

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

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### **SIN'S CONTROLLING POWER**

There is a difference between someone who wants to do what is right, but struggles and stumbles, and a person who doesn't care and sins to please self. It's not a distinction in offense for godly people have done some terrible deeds. David committed adultery and murder, and Peter lied about knowing Christ. Neither does it involve the possible effect of sin. The "good" kid, who's never tasted alcohol before, but gives in to the pressure to drink and drive the first time, is just as dangerous as the one who does it all the time. The main difference is in one's heart and hope for doing better. A person motivated to be right and do right has a much better chance of turning his life to God. God described King David as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). By reading the Psalms of David you get a glimpse of just how much he loved God. Peter went out and wept bitterly after he denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:75). On the other hand, the Jewish leadership had no hope because they renounced Jesus. They did not want to believe Him because Satan had filled their hearts (John 8:42-45). Sin is a destructive and progressive force when allowed to fill one's life (2 Tim. 3:13). David and Peter responded quickly in remorse for their sin. They did not deny or excuse their offense, nor did their sin become habitual. If we are not careful, evil has a way of becoming a compulsive behavior (Gen. 6:5). People may develop a pattern of thinking or repetitive action that becomes difficult to overcome (Heb. 6:4-6). It's possible to become psychologically and emotionally addicted to sin's pleasure. We may also turn to evil to mask other problems in our lives. Alcohol and drugs do all of this. Sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, and pornography, can fall into this category. People may develop a vain sense of superiority by tearing down others in pride, selfishness and gossip. It's sad that some people feel good about themselves only when they disparage others.

It is hard to change and do better when sin controls our thoughts and actions (2 Tim. 3:1-7). Paul describes people who have no self-control over their lusts. He says that they are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." He talks about women "loaded down with sin and led away by various lusts." Clearly, people like this will find it difficult to change

because evil consumes them. That is what sin does; it makes us comfortable and happy with an evil life-style.

Sins can also sear the conscience to a point where once objectionable acts become agreeable (1 Tim. 4:1-3). Abortion and homosexuality fall into this category, as do lying, cheating, and profanity. People relax their position on indecency and sexual impurity because they're so widely accepted by society. We have come to expect these acts on television, in the movies, and from our neighbors, and so we're not "shocked" by them anymore. Christians need to take care to never become comfortable with sin. A searing of the conscience begins with a softening position on evil.

When we develop a compulsive behavior of sin, it's usually not long before we excuse our conduct. People find a way to console and convince themselves that their sin is not so bad. If we find pleasure in wrong doing it's much easier to believe the lies of evil. The nature of sin is it lies to us and we believe it (2 Thess. 2:9-12).

Even if you want to do better, it is hard to break the cycle of habitual sin. That is why everyone needs to take care about what they do, and never allow evil to get a foothold. Many of the early Christians came from paganism, a life-style that encouraged all manner of immorality. It was a concern addressed by the inspired writers (1 Peter 4:1-3). It is a lot easier to never begin a bad habit than it is to stop one.

Another reason sin is so invasive has to do with the influence of others. The bible warns us not to put ourselves in precarious positions. Choose your friends wisely and don't hang around those who tempt you (2 Cor. 6:14-18). Even secular wisdom understands this principle. Drug and alcohol abuse counselors tell their patients to avoid people who use these substances and locations where they're available (1 Cor. 15:33). If a person has trouble with fornication then he should stay away from places and people who tempt him. It is much better to find Christian friends who will help you succeed than it is to be around worldly people who want you to fail.

Have you ever noticed that if you are trying to quit something it seems as if the matter is always on your mind? You think about how great it use to feel and how much fun you use to have. You become much more aware of people doing what you want to stop doing. It is hard to get away from the problem. That's the devil's way of testing your resolve and patience. The solution is to focus your mind on good and wholesome thoughts (Phil. 4:8).

Even though it is hard to quit something that's ingrained in your life, I don't want to leave the impression there is no hope. People stop doing bad things all the time and for reasons less noble than pleasing God. With God's help you can overcome anything (1 Cor. 10:13).

Nothing less than total resolve will defeat ingrained sin. Patience and long-suffering enable us to endure to the end. You must respect God's Word and seek His help by prayer. Seek out and trust faithful Christians to aid your effort. Remember, it's worth the fight to triumph over sin because the reward is heaven.

- Terry Starling

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## Mote Hunting

In His condemnation of hypocritical judging, Jesus speaks of one who beholds the mote in another's eye, but fails to consider the beam in his own eye (Matt. 7:3). What unusual moral vision! When focused outwardly it is able to discern the tiniest speck; yet, when looking inwardly, it cannot discern what should be most obvious. Our Lord is, of course, pointing up the need for self-discipline ("cast out first the beam out of thine own eye," v.5) — and what a tremendously important lesson it is! But what He touches on in only an incidental way in this context may be worthy of further consideration too; namely, mote beholding.

Obviously, the act of mote beholding, in itself, is not wrong for it is simply the act of perceiving or seeing the "mote," whatever it might be. When this occurs, providing we have de-beamed ourselves, we can help ("see clearly") to cast out the mote from our brother's eye. If, however, we are not careful, the mote beholding easily deteriorates into mote hunting; i.e., looking for fault in others, especially with a view to hurting or discrediting in some way. The Christian who deliberately looks for something to criticize in another has, in that disposition alone, a personal "beam" in his own eye that needs beholding and casting out. Lamentably, mote hunting is more popular than beam hunting. No doubt, if there were more of the latter there would be less of the former. But, such is not the case and, in fact, it often appears that some have declared open-season for mote hunting.

Take, for instance, many of the written debates, exchanges, reviews, reviews of reviews, exposes, and the like, of recent years. It is not unusual to see the obvious intent and meaning of an action or argument ignored in a painstaking and tedious effort to search out some trifling innuendo to be used against the opposition. If one is suspected to have certain "leanings," his every statement is carefully scrutinized — not for objective evaluation, but for "evidence" with which to blast him! If nothing of an incriminating nature is obvious, the mote hunter can always read between the lines and find something with which to jump to an unwarranted conclusion. The mote hunter's inferences have a way of being translated into his opponents "position." Whether real or imagined, every mote is

likely to be magnified to "beam" proportions. But, such mote hunting and exploiting is by no means limited to writers and debaters.

In fact, most of us have likely indulged in the practice to some extent. Ill-will, prejudice, and envy (things to which we are all susceptible) can easily send us on a mote hunt if we are not careful. If one has wronged us, we are inclined to search out and exploit the "motes" of his conduct and speech. Even the slightest conflict or controversy can motivate mote hunting. And when brethren start looking for and advertising the bad in each other, look out! You will see just what we are seeing in many places today: hate, enmity, strife, and division such as cripple the cause of Christ.

The answer? "Love suffereth long, is kind, envieth not, thinketh no evil, beareth all things."  
- Dan S. Shipley, via *Plain Talk*, April, 1983

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Proverbs 18:13 -- He who gives an answer before he hears, It is folly and shame to him.

Hebrews 12:14-15 -- Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;

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- > "Part-time faith, as a part-time job, will not fully support you!"
  - > "Failure is one thing that can be achieved without effort!"
  - > "Whether a person worships regularly or not does not depend on how far he lives from the meetinghouse, but rather how far he lives from God!"
  - > "Patience is the ability to count down when you might want to blast off!"
  - > "The more steam you put into your work, the louder you can whistle when the job is done!"
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**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: "*Weak Hands and Feeble Knees!*" (Heb. 12:11-13); Sunday evening: *Bimonthly Singing!*