times comes (Ephesians 6: 10-18).

Pride is one of man's most pervasive enemies. It sneaks in when we are not looking - and sometimes even when we are. Sin started with it; it has ever been a problem for man. "Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18), said the wise man. And yet we only fight it back; we never really conquer it. Ironically, the recurrence of pride is often worse than what we just fought back.

It's difficult to control pride. Humility is the answer (1 Peter 5:5); but humility is hard - hard to get it, even harder to maintain it.

Spies are part of warfare. They sneak in and gather information to aid in defeat. They work on the inside. Two of the most ubiquitous of these insiders are materialism and indifference. Materialism wears the mask of success. Indifference masquerades as leisure time earned by hard work. In both cases, they spy out ways to defeat you. Materialism occupies you so with what seemingly are legitimate battles - battles like "making a living" - that you have no time to spend on the real war - building character. Indifference, on the other hand, lulls you into apathy and thereby promotes inattention to what is really important. Both these actions are so well disguised that they seem appropriate, when in fact, they are eating away at the fiber of your enthusiasm, thereby blunting your interest in what should be of greater concern.

We can overcome the battles of life, but only as we trust completely in our leader (Romans 8:34-39); only if we are watchful and earnest (1 Corinthians 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8); and only if we hold out to the end (1 Corinthians 15:58).

One thing is sure, however. You have to get into the thick of the battle if you plan to have the victory. You can't win by just standing around watching.

- Dee Bowman

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## **HE APPEARED TO THEM TO BE JESTING**

The men who lived in Sodom were "wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord" (Genesis 13:13), so much so that the Lord determined to destroy the city. But first he sent two angels into the city to deliver the lone righteous man among them - Lot.

"Then the two men said to Lot, 'Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it' (Genesis 19:12-13).

Lot was now aware of the coming destruction, which gave him the opportunity to escape. He also had time to convince others to come with him and be saved. "Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, 'Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city.' But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting" (Genesis 19:14).

These men did not take the warning seriously. As a result, despite the invitation they received and the opportunity they had to be saved, they perished along with the wicked.

The destruction of Sodom serves as an example of "the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 7). God will one day destroy the world and bring all men into judgment (2 Peter 3:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Like Lot, we have the opportunity to help save others. Some will not take us seriously, like his sons-in-law, but some might. All we can do is try to convince others to follow the Lord.

But while some will not take our warning seriously, let us not act in such a way that would cause even more people to ignore our message. How could we do this? By acting in such a way that others do not think we are taking these warnings seriously.

Do you take God, His word, His authority, His commandments, and His future judgment seriously? Can others tell? Or do your words and deeds betray you?

- Andy Sochor

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## **I Never Intended to Quit!**

A man who had not attended one service of the church in four years told me he had never thought of "quitting" the church. I reminded him that he had: (a.) withdrawn his presence from the services, (b.) refused to give his moral support to the activities of the congregation, and (c.) withdrawn his financial support, for he had not given one dime to help carry on the Lord's work.

Then I asked, "What else would you have to do in order to 'quit' the church? In case you ever decide that you no longer desire to be a member, what other steps will be necessary to 'quit' the church?"

As the true status dawned upon him, his expression reflected his sober thoughts. He replied, "Why brother Nichols, I've already quit, haven't I? Well, I surely did not mean to! And I do not know when I did it. I am coming back." He did too. At the next service, he was restored and three years later he was still faithful.

Dear reader, how about you. Have you quit the Lord and His church without resolving to do so? Perhaps no one deliberately decides to quit, but many carelessly drift into backsliding.

If you quit attending services, quit boosting the program of activities planned by the elders and quit giving as God has prospered you to enable the congregation to meet its budget, you need to be restored.

- Gus Nichols

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- > "Any speaker or writer who pleases everyone says nothing!"
  - > "You can always find some dirt if you're looking for it!"
  - > "Prayer keeps you close to God. Neglect it and you will drift away!"
  - > "You can't press on toward the goal while you're looking the other way!"
  - > "It's hard to hear when your mouth is open!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Kingdom Righteousness and God's Commandments!*" (Text: Matt. 5:17-20); Sunday evening: "*A Royal Official Becomes a Believer!*" (John 4:46-54).