

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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February 25, 2018

Volume 38, # 09

Idleness

We are all acquainted with an old adage which says, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." It is possible for one to misuse his mind and it is possible for one to allow his mind to become disused. God condemns both. We frown exceedingly upon the person who misuses his mind by allowing it to be filled with lust, avarice, and hate, but we have failed to understand that disuse or idleness of the mind concerning the things of the Lord will bring "spiritual decay. " I am told the following story which very graphically shows "disuse will result in decay."

"Victorious Roman Legions, left behind to rule a defeated Spain, built an aqueduct in Segovia in AD 109. And for 1800 years -- sixty generations -- that aqueduct carried sparkling water to hot and dusty Segovians. About the turn of the twentieth century, thoughtful Spaniards decided the aqueduct should be preserved for posterity, and so should be relieved of its age-old labor. "They laid modern pipelines and stopped the flow that for years had gushed and gurgled in the aqueduct. Shortly after, the aqueduct began to fall apart. The blazing sun dried the mortar and made it crumble. Its stones sagged and fell and soon it lay in ruins. "What ages of SERVICE could not destroy, idleness rapidly disintegrated."

There are many people today who use their minds to dwell upon the very "rot" of the earth. Concerning such people, God expressed the following attitude in the long ago. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (Gen 6:5-6). It grieves God to see His creation engaged in the distortion of their minds.

I believe it can be said with equal force that God is also grieved to see our minds lying idle in spiritual disuse. For this very reason Paul admonished. "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Tim 4:15). And again, "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true. whatsoever things are honest,

whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil 4:8).

May God help us all to study and meditate upon his Holy Word. And by all means remember: "Disuse Will Result in Decay."

- W.R. Jones, 11/17/1974

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL

Once while Raccoon John Smith, a pioneer American preacher, was speaking of the plainness of the gospel in contrast with the abstruse systems of men, a note was handed to him from the audience: "If the gospel is so very plain, as you say it is, why do you have to labor so hard to get people to understand it?"

Smith replied, "I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch, and though I had the kindest soil, and the best seed and sowing was easy, I never got top or root till I took my axe and hoe and briar knife and went in and whacked and grubbed and cleared the ground. The Lord knows I do not esteem it hard to preach the gospel to those prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice, and cut out systems and clear away sectarian trash that cumpers the minds and hearts of the people."

- Unknown

Let the Bible Be Your Guide

Some people form their own opinions of what is right and what is wrong independently of the Bible. In other words, they usurp the authority that God has reserved unto Himself, and in so doing they completely abolish the use of the scripture to direct their lives.

There are others who select separated and unrelated parts of the Bible in an effort to make God's Word harmonize with their own idea and desires, ignoring the fact that if they discard a part of the Bible they discard it all.

Then, there are those who proudly claim that all of their family have usually been members of a certain church, and consider this sufficient reason for their affiliation with the same. This is a sort of "Christian-ancestral" worship. In fact, what their family has done is more important to them than what God says to do.

And there is still another class who pay their preacher to do their Bible reading for them, and blindly accept all that he says as gospel truth. When you consider there are more than three hundred recognized religious denominations in America, and that no two of them are in entire agreement, you may well ask who is right and whose word shall I take?

The solution is to cast aside all prejudice; learn how to rightly divide the Word of God; study it reverently; consider it prayerfully; and thus, let God decide the question for you.

- Timberland Drive Messenger -- Lufkin Texas, 8/15/1954

The Man Who Tried Three Religions

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task" (Acts 6:3).

The growing Jerusalem church consisted of converted Hebrews from Jerusalem (Acts 3:13; 4:50) and Hellenistic Jews "from every nation" (Acts 2:5). The Hellenistic widows' needs in the church were being overlooked, so the apostles' put seven spiritual "men of good reputation" in charge of this benevolent task (Acts 6:1-12).

How many can you name from memory of these early benevolent servants in the Jerusalem church? Probably Stephen, later the first martyr (Acts 7), and Philip, who later devoted himself to evangelistic work (Acts 8:5). All seven men in this list have Greek names. These are Hellenistic Jews, except one man listed last: ... Nicolas, the proselyte from Antioch" (Acts 6:5).

Nicolas is the first Gentile convert documented in Acts. Previously, he had converted from Gentile paganism to Judaism. Greek paganism was frightfully superstitious and morally bankrupt. In this idolatrous darkness, Nicolas the Gentile was attracted to the goodness and righteousness of the Jewish religion (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). He became a practicing Jew that meant annually going up to Jerusalem for feast days (Exodus 23:17).

Hence, it is most likely he was among that international crowd of Jewish worshippers on Pentecost (Acts 2:5). If so, he was touched by the gospel of Jesus, by penitent faith in the Messiah, and gladly obeyed Christ in baptism (Acts 2:36-41).

What an exciting conversion story out of the wilderness of religious confusion! I like and admire Nicolas. He grew amid Gentile idolatry, converted to Judaism, and then became, upon hearing the gospel, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Here truly is a "good" man, willing to be led and controlled by "the Spirit" (Acts 6:3)! Having been in two other religions, he again was willing to change when faced with the truth. At last, he discovered the true religion of the Son of God and obeyed "truth as it is in Jesus" (Ephesians 4:21).

This is the spirit of an idealistic truth seeker (Acts 17:11). "Lord, what will you have me to do?" (Acts 22:10). Every person is his or her own "restoration movement" to be all the Lord wants us to be.

In seeking to be right before God, we must be willing to change wherever we err. This is the final test of a good heart's true sincerity: obeying the truth where it leads (Matthew 5:6,8; Luke 8:15).

- W. Frank Walton

First Love

A tap at the study door announced a timid and frightened young couple. Their marriage was "coming apart" — or so they thought — and since I had "performed their ceremony," they had come to me for help.

The timid approach fooled me. What should have been an easy "patch-up" job grew more complicated as we discussed the details. Recalling each incident of friction led to charges of blame, efforts to justify, defense of pride. The situation was growing steadily worse when, in desperation, I tried the magic of "first love."

"Please arise, and stand here," I requested, indicating the exact spot where they had made their vows. Picking up my Bible, I stepped into place before them. "And now, will you join right hands." Then, as they grew silent with their memories, I reminded them of the pledges they had made "before God and to one-another" on that eventful day some months earlier.

Before my little speech was finished — maybe I was over-playing my part in the drama they interrupted to thank me, and hurried out of the room, hand in hand. Perhaps they had heard little of what I said, but they recalled their own hopes and determinations of first love, and that was enough.

The Hebrew writer urged faithfulness by saying, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions...." (Hebrews

10:32). When we "leave our first love," (Rev. 2:4f) it must be restored if our union with Christ is to survive.

When brethren "go a-gadding" after strange doctrines, human institutions, the social gospel, etc., they have neglected their first love — their espousal to Christ. (2 Cor.11:1-3) They profit little by tongue-lashings, ridicule, or even sound high-powered argumentation — especially if they are so self-willed as to be no longer interested in the Bible pattern. Unless their love for and determination to serve Jesus Christ can be rekindled, all else is vain.

Please join hands — with the Lord!

- Robert F. Turner, via *Plain Talk*, June, 1968

- > "In the gospel, we discover we are far worse off than we thought, and far more loved than we ever dreamed!" —Singer Steven Curtis Chapman
 - > "About the worst advice you could give anybody is 'be yourself!'" —Oscar Wilde
 - > "The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none!" — Thomas Carlyle
 - > "Character is never developed without suffering some difficulties or stern corrections of some sort to help shape it!"
 - > "The man who is rowing the boat has no time to rock it!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Grace of God!*" (Text: Acts 11:19-24);
Sunday evening: *Bi-monthly Singing!*