

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.
Jackson, TN 38305
oldhickorycofc.com

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White Washin'

The old chicken coop didn't last long between white-washin's — one was hardly finished and it was time for another. It always looked so clean after each job that it was hard to imagine that those gathering eggs were met with such a stench. No matter how much white-wash you put on, it didn't seem to improve the smell on the inside of the coop.

After a while the filth got so bad that someone (never me) would suggest that it was time to clean and disinfect the inside. It sure smelled a lot better after that. But believe me when I say that it's much more pleasant to white-wash two chicken coops than to clean out one.

Of course, white-washin' is nothing new. The Pharisees garnished the tombs of the fathers to make them appear beautiful but there were dead men's bones inside. They meticulously cleansed the outside of the cup and platter but this did not remove the inside stains (Matt. 23:24-27). Our Lord was not condemning the whitewashing of sepulchers nor was he teaching a lesson here on how to wash dishes. He said, Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity, Matt. 23:28), and they understood that he spoke of outward religion (white-washin') as opposed to inner cleanliness of heart.

It is never easy to cleanse ones heart of sin but sometimes the smell becomes so odious that we can no longer cover it up. The more David white-washed to cover his sin, the more sin there was to cover — first adultery then deception and finally murder. Admitting his sin was humiliating and painful, but far better this than plunging, white-washed, into eternity where the paint job peels.

Pity poor Saul. God said for Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, but Saul and the people spared Agag, the best of the sheep, oxen, and all that was good. Saul said to Samuel, I have performed the commandment of Jehovah, (1 Sam. 15:13b), but his paint began to run when the oxen lowed in Samuels ears. He thought he could blame the

people but Samuel applied God's paint remover — to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams (v.22).

Many souls today are filled with extortion, excess, murder theft, adultery, etc., and each new day demands more self-justification, excuses, and rationalizations to hide the sins — at least from one's own eyes. But there is not enough white-wash in the world to cover ONE sin. The only hope for the cleansing from sin is through the blood of Christ (Matt. 26:28; 1 John 1:7). It was not easy for Him to die on the cross, and it may not be easy for Christians to repent and confess sins, but that's what it takes to cleanse the inside (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22).

The cleansed conscience and restored relationship are much better than self-justification. I liked the clean chicken coop much better than the white-washed one too — after it was all over.

- Jim R. Everett, via Plain Talk, February, 1971

Providence

In his classic book Robinson Crusoe, famed author Daniel Defoe emphasized that when Crusoe was shipwrecked on a forsaken island, he was deprived of almost everything that people consider vital for happiness. After reflecting upon his condition, he has Crusoe say: "I sat down to my meat with thankfulness, and admired the hand of God's providence which had thus spread my table in the wilderness. I learned to look more on the bright side of my condition, and less upon the dark side, and to consider what I had rather than what I wanted. And this at times gave me such secret comforts that I cannot express them ... All our discontents about what we want appeared to me to spring from the want of thankfulness for what we have!"

Surely these are times of great concern to all serious-minded people. Many are perplexed about governmental scandal, and a variety of crises confront us. Perhaps it would not be inappropriate for us to reflect upon the gracious providence of our wonderful God. It would scarcely be possible to exaggerate the concern that our heavenly Father has for His children. Job once asked: "Doth not he see my ways, and number all my steps?" (Job 31:4; cf. Psa.56:8). Jesus taught that Jehovah's interest in even the smallest of his creatures is genuine proof of his concern for those who serve him. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are numbered. Fear not, therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Mt. 10:29-31).

Supplementing this, in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord emphasized that a recognition of the gracious providence of God would relieve us of the anxiety commonly characteristic of daily living. Christ exhorts: "Be not anxious [literally, 'don't keep on worrying'] for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." (Mt. 6:25). The Savior then supports his admonition by the following reasons:

(1) Life is more than food and the body than raiment. In other words, if God has endowed us with bodies and life, surely he will sustain us.

(2) If Jehovah both feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, he will care for us as we are of greater value than they.

(3) Anxiety is useless for it cannot add to one's life. The truth is, medically speaking, worry can precipitate numerous illnesses which actually shorten life.

(4) Anxiety is basically pagan "for after all these things do the Gentiles seek." "Gentiles" here stands for heathenism. Materialism is the primary thrust of the pagan's life.

(5) Worry over material things is a reversal of priorities; the kingdom of God must be the dominant factor of our lives; when such is the case, God will provide our needs.

(6) Deal with your problems one day at a time; "the morrow will be anxious for itself."

Surely, sober reflection upon these divine words would calm quaking hearts in troublous times. Let Christians refrain from panic talk and set an example before a fearful world. Cast your cares upon God; he cares for you. (1 Pet. 5:7).

- Wayne Jackson, *The Christian Courier*, Vol. IX, No. 12, April, 1974, p. 45.

If Your Eye Strays...

When the honeymoon is over, and the early excitement of love gives way to the long hall of responsibility and house payments, the heart is tested. The wedding gown becomes a robe, and curlers take the place of the veiled coiffure. Her timid "I do" becomes a harsh "Take your feet off the table!" as she brings the coffee. And brother, your puffy unshaven face is something less than appetizing!!!

So, you go off to work, where the women are well dressed, perfumed, and far removed from the diaper laundry. Does your eye stray? Well, maybe; and that's bad enough. But the critical question is yet to come. Does your heart reprove?? Now that is the test!

When Paul wrote, "That which I do, I allow not: for what I would I do not; but what I hate, that do I" (Rom. 7:15-f), he did not mean he never did what he thought he should do. He was demonstrating the inadequacy of law (alone) to cope with weak man's need. (See Rom. 8:3-4.) Deliverance had to come through forgiveness, made possible through Christ's death. But there is more. The individual is profited by this grace on the condition of his faith — and that is a trust that only a changed heart can contain. Belief "to the saving of the soul" begins with a simple acceptance of testimony, but it must produce a cleansed heart (Acts 15:9); one wholly given to God; determined to serve Him without reservation. And that kind of heart puts cold water on those roving eyes.

It works that way, to a limited extent, in a purely human situation. I love my wife so very, very much that hurting her is like hurting myself. If I should be untrue to her I know the deep pain she would feel — the unbelieving shock, that would be followed by withdrawal into dismal darkness. I know this because I know how the reverse would affect me. Ours is a mutual trust so complete we understand one another's emotions. If my flesh is tempted, my heart says "No," and turns hurriedly away. I do not want to be untrue, because that would be contrary to my deeper desire: my longing to continue the wonderful, trusting relationship I now enjoy with the woman I have loved so long.

Is not this the principle Paul has in mind when he says, "I serve God, with my spirit, in the gospel" (Rom. 1:9), and "I serve the law of God, with my mind, through Christ" (7:25; both passages condensed)? Again, "He is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" 2:29). He is not saying that unlawful actions are no longer sin, or that they will not be held against him. *He is saying that in order to have forgiveness for those sins, one's desire must be to serve God — one's heart must reprove.* He was wretched, when he did sin, because of the conflict within — the warring of his deep desire to serve God, with the temptations of the flesh.

Law continues in Christ, but its dominion is broken by grace (6:14). The renewed heart accepts God's law not in fear, but gladly. It has become part of the individual: the real "me" wants to be faithful to the God loved with all heart, soul and mind.

- Robert F. Turner, via *Plain Talk*, November, 1980

> "There is a true correlation between wisdom and one's willingness to hear and evaluate responsible criticism. Even when the rebuke is without foundation, we learn how our work looks to others; and a moment of self-inspection is useful."

- Robert F. Turner, 1982

- > "The person who thinks everything said is directed at him, very likely thinks "of himself more highly than he ought to think." (Rom. 12:3) Those who "think soberly" rarely become upset by the trivia of life." - Robert F. Turner, 1966

 - > "Exercise daily. Walk with the Lord!"

 - > "Give God what's right, not what's left!"

 - > "God promises a safe landing, not a calm passage!"
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THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: "*The Entitlement Mentality!*" (Text: Exodus 2:23-24; 13:3; 16:3); Sunday evening: "*Sheep, Wolves, Serpents, and Doves!*" (Matt. 10:1-16).