

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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March 18, 2018

Volume 38, # 12

THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

Not long ago I was looking among a pile of old books and I picked up one which had a chapter headed, "The Trail of the Serpent." The chapter began by saying that "there is a dead-line of hate between the serpent and man. It is old as pain and it will last to the end of the trail. The young and the old become anxious and uneasy when they come upon the trail of the serpent. It is a danger signal. The serpent may be coiled nearby, ready to strike and poison and kill with his deadly virus. Like unto the trail of the serpent is the Scandal-monger, the Tattler, and the Gossip. They harry and wound the children of men, and they feast and fill and fatten on the reputation and character of their fellows."

No one has any objections against honest and constructive criticisms, and most of us approve the full and frank discussion of daily news, the position of preachers, teachers and public officials; but all right thinking people, and especially those who claim to follow the Lord, ought to rise up in holy horror and wage relentless war against those assassins of reputation and character who gossip and tattle and throw mud with no evidence save such vague and hazy statements as "they say," "did you hear?", "I heard," etc. Space will not allow calling the names of countless men and women, boys and girls, who have been poisoned and have gone down under the calumny of these idle busybodies. Schools, churches, businesses and professions have been destroyed by them, and some of the bravest and best bear their scars.

In a not too distant town there lives today a wonderful Christian woman who once fell deeply into sin. For years now her light has shone for Christ and His church as she ministered to the weak and erring, the sick and unfortunate. She has never failed to wage war against the evils which seek the destruction of youth. She is old now, but these slanderers will not leave her alone. When the battle is joined with old Satan's servants, these slanderers, like vultures, turn back the pages of time and seek to crucify her all over again in order to justify themselves in the courses pursued.

My business is to turn souls away from the Devil, but if one is determined after being taught and the proper example set to serve Satan, why not take a real place, like safe-blowing or robbery?! Why this scavenger job of gossiping?!

Someone has well said: "Slander shuns a clean mind. There is something unclean in us when we love to dwell upon the diseases of society. Arson, stealing and murder are sins that have no palliation; but roll them into one black lump, and they pale before the crime of murdering a reputation. Let us look for the good in our brethren and encourage it to grow with recognition."

The slanderer seems never to realize the harm which may come of his gossiping. W. L. Oliphant told the story of a sister Slanderer who once started a very harmful story about a very good man. When approached by the party whom she had injured, she said: "I am sorry. I did not intend to do you an injury. I will retract what I have said, and undo the harm which may have been caused." The victim of her story called for a feather pillow. He took this pillow to the door, cut open the covering, and tossed the feathers out into the air. The wind was blowing at a rapid pace. The feathers were scattered over the ground, up in tree tops, on the houses, and everywhere, for several hundred yards. He then said: "Will you please gather these feathers and put them back into the pillow as they were formerly?" "Why," exclaimed the lady, "it could not be done." "You are right," said her friend, "Neither can you undo the harm you have caused me, when the poisoned feathers of slander have been wafted abroad by the fierce gales of gossip, they can never be apprehended and imprisoned."

It is difficult to deal with those who follow "the trail of the serpent." The Christian should know that he cannot retaliate or strike back. Paul knew how to suffer from the sting of slander. He said: "Being defamed, we intreat." (1 Cor. 4:13) He had just said: "Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it." (1 Cor. 4:12) As great as is the injury done to another by the slanderer, he does himself the greatest injury. Christ was slandered, but "when he was reviled," He "reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (1 Pet. 2:23) We are in good company when we suffer for the sake of righteousness. We know that the slanderer will reap what he sows, and, that vengeance belongs to the Lord.

Are you called upon to suffer for the name of Christ? Have you been forsaken by friends who now slander and oppose you? Then remember what Jesus said to the disciples when they went forth to preach: "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. 10:24, 25) "Rejoice," says the Savior, "and be exceeding

glad." (Matt. 5 :12) Think it not strange when fiery trials come your way, but rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer in a cause so glorious. (See 1 Pet. 4:12-16) The Lord does not promise to exempt the faithful from slander and suffering, but He does assure the obedient that He will never forsake them and that they shall share the joys of the New Jerusalem. Hold fast therefore to the Word of God, though every step of the way is beset by perils, "for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:18)

- Rufus R. Clifford, via *Walking In Truth*, Aug., 1963

A Prayer For The Elders

"Our Father, let me be a pillar of strength to them, not a thorn in their flesh to sap their strength, nor a burden on their back to pull them down.

"Let me support them without striving to possess them. Let me lift their hands without placing shackles upon them. Let me give them help that they may devote more time to saving others and less time to gratifying my vanity.

"Let me work with them as ministers of the whole flock and not compel them to spend precious time bragging on me. Let me be unselfish in what I do for them and not selfish in demanding that they do more for me. Help me to serve the church more and be happy that they serve me less.

"Help me to receive not an accusation against them except at the mouth of two or three witnesses. Help me to be good and true in my judgement upon them ----- for I have never walked in their shoes. Help me Lord, to be a Christian at all times that their work may be made easier for them and my own soul be drawn closer to Thee. In Jesus Name. Amen"

- Unknown

Detached Members

Perhaps the most quickly recognized illustration of a member of our body being detached is the retina, that part of the eye that receives the image and sends it through the optic nerve. When it becomes detached, that eye is unable to see.

Paul declared that we are all members of the body, if we are children of God, Christians (1 Corinthians 12: 18-20). And he further taught that all of the members must work for the well-being of the whole body (Ephesians 4: 16).

But we cannot function if we become detached from the rest of the body. That part of the body that is cut off, or detached from the body, can be no benefit to the body. An arm severed from the body can do no work for the one who has lost that limb. But neither can the body continue to supply life to the part that is detached.

Even so, members of Christ can neither serve him nor can he be a blessing to them, if they become detached from Him. A close association with the Lord in the body is necessary for the grace of God to save and bless us. Those members who have detached themselves from the church or have so lived as to have the fellowship with God's people broken will die as surely as a severed limb. Jesus said, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so neither can you, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4). We cannot miss meeting and working with other saints in the church and bear fruit for the Lord. We must stay attached to His body in all things to keep our fellowship with Him, for He is the head of the body. Are you well attached?

Let us keep well involved in worship, in teaching others, in study, in ministering to others' needs to keep our lifelines connected securely. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation.

- Frank Smith

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- > "An amazing amount of our thinking is done backwards. We first decide what we want to believe, then find good reasons for believing it!"
 - > "No gift that you give to your mother can compare with the gift that your mother gave you!"
 - > "As you walk on the sands of time, take care what your footprints reveal; so the imprint you leave may be that of a soul, and not that of a heel!"
 - > "Talk and you say what you already know; but listen, and you learn something new!"
 - > "The road to success is always under construction!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Be Careful With Your Words!"* (Text: Eph. 4:29); Sunday evening: *"The Truth Will Make You Free!"* (John 8:31-32).