**The Old Hickory Bulletin**

**Old Hickory Church of Christ**

**841 Old Hickory Blvd.**

**Jackson, TN 38305**

***oldhickorycofc.com***

**November 26, 2023 Volume 43, # 48**

**Sending the Sluggard**

All this time I had thought the sluggard was named for the slug. It turns out the truth is just the opposite. The little shell-less snail began to be called a "slug" in the English language in the early 18th century because only a lazy man — a "slug" — moves so slowly.

The sluggard lies there, attached to his bed like a door to its hinges (Proverbs 26:14). The sluggard rests from work he's not done (6:9). He is filled with longing but empty of effort to achieve his desire (13:4). He rests before his work is done but never starts again (20:4). He's practiced in making excuses sound reasonable in order to keep from doing necessary work (Proverbs 22:13; 26:13).

Proverbs 10:26 says this: "Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him." Vinegar breaks down calcium, causing teeth to weaken and the mouth to pucker. Anyone who's sat around a campfire knows the feeling of smoke burning the eyes when the wind changes direction. Vinegar and smoke are both irritating, as is entrusting a task to someone who fails to do it. Being slow to obey is disobeying. The Septuagint (LXX) translation even says "law-breaker" instead of "sluggard."

When our children were very little, we dressed them, brushed their teeth, fastened them into their car-seats, and did many of these things for them. But then we showed them how button-holes work, taught them the complicated skill of matching the shape of the shoe to the appropriate foot, and demonstrated again and again how seatbelts buckle. So now when we say to our little ones, "Okay! Everyone please get your shoes, coats, and get in the car!" we expect to find our children completely clothed and buckled-in to their seats within a few minutes. And then there are the times a little girl has gotten distracted tucking in her baby dolls or a little boy has forgotten to locate his shoes when the Legos on the floor are calling to him. It's smoke to the eyes, which is why we work to train our children that "Obedience is first time, right away, all the way, with a happy heart."

And then God says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people" (Romans 10:21). God keeps calling, instructing, and warning, and what does He get? When we're told, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving," are we sluggish about it (Ephesians 5:4)? Or when we're told to be wise and make "the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (v. 16)? Or when Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to preparing for the wedding feast or to the master entrusting his servants with portions of treasure (Matthew 25)? Isn't Jesus warning us against sluggishness? Just as poverty came like a robber on the sluggard whose field was barren and fruitless in Proverbs 24:30-34, Jesus promises His coming will be like a thief in the night to those who have been slow to prepare for His return (Matthew 24:43; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Will He find we've been sluggish to obey Him? Will He find us fruitless?

The sluggard will find that serving God gets harder and harder the longer he puts off obedience. Like a hedge of thorns obstructing his path, laziness makes his way of life more and more difficult (Proverbs 15:19). We call it procrastinating; wisdom calls it senseless (Proverbs 24:30). May we obey the first time, right away, all the way, with a happy heart. May we not be smoke in the eyes of the Lord, He who has sent us as messengers to proclaim His excellencies (1 Peter 2:9).

- Justin Dobbs

**Clippings:**

INTEREST

"I can't get interested in the church", remarked a young lady.

"NO," was the reply given her. "You can hardly expect to. It is somewhat like getting interest at the bank. You have to put in something first, and the more you put in - time or money or prayer - the more the interest grows."

- Unknown

CONSIDER

"When you see a dirty face in the mirror you wash the face, not the glass. Don't try to make God's Word read differently but rather bring your spiritual activities into alignment with it. Remember, friend, it isn't the mirror - IT'S YOU!"

- Unknown

**Doctor Feel Good versus The Great Physician**

Matthew 9:12 – "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick."

A common pet-peeve of many doctors is convincing their patients to be open and honest about the symptoms of their diseases. Though any doctor worth his salt wants to fix the problem, not every patient desires to be completely healed of their diseases. Eager to present themselves in a positive light, many patients are fearful of being lectured or judged by their physician for their bad lifestyle choices. Other patients are simply looking for pain medication to dull the hurt or continued disability to prolong their co-dependence. What they actually need is hard medicine, but they seldom take it because often their goal is a quick, temporary fix to get them through the week.

Dr. Feel Good, on the other hand, is very popular with these patients. If they are interested in simply dulling the pain brought on by their diseases, he will provide all of the opiates their hearts desire. If the patient is looking for a statement to support continued disability payments, they will go out of their way to accommodate. Dr. Feel Good never rebukes your lifestyle; he will never judge your irresponsible choices; he will never speak negatively. His only goal is to make you happy because he can only stay in business when he has people who depend on him. That is where he derives his sense of self-worth.

In the religious world, Dr. Feel Goods are a dime a dozen. Their sermons are watered down, sugar-coated, and diluted of any mention of sin (2 Corinthians 2:17). They will never rebuke you unless exposed of their malpractice, at which point they'll pick up their scalpel to wound rather than fix you, because Dr. Feel Good can only stay in business if he can acquire volatile Christians who depend on his quick fixes. Tragically and ironically, Dr. Feel Good is who he is because he cannot fix himself, and therefore becomes just as codependent on unstable Christians as they are on him. It is a vicious, deadly cycle for disciples who lack the faith and courage to seek help elsewhere.

The Great Physician, Jesus Christ, however, is fully qualified to cure us from the disease of sin. While most doctors require years of schooling, He has been qualified from eternity (1 Peter 1:20; Ephesians 1:4). Having no need of our charts, he is perfectly acquainted with our sickness, knowing us better than we know ourselves (John 2:25). As someone who sympathizes with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15), He has the perfect bedside manner. But unlike Dr. Feel Good, He knows how to use that scalpel to cut right into the problem and help us (Hebrews 4:12). While some doctors are too booked or fearful of contracting our disease, Jesus makes house calls (Matthew 11:28); and no disease is too dreadful that He is not willing to lay His beautiful, healing hands upon (Luke 5:12-13). And our Great Physician has never lost a patient when He is willing to take the cure for this dreaded disease called sin.

If you are a Christian who is not getting the spiritual medicine you need, there are other physicians-in-training available to help guide you to the Great Physician. It may be hard medicine and the knife may hurt from time to time; but only the pure, unadulterated word of God can heal you of your disease.

- Ryan Hasty

**Some People Just Don't Listen!**

On August 24, 1992 category 5 Atlantic Hurricane Andrew hit landfall in South Florida. Until Hurricane Katrina in 2005, it was the most destructive and the most costly hurricane in the United States, with wind gusts as high as 174 mph. The hurricane passed directly through Homestead, where my brother Jim and wife Sally were living. Records indicate that Andrew destroyed more than 63,500 houses and damaged more than 124,000 others.

Plenty of advanced notice warnings were broadcast over the radio and television for days leading up to the disaster. Military and law-enforcement personnel scoured the streets repeatedly warning people to evacuate. But you have learned just as I have, of the "hard cases" who choose to "hunker down" and "ride it out!" It seems to be the case whenever a hurricane comes ashore in this country. Some people just don't listen! Sixty-five people were reported as dead.

There's a Great Day coming when time will be no more. The Lord God who gave life to every person will call all to appear before His Son (2 Corinthians 5:10), whom He appointed as Judge over all hearts and lives (Acts 17:30-31). The faithful will be rewarded, but only punishment remains for all others (Matthew 25:31-33, 46). The warnings have gone forth into all the world (Colossians 1:23; Romans 10:18) and are continuing at this present day (John 12:48). Many hear and heed the warnings, but very, very many refuse to enter the refuge Jesus Christ has offered (cf. John 3:36).

We have all been warned! Are you one of the procrastinating "hold outs"? Have you falsely convinced yourself that you can "hunker down" and "ride it out"? Are you refusing His invitation, attempting to convince yourself that it won't be so bad because you won't be alone? Will you be one that the Lord says will not listen (cf. Matthew 7:24-27)?

- Gary Smalley

\* "Let the Bible fill your memory, rule your heart, and guide your feet!"

\* "Looking on the bright side of life will never cause eyestrain!"

\* "Many things are opened by mistake none more often than the mouth!"

\* "Keep your head and your heart pointed in the right direction and you won't have to worry about your feet!"

\* "Just because we came from dirt doesn't mean we have to wallow in it!"

**Family Matters**

**Thank God for our precious spiritual family!**

**PRAYERS:** Pray for those who have fallen away from the faith. Pray for the sick: Christy Cook; Phil Hutton.

Please pray for our children & older members: Ellen Joyner, Earl King, Marie Lively, Donna Teague, Judy Michael, Minner Hicks, Dean Powell, and Annie Hardin.

Friends & family of our members: Ben & Martha Needham; Cokey Elder; Juano Cox; Kenneth & Paula Wadley; Robert & Shirley Allen; Starla Young (Brenda's niece); Jane Snell; Jonah Pruitt (age 6); Linda Sherman (Sabrina's Aunt in Nursing Care).

**THANK YOU FOR VISITING:** Gina Goforth & Zach, 2315 Durham Ave., Brownwood, TX 76801.

**THIS WEEK'S SERMONS:** Sunday Morning: *"Why I Left My Former Religion!"* (2 Timothy 1:7-10); Sunday Evening: *"The Joy of Liberating Slaves!"* (John 8:31-36).

**BIBLE CLASS:** *A Study of General Epistles* (Vol. 2), by Billy W. Moore, page 92.

***Elders:  Gordon Percell & Gary Smalley***

***Evangelist: Gary Smalley***

**Sunday AM: 9:30 & 10:30
Sunday PM: 5:00
Wednesday PM: 7:00**

**✯⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁⦁✯**

***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)