

The Old Hickory

Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Secret Sins, Hidden Faults!

In a recent letter a respected preacher and reader of Guardian of Truth asked me to write something on Psalms 19:12-13. Neither of us believe David was asking for an unconditional forgiveness of sins of ignorance. Both of us believe one may sin in ignorance (Lk. 12:47-48) -- but we both believe sin is still sin, and must be forgiven if we are to be acceptable before God (cf. Lev. 5:17). This was a simple and direct request for exegesis and thoughts on David's prayer-like statements in the Psalm cited, and we will so treat it.

The ASV reads, "Who can discern (his) errors? Clear thou me from hidden (faults). Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous (sins), "Let them not have dominion over me, Then shall I be upright, and I shall be clear from great transgression."

Let us first consider David's question. In preceding verses he praised the virtues of God's law, testimony, precepts, commandments, and ordinances. "By them is thy servant warned" (v. 11). David is not questioning the adequacy nor the clarity of God's law. The intense sincerity evident in the psalm, and the fact that "clear" or "cleanse" (KJV) means "absolve" or "set free of guilt," forbids our thinking David sought an excuse for his sins. He asks, "Who can discern (his) errors?"

in a rhetorical manner, implying none can know himself so perfectly. The "his" is supplied, but removing it only broadens the question. This is a cry of despair. Coming from one like David, in the context of a plea for mercy, it seems rather to be an asking for divine assistance in knowing his sins, that he may avoid them in the future. At the same time he recognizes man will never know either himself or the law in an absolute sense.

"Clear" (forgive) me of hidden (secret) faults - follows, and rests upon the previous rhetorical question; the hidden sins being those not perceived, those none can discern. Yes, the language ("secret sins") could apply to sins David knew, but kept hidden from others; but would David pray for such sins? This interpretation injects brazen gall into a psalm to God by one who repeatedly recognizes Him as Pure and All-Knowing; who in the next breath prays, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." Hold the writer and his context clearly in mind, and you will reject such an anomaly-Pulpit Commentary is concise: "Who can understand his errors? rather, who can discern (or, perceive) his errors? i.e., all of them. Who will not overlook some, try as he may to search out his heart? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Those which are hidden from me, which I cannot discern." This is fair and clear exegesis.

The "presumptuous sins" of verse 13, are in contrast to sins of verse 12, and help to define them. From a word meaning "to seethe, boil over," the term signifies "willful, deliberate, insolent" sin; Delitzsch says, "opposite of sin arising from infirmity." It seems unlikely that one of David's disposition would "insolently" ins' yet, he prays "keep back" thy servant from such. Note David's use of "keep back" in 1 Samuel 25:33, 39, to appreciate its use here. David knew the subtlety of temptation and sin, and wanted to stay as far from it as possible. Only by so doing could he avoid the ultimate end of total apostasy. As he says, "Then shall I be upright, and I shall be clear from great transgression" (v. 13b). It is difficult to understand how anyone, keeping these verses in context and fairly interpreting them, could conclude that David was excusing sin, or seeking to justify himself. It is far out indeed, to say they teach "unconditional forgiveness."

But we should not close this article without warning about misuse of Scriptures "to justify a good cause." If we believe one man teaches error on a certain text, this does not justify our misuse of that text to answer him. May one sin without being aware of it? Few, if any, deny this. Then we should not allow David's secret sins," however interpreted, to lead us away from the heart of claims regarding unconditional forgiveness? And even if we deemed it necessary to question "secret sins," we should avoid mechanical arguments that "play" with words, ignoring the context.

- Robert F. Turner
Guardian of Truth, December 19, 1985

Should We Let the Kids "Decide for Themselves"?

Occasionally we hear parents who say that they don't want to force religion on their children. These misguided folks think they are doing their kids a favor by letting them "decide for themselves". They're afraid that there will be some resentment in the children later if religion has been 'crammed down their throats'.

May we be absolutely blunt in response? That is one of the stupidest ideas anyone ever suggested!!! We force many things on our children. We insist that they bathe, brush their teeth, change their clothes, etc. We "cram" education down their throats by making them attend school regularly. We demand that they do their homework. We force them to eat good food, get adequate rest, and do other things that are important to their health and development. We do all of this because we know it is in their best interest. And, we do it even when the kids don't like it. Why is it that this common sense approach is neglected by parents who are determined to "let the kids decide for themselves" when it comes to religion?

Dr. James Dobson writes: "There is a critical period when certain kinds of instruction are easier in the life of children. There is a brief period during childhood when youngsters are vulnerable to religious

training. Their concepts of right and wrong are formulated during this time, and their view of God begins to solidify. The opportunity of that period must be seized when it is available. The absence or misapplication of instruction through that prime-time period may place a severe limitation on the depth of the child's later devotion to God. When parents withhold indoctrination from their small children, allowing them to "decide for themselves", the adults are almost guaranteeing that their youngsters will "decide" in the negative."

God's word has always taught us the truth on this subject: *"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6).

- by Greg Gwin

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Can We Be The Church That Jesus Built, Today?"* (text: Col. 1:9-14); Sunday evening: *Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – The Fruitless Fig Tree!* (Mark 11:12-14, 20-26).

SCHEDULE: Our Vacation Bible School is scheduled for June 20-24, 7:00 PM, with Dwayne Gandy as our guest speaker. Our Fall Gospel Meeting is scheduled for Sept. 18-23, with Eric Reynolds.