

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Holding Forth the Word of Life

“Hello, Simon, did you hear about the incident up at the temple yesterday? We were a little late for the hour of prayer, and when we got there, we heard this awful commotion in Solomon’s porch. Peter and John had just healed a lame man—they’re always trying to get attention, you know—and Peter was doing the preaching as usual.

Well, Simon, you should have heard the sermon. No, on second thought, I’m glad you were spared the agony. Do you know that Peter preached the same old sermon that he used on Pentecost? People get tired of hearing the same old thing.

And he was so offensive. He actually accused them of being ignorant and said they had been guilty in the crucifixion of Jesus. They were guilty, of course, but Peter doesn’t have to be so plainspoken right to their face. And scripture, scripture, scripture! I get so tired of hearing scripture all the time. I thought he would never get through.

And, would you believe, it was the very time I had chosen to take Joseph with me. I was just mortified! I apologized for what happened, but I just know he’ll never go with me again. In fact, he might never speak to me again.

But that’s not all! Before Peter got through preaching, the priest and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came up and arrested Peter and John right there. Simon, I was so embarrassed! We’ll never do any good with all this bad publicity. They get a good crowd together and then ruin it all by getting arrested. The apostles don’t know a thing about gaining public favor.

And all they want is money. They probably want more people to sell their possessions. They won’t get mine! I can’t stand fanatics; besides, those people are just showing off giving all that money.

And, by the way, Simon, I hear they are counting the number of converts again. Boy, they sure do go for numbers. But let them count. The way they're going, there won't be a church left around here. We can just get ready to close the doors. Nobody wants to be a part of a church where the preachers preach the same old thing all the time and are constantly being arrested.

Did you say something, Simon? What did you say? The number is what? The number of men is up to... to... 5,000?!"

- Bill Hall

CONTEMPLATING: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (Part 2)

In order for sinful man to have God's approval, his sins must be forgiven. When sins are forgiven, the individual is said to be a "new creature". As a "new creature," one is then reconciled to God. Consider the following passage:

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

As we approach the study of forgiveness of sins and how one can obtain that forgiveness, our very first consideration should be given to locating the means whereby we can obtain forgiveness, or remission of sins, or reconciliation. According to the passage cited above, the avenue by which we obtain reconciliation is the word of God. God gave the apostles the "ministry of reconciliation," having committed unto them the "word of reconciliation." Jesus told the eleven to, "... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16). By this passage we can see that it is absolutely necessary for every human to hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it in order to be saved. All Christians have the responsibility of taking the GOSPEL to every man. The GOSPEL provides the means of salvation, forgiveness, reconciliation. Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 1:21 that, "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." Of course this refers to the preaching of the GOSPEL, the un-perverted, uncorrupted message that was taught by Jesus and His chosen apostles in the first century. It is this pure and unadulterated GOSPEL that Paul

refers to in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

As you notice the following passages of scripture, ask yourself this question: What means has God provided for man to obtain forgiveness?

1. "Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:22-23).
2. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
3. "Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." (James 1: 21).
4. "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13).
5. "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).
6. "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." (Acts 20:32).
7. "to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel," (Ephesians 3:6).
8. "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).
9. "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." (John 6:63).

10. "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe." (1 Thess. 2:13).

11. [Peter] "and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household." (Acts 11:14).

12. "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (Jesus' prayer to the Father, John 17:17).

This is not a complicated or confusing subject. It only becomes so when men interject their ideas and philosophies into it. There is much confusion in the religious world today about the means of obtaining forgiveness. Some try to make the process of conversion into some kind of mysterious or miraculous process that is difficult for people to understand. Some interject into the study of conversion all manner of passages that have no relation to the subject other than to be used out of context to support their wild notions about obtaining forgiveness. God does not show respect of persons by making forgiveness available through a long, drawn out, complicated process that two-thirds of humanity could never understand.

It appears as if many want their knowledge of the Bible to be presented to them on a silver platter, already digested and "simplified" by religious teachers. Do we lack the self-initiative to take the Bible in hand, an open mind, and common sense, and STUDY FOR OURSELVES to see what God has revealed to us? I can understand why Paul made this statement: "But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3).

Some talk of God having to draw the sinner (they mean through some miraculous means). I agree completely that God draws the sinner, but HOW does He do it? He does so through the influence of the GOSPEL, the message that was preached and recorded for our instruction. Note carefully, John 6:44-45, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me." God draws the sinner by teaching him. When he is taught, he has learned of the Father and comes to Christ. Is that not simple? It is the TRUTH!

- Gary Smalley

> "Calling attention to the faults of others never rids us of our faults!"

- > “Some people, like tea, never know their real strength until they get into hot water!”
 - > “To be angry with a weak man is proof you are not very strong yourself!”
 - > “Blessed is the man who refrains from speaking until he knows what he is talking about!”
 - > “A diamond is a chunk of coal that made good under pressure!”
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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)