

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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WHAT KIND OF TREE DO YOU HAVE?

In Matthew 12 Jesus healed “a demon-possessed man *who was blind and mute*” (vs. 22). “But when the Pharisees heard *this*, they said, ‘This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.’” (vs. 24). But Jesus quickly exposed their imbecility and their iniquity. In answering their charge Jesus said, “If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?” (vs. 26). In expelling demons, Jesus was spoiling Satan's goods, or Satan's house, which could not have been done unless Satan was previously bound (vs. 29). Jesus showed that they were guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit by their charge that the essence of Jesus' power was Satan rather than the Holy Spirit. They were in effect speaking of the Holy Spirit in a profane, irreverent, and contemptuous manner. But, the Pharisees were revealing something else by their wicked charges: the content of their hearts.

Earlier Jesus had warned of false prophets, saying, “You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 7:16-19). The kind of tree determines what kind of fruit will spring forth, and examining the fruit will reveal the kind of tree that brought it forth. Their wicked and blasphemous speech openly revealed the content of their own hearts, to which Jesus replied with one of His strongest and most explicit censures: “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” (Matthew 12:34). They were evil men because of the “evil treasure” of their hearts (vs. 35).

Their contemptuous blasphemy was termed “careless” words by Jesus (vs. 36), that is, they were useless, inactive and barren. But the passage seems to indicate that the careless words of which Jesus spoke were EVIL, and not only ineffective and worthless. These Pharisees were slandering the Holy Spirit, their charges were false, rotten, wicked, having no reverence or truth about them whatsoever! Jesus was meeting their vile charges and showing that all who were guilty of speaking in such a manner “shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.” (vs. 36), and would suffer condemnation (vs. 37).

Friend, have you spoken in an irreverent or contemptuous manner? Have you taken inventory of the content of your heart? What kind of fruit are you bearing? What kind of tree do you have? Are you evil in the Lord's estimation? How will you fare on the Day of Judgment? May we assist you in becoming a Christian and remaining faithful?

- GFS

BIDDING GODSPEED TO ERROR

One of the most dangerous inroads to error and compromise is our failure to rebuke false doctrine. Jeremiah 1:10 says, "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant." Notice that of the six things Jeremiah was to do to the nations and kingdoms, four of them were negative and only two were positive!

I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

In the little one chapter book of Second John, we learn that we must not bid God's blessings upon those who fail to teach the doctrine of Christ. When we do we become partakers of their evil deeds and find ourselves devoid of the Lord. The doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-2) need no encouragement from followers of the Saviour. Jesus, meek and gentle, pointedly rebuked the servants of Satan for the hellish mandates, (Matthew 23; Mark 12:24). When precious souls are in the balance we dare not compromise truth under the guise of "being polite." False teachers must always find sharp conflict with the soldiers of Christ who wield not the sword of the Spirit in vain, (Eph. 6:17). When the emissaries of Hell feel comfortable in our presence, we have "bowed the knee to Baal." (1 Kings 18:21).

There seems to be a growing movement to criticize CRITICISM! That old ecumenical cry of "Let's agree to disagree" passes over Ephesians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2 and 1 Thessalonians 5:21. These passages clearly demand that we not only "prove all things," but that we rebuke untruth and have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." There seems to be many now who pick up the old cry-baby tactic: "Just look for the good in everyone and then you won't have time to be critical." And if one is critical he is weak, paranoid, and to be pitied.

What a convenient way to build a system of error! Ahab never liked Elijah and Micah because they were always condemning his evil plans. Jewish leaders never did become ardent friends of Christ for the same reason. I also seem to recall that Peter and John and other apostles spent many days in prison because they had not read *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Poor Stephen got himself stoned to death. Unfortunately, he lived long before some of our brilliant (?) thinkers came out with this "Don't be critical" advice. More than anything else, I would recommend to every Christian a

careful study of Acts, First and Second Timothy and Titus and much, much less of Peale, Graham, Carnegie, and Wilkerson. The psychology of the Bible is often just the opposite of what the world calls compromise.

One of the best and clearest ways to bid Godspeed to error is to rebuke those who are rebuking error. May fervent evangelists and dedicated elders of Christ never be persuaded to sheath the sword of TRUTH.

-- Johnny Ramsey
Via *The Instructor*, Jan., 1982

ONLY THE GOSPEL SAVES

Divisions among people professing to be Christians have been a greater disadvantage to the cause of Christ than Judaism, Roman Catholicism and infidelity combined. Is there any remedy? There must be, for Jesus Christ would have not prayed so fervently for the oneness of His people without furnishing a basis on which it can be accomplished. Whatever makes a man a sectarian is useless, and may therefore be laid aside. Can a man be saved and not believe in Methodism? Methodists themselves admit he can. Methodism is not the gospel, for "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Can a man be saved and not believe in Baptist doctrine? Baptists themselves admit that he can. Baptist doctrine is not the gospel, for "He that believeth not shall be damned." Can a man be saved and not believe in Presbyterianism? Presbyterians themselves admit that he can. Presbyterianism is not the gospel, for "He that believeth not shall be damned." The same argument may be applied to many of the religious orders in "Christendom" with the same results in every particular, hence I conclude that a man may be a Christian, be a follower of Christ - be saved - and reject all systems of human opinion. In order to be a Christian, a man must believe in Christ and obey the gospel. In order to be a sectarian - a Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc. - a man must accept something in addition to the divine system.

---An excerpt from the book,
THE GREAT CONTROVERSY
by Ashley S. Johnson

SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Examine Yourselves!"* (text: 2 Cor. 13:5-6); Sunday evening: *"A Lost Generation!"* (text: Numbers 13-14).