

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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

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The Battleground of the Heart

The Scriptures tell us that God's people are soldiers in His army. The reason for referring to us as soldiers is simple: we are at war. The war in which we engage ourselves is with Satan and his messengers in this world. Consider these passages: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." (1 Timothy 6:12). "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:11). "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." (Romans 8:23). "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." (2 Timothy 2:3-4). Make no mistake about it; Christians are at war. From the time we become part of His body, the church, until we leave this world, we must fight against Satan! How do we win this fight?

The battleground: First and foremost, we need to know where the battle is being waged. Solomon gave us some insight: "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." (Proverbs 4:23). Every day, the battle is being fought in men's hearts. The one who is able to gain control of your mind has the upper hand. Satan constantly seeks for ways to enter Christians' hearts so he can corrupt and defile them. How does he do it? Truth be known, he cannot do it without our help.

Our cooperation: We make daily choices that allow Satan to enter our minds. It begins with our thoughts, what we read, that to which we listen, and what we watch. All seek to control the Christian's heart. The devil plays the game of divide and conquer. This is why Jesus told us, in His Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8).

Our Adversary: Satan really uses his lies to take advantage of God's people by seeking to convince us that he is telling the truth. Jesus referred to the devil as a liar and the father

of all lies (John 8:44). Satan cares nothing about our needs; he wants only for us to spend eternity in hell with him and his angels. Therefore, he relentlessly seeks to get into our hearts and entice us to transfer our affections from God to the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17).

Satan's Methods: Many of God's soldiers go AWOL for one simple reason: they fall asleep on watch! One of our adversary's cunning traps is to lull us to sleep and convince us that there are no dangers about which we need to be concerned. Make no mistake about it; Satan is the master of his craft! Unless we constantly guard what we allow to enter our hearts, he will take advantage and gain a foothold.

Fight! Do not allow him to win you over (2 Corinthians 2:11)! Fellow soldier, are you waging a successful warfare against the enemy? Who is winning the battle for your heart?
- Keith Greer [slightly edited – GFS]

The Shame of Thy Nakedness: The Bride Wore a Veil; the Groom a Bow Tie

At a wedding in a southeast Texas nudist camp, the bride wore a veil, the groom a bow tie, and the minister his glasses -- nothing more! No, this is not a joke; nor is it funny. Such events are degrading to marriage and the home, and demoralizing to our nation, state, and community. This mockery of a marriage ceremony was covered by Richard Kotrla II in the [Browsing on the Brazos](#) column for September 23, 1993 (*Brazoria County News*). Can't the press report on Peeping Toms, voyeurs, exhibitionists, nudists, and other perversions without going along for the ride?

Public nudity is a moral outrage. Indecency does not become pure when those who practice it gather into a camp. How about an incest community (for consenting children only, of course), a free-sex commune, a polygamy colony, or a bestiality camp? This is like sanctifying the sin of homosexuality by forming a homosexual church, or sanctifying the slaughter of infants by calling an abortion death house a health and reproductive services clinic. Shall we sanitize murder by establishing a Mercy Assisted-Suicide Hospital? [Editor's note: In a recent news item, an academic who resigned from a Virginia university after saying it wasn't necessarily immoral for adults to be sexually attracted to kids has been hired by a Johns Hopkins University. Allyn Walker, PhD, who identifies as a trans-sexual person, started a firestorm by his argument that pedophiles should be referred to as "minor-attracted persons."] Almost anything is possible in a society where the proper technique for committing fornication is facilitated by teaching safe sex to unmarried teenagers.

When people lose their moral bearings, they consider perverted practices to be freedom of expression in its purest form. They consider clothing and standards of decency a facade. They may hide their practices for a while, but then they want to come out of the closet and be accepted as part of the community. Some of us may feel we could not join such infamous camps and communes, but we admire how friendly and open their inhabitants are about their lifestyle.

We need to get back to the Bible, back to its family and moral values, back to its teaching on how to truly love God and our fellowman (Matthew 22:37-40). We are losing sight of the very purpose of our existence:

- "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." (Ecclesiastes 12:13).
- "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." (1 John 5:3).

Every word of God was given for our good. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4).

We need to put our clothes back on and respect Bible standards of modesty and decency. God Himself, when sin entered the world, put proper clothing on man and woman to protect them from temptation (Genesis 3:21). The garments He made covered more than their fig-leaf briefs, covering the upper body and hanging down [most likely – GFS] around their knees. Since that time, God has taught that it is shameful for men and women to uncover their nakedness, in whole or in part (Isaiah 47:2-3; 1 Timothy 2:8-10). Proper clothing prevents displaying "The shame of thy nakedness." (Revelation 3:18). When men harden their hearts against God, they lose their sense of shame and no longer blush at immodesty, indecency, or immorality (Jeremiah 6:15).

Let us forsake our sins and the hardness of our hearts. Believe in Jesus, repent of all sin, confess him as God's Son, and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Mark 16:16; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38).

- Ron Halbrook

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SIN PURSUES A DARK COURSE

The course of sin is seen in different forms (Proverbs 21:6-8). There is the sin of falsehood which has a view to temporal enrichment, or the sin of cheating. Violence has the same end in view - breaking into the neighbor's treasury, or committing assault upon his person.

The course of sin involves injustice, or the sin of withholding from our neighbor that which we know is his due; whether it be a weekly wage (James 5:4), or whether it be the appointment to which he is entitled by his merit, or the honor he has gained by his services. The course of sin is also seen in perversity, or forwardness - attitude of wanton and determined rebelliousness against God's rule, or in-submission to His claim.

- Hoyt Bailey, *Aspects of Sin*, p. 26

The Righteous Person

A metaphor used often in the Old Testament Scriptures is that of a strong and healthy tree representing a righteous person. He flourishes spiritually, much like a stately tree. Notice:

"The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the LORD, They will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still yield fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and very green, To declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." (Psalms 92:12-15).

Throughout the Scriptures, the righteous are compared to the palm tree (Psalms 92:12; cf. Song 7:7), the cedar (92:12; cf. Song 5:15), the olive tree (Psalms 52:8; cf. 128:3). Such trees are beautiful, healthy, fruitful, and lasting a long time, just like the righteous. What powerful strength and grand excellence are depicted!

The righteous are stately and strong! They grow like the cedars of Lebanon, which were of the highest quality and height, being desired for great building projects. The wicked do not have such characteristics.

The righteous are vibrant and productive! Psalms 1:3 says, "He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." This is the righteous man who delights in the law of the Lord. The wicked have no lasting fruit.

The righteous are not spiritually diminished by age! The quality of spiritual life does not decrease in the righteous; they are renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). They draw strength from God as they worship and serve Him. Even at the end of life he praises the goodness and blessings of God. "The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous." (Psalms 1:4-5).

Are you righteous? Can you appreciate the great blessings of righteousness?

- Gary Smalley

- * "If the Lord intended for us to live in a permissive society, wouldn't the Ten Commandments have been the Ten Suggestions?"
 - * "If you wouldn't write it and sign it, don't say it!"
 - * "Love for enemies includes overflowing good will toward unfriendly people!"
 - * "Gossip and anger are like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die!"
 - * "Clean living takes a lot more than soap and detergents!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)