

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

841 Old Hickory Blvd.

Jackson, TN 38305

oldhickorycofc.com

March 15, 2015

Volume 35, # 12

Presuming to Know the Mind of God

In writing to the church at Corinth, Paul described the unfolding of God's scheme of redemption as the revelation of a mystery that was previously hidden.

“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

Paul explained that the only way for man to know the mind of God is for the Holy Spirit to reveal it. Today, that revelation is found in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16). It is not only erroneous, but also dangerous to the fate of our eternal souls, to go beyond the Scriptures and presume to know the mind of God. Let us notice how we may, if we are not careful, be guilty of this.

Interpreting Events

People often want there to be a reason why certain events occur – not just as consequences of certain actions, but for God to somehow be doing something behind the scenes to teach us something. Notice what Jesus said about this:

“Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish’” (Luke 13:1-5).

Jesus discussed two events about which people were jumping to conclusions and assuming that these tragedies occurred because God caused them. His point was that we should not immediately jump to such conclusions. Sometimes bad things just happen, as “time and chance overtake [us] all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11). Sometimes bad things happen as a consequence of sin (Proverbs 13:15). However, we should not immediately assume that when something happens – whether it is good or bad – that God had some direct involvement in it so that He might communicate some thought to us. Rather than trying to interpret events as if they were signs from God, which is a characteristic of “an evil and

adulterous generation” (Matthew 16:4), we should look to God’s word to find out what His will is (1 Corinthians 2:10-12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Scriptures say, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God” (Deuteronomy 29:29). It is foolish for us to presume to understand anything about the will of God that is not found in His word.

Engaging in Good Works

It is common to hear religious people describe the “good works” they do, either as individuals or through their churches. The desire to be engaged in good works is commendable, but we need to be careful what we classify as “good works.” Notice what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Many religious people are comfortable following the motto, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Yet we must remember what the Scriptures teach and not pull a verse out of context to justify whatever we might want to do. How do we glorify God? The same way Jesus glorified the Father: “I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4). We glorify God by doing

His will. What is His will? Rather than presume to know the mind of God, we should look to His word to see what pleases Him. Jesus explained in the passage above that there would be many well-meaning, religious believers who would be lost. They would be lost because, although they claimed to do things in the name of the Lord, they were actually practicing lawlessness (practices for which they had no law/authority). Just because a particular work seems good to us or is common among the religious world, we must not presume that God will be pleased by it. Instead, we must “hold fast the pattern of sound words” (2 Timothy 1:13, NKJV) and limit ourselves to those practices which are authorized in His word.

Becoming a Christian

How does one become a Christian? Sadly, many presume to know the answer to this question based upon what they see and hear in the denominational world, rather than looking to the Scriptures to answer the question. As an illustration, notice the example of Naaman who came to Elisha to be cleansed of his leprosy:

“Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean.’ But Naaman was furious and went away and said, ‘Behold, I thought, “He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.” Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of

Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?' So he turned and went away in a rage" (2 Kings 5:10-12).

Naaman needed cleansing. Yet when Elisha told him how to be cleansed, he rejected it (until his servants later convinced him to listen). But initially, he thought God's way was too simple (washing in the Jordan River) and was inferior to an alternate plan he contemplated (using the rivers of his homeland). Yet when he finally followed God's plan, he was healed (2 Kings 5:14).

Today, we need to be cleansed of our sins (Romans 3:23). This is possible through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14). But how do we become cleansed of our sins? The Jews on the day of Pentecost did not presume to know the answer. They asked: "Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Unfortunately, many today are like Naaman, saying, "Behold, I thought..." (2 Kings 5:11). They presume that one is a Christian by faith alone, by praying a "sinner's prayer," by just being a good person, etc. But the Jews on Pentecost did not make such assumptions. So what were they told to do? "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Though many in the denominational world either ignore or minimize the importance of baptism, the Scriptures teach that baptism precedes forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), salvation (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21), and being in Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27). Rather than presuming to know what to do to be saved, we should simply do what the Scriptures teach.

Conclusion

The Hebrew writer said that Jesus is “to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation” (Hebrews 5:9). Our souls are too important for us to risk losing them over our assumptions about the will of God. In everything we do, let us carefully search the Scriptures so that we might do all that the Lord commands and do only that which He authorizes us to do.

- Andy Sochor

Are You Interested?

Devotees of pagan religions memorize their "sacred writings." No one can teach in a Mohammedan mosque until he has memorized the Koran. Buddhist priests can quote their writings for hours without making a mistake. How is this possible? *They are deeply interested in their subject.*

Some sports enthusiasts can tell you the batting averages of practically every player in the major leagues. They know the scores of every football game played last year. Some go so far as to watch two games at once on different televisions lest they miss some significant play. Why is this? *They are deeply interested in their subject.*

Others are experts at Trivial Pursuit. They can answer questions ranging from movie stars to motor cycles, from science to snow-capped mountains, from Japanese customs to Jack and Jill

nursery rhymes. How did they obtain such proficiency in trivialities? *They are deeply interested in their subject.*

Some who profess to be Christians don't know where to find scriptures telling man what to do to be saved. They have need that one teach them again concerning the first principles (Heb.5:12). *Wonder why?*

- Rick Duggin

- > Arrogance is born from the idea that one person has what others lack.
 - > As water never rises above its level, so what we do never rises above what we have in our hearts.
 - > "If you stop and ask yourself why you are not so devoted as the (early) Christians, your own heart will tell you that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it." - William Law
 - > "Faith like Job's cannot be shaken because it is the result of having been shaken." - Abraham Heschel
-

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"The Church: The Body of Christ!"* (Text: Col. 1:13-18); Sunday evening: *"Characteristics of the Mature! [Part 2]"* (Text: Eph. 4:11-15).

GOSPEL MEETING 2015: Our Gospel Meeting is scheduled for July 19-24, with Jerry Crolus, of Conway, AR, preaching.