

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Issues Facing the Church

There are issues which children of God are faced with in every age and our age is no different. The sins remain the same, but the particular ones that must be dealt with more specifically vary from time to time. It is good to analyze the specific issues of our time so that we can be on the alert and defend the truth against any attack (1 Peter 5:8).

The preaching of Jesus and the apostles sounded an alarm. They tried to alert people to the dangers about them. Jesus warned His listeners of false teachers in the Sermon on the Mount and Paul warned the elders at Ephesus about corruption from within the eldership and attacks from without (Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-32). Thus, one of the works a gospel preacher should be engaged in is the work of warning the brethren of dangers. This brings us to an issue we face in the church today. There seems to be less and less warning coming from preachers today and when some do sound a clear warning signal, they are derided for being alarmists and divisive.

Sermons that call the names of false teachers and their heresies are not wanted in many churches today. They are considered out of place in our refined society. That may be one reason why some churches have problems, because the problems seep in and fester for a few years and then finally erupt. Had adequate warning been given, the problems may have been recognized much earlier and taken care of before much damage could be done.

Soft, compromising preaching is an issue that faces us today in the church of our Lord. Preaching that would make a member of a denominational church comfortable at our services may be truth, but not the truth that is needed. Some preachers avoid sermons that specifically deal with the works of the flesh. They are aware that members are present who are involved in those sins and are afraid that direct preaching from the pulpit on such might scare them off. This lack of strength is conditioned by fear of losing one's source of income, which may result in a cramped lifestyle. Gospel preachers must always remember that we are accountable to God and not to man for the message we preach (1 Thessalonians 2:4).

Another issue facing the church today is worldliness. Christians who blend in with the world are not friends with God (James 4:4). More and more we hear sins of worldliness being defended by Christians. Mixed swimming, attending the high school prom, drinking of intoxicants, the wearing of shorts and other scanty attire, and watching filthy entertainment on television or at the movies are some of the activities that are being practiced and defended by some Christians today. The influence of Christians is disintegrating as they condone more and more of these sins. Many churches have members in them who participate in one or more of these sins and other members who would oppose these sins sit silently by and slowly deteriorate. They have not the faith in God or his word to firmly stand against the error among the members of the local congregation.

Worldliness is an ever-present danger and we must be reminded about its deceptiveness and taught about its various forms. Elders who chaperone dances and preachers who defend their right to do so are examples of how far into worldliness some have gone. The frog that slowly boils to death a degree at a time is just as dead as if he had been run over by a car. Many Christians are slowly but surely headed down the road of spiritual death.

The cares of this world is another danger in the church today. Jesus warned about this in Luke 8:14 when he said, "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection." Sometimes our wants turn into our needs and we spend countless hours working for that which will perish one day (John 6:27). During those hours of working for the perishable, our spiritual side diminishes until it finally dies altogether. A life that at one time was filled with zeal for the Lord gradually smothers to death. What a horrible and tragic waste. Rarely does one go down this road without taking some with him; the wife, the children, or others in the Lord's body.

Another issue we face today is the issue of fellowship. We are being encouraged, by once faithful gospel preachers, to fellowship false teachers. These false teachers are defended because they only teach a "little" bit of error. How much error does one have to teach or practices before he displeases God?

Rat poison is 98% grain and only 2% poison. Does the fact that a rat only eats a small amount of poison in relation to the amount of good grain change the end result? He is just as dead as if he had eaten 100% poison. Those teaching error on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the deity of Christ, or any other soul-damning heresy are to be marked and avoided (Romans 16:17). Those advocating that faithful Christians fellowship them should also be marked and avoided as they, too, have stepped outside the doctrine of

Christ (2 John 9-11; Ephesians 5:11). This is a growing problem among churches today and brethren need to be taught God's truth on these matters.

These are some of the issues we face today. They have faced brethren before and some have stood and others have fallen. Let us be like the Bereans who "received that word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). And then, after receiving that word, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

- Andy Alexander, via Guardian of Truth, 10/07/1993

WHEN "MOSES SPAKE NOTHING" IT LIMITED — WHEN CHRIST "DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING" IT LIMITS TOO!

In discussing the use of instrumental music in worship, we are often met with the argument, "The New Testament doesn't say anything about instruments" or "it doesn't say not to use them." Let us look at Hebrews 7:12-14 for a parallel. The law given by God to Moses authorized priests from the tribe of Levi, yet it did not specify that men of Judah or other tribes of Israel could not be priests. Moses affirmed what was to be done, and his silence about other tribes placed a limitation. In 1 Kings 12:31 we see Jereboam making priests which were not of the sons of Levi and in so doing sinned against God. As long as that law prevailed, which commanded priests to be of Levi, (Numbers 18:6), even though Moses had made no negative statements about other tribes, Jesus could not become a priest upon the earth. When that law was annulled then he became our high priest in heaven even though he was from Judah, because the law changed and the Gospel named Him our priest.

Now, the New Testament tells us to sing, (Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16), but it speaks nothing of instrumental music in worship. It neither mentions nor condemns, because He has told us what we are to do: sing. Though fire is fire, when Nadab and Abihu offered a strange fire "which He commanded them not", (Leviticus 10:1), God killed them. It is true that singing is music and instruments make music; but one the Lord commanded and the other He has not. When God has not given instructions, we dare not add to His specific commands. The church can work through no organization but the local members with elders and deacons; it can do no work except preaching the truth, edifying and helping its indigent members for this is the work God has commanded or taught it to do in the Scriptures. His silence must stop us there.

But it is argued that the Jews used instruments. So they did and they offered animal sacrifices and had Levitical priests, but we must not for we are under a different law according to our text in this lesson. The Scriptures of the New Testament become our sole authority for what we can and must do in service to God today. We are commanded to assemble and worship together, (Hebrews 10:25), and we have examples of places with such conveniences as lights being provided for these assemblies. So we have authority to provide a convenient place for our worship. But we have neither command, example nor necessary inference for instruments. We are provided by the Lord with a voice to sing as He commands.

- Frank Smith in The Instructor, May, 1982

From Mountain to Valley

"Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, 'Thus says the LORD, Because the Arameans have said, The LORD is a god of the mountains, but He is not a god of the valleys, therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.'" (1 Kings 20:28).

As a Bible student, you will recall the spectacular display of the glory of Jehovah God over the false and worthless idols, Baal and Asherah, in the contest on Mt. Carmel between God's prophet, Elijah, and the eight-hundred fifty false prophets that ate at Jezebel's table (1 Kings 18). When the people witnessed the power of the true God over the false idolatrous gods, they reaffirmed their allegiance to Jehovah, and the false prophets were slain as Elijah performed the will of the Lord God. This was an amazing display of power and victory.

Elijah had shown himself to be a courageous representative of the Living God, but when a messenger came to him from Jezebel, who promised that he would be dead by the next day, Elijah lost his courage and fled, being depressed and feeling all alone as the only champion of righteousness.

We all may be familiar with how quickly a mountaintop experience can degenerate into a valley of gloom, by even a few words spoken by another person! One day we may feel confident and courageous in our service to God, and the next we may feel dejected, helpless and alone.

Let us find the comfort in our God that Elijah found (1 Kings 19). He is always in control, as He is the God of the mountain as well as the God of the valley. He ministered to the

needs of His servant, just like He will minister to our needs – during times of courage and times of weakness.

Are you confident and courageous today, or are you feeling down and out? What do you need to ask your heavenly Father for today? Remember, no one will strengthen you like your heavenly Father!

- Gary Smalley

* "If you cheat on the test, don't thank the Lord for the 'A!'"

* "If you don't avoid the bait you'll end up on the hook!"

* "If you don't like the devil's fruit, stay out of his orchard!"

* "If you don't like the way you were born, try being born again!"

* "If you have a kind thought, share it by encouraging others with kind words!"

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)