

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Excerpt from the Oliphant-Rice Debate

Dallas, TX, January 1935, pp 526-28.

The following is an excerpt from gospel preacher W.L. Oliphant's last speech on the proposition, "The Scriptures Teach that a Child of God Who has Been Saved by the Blood of Christ Can So Sin as to be Finally Lost," and his last speech in the eight night debate. I found it to be quite eloquent and touching. - Gary Kerr

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"Ladies and gentlemen, this will probably be the last time I shall have the opportunity of speaking to all of you. Like the apostle Paul, I want to be 'free from blood of all men.' I warn you that you cannot live in sin on earth and then spend eternity with God and the blest in heaven. The Bible as clearly teaches this as it is possible for a thing to be taught. The grace and mercy of God are boundless. His love for us is beyond means. It is only through his wonderful grace that any of us can be saved. But, consistent with the majesty and holiness of deity, God cannot approve sin in any one. The Lord demands that we be faithful to him to the end. Does that mean that we must be faultless? None of us live faultless lives, but we may live faithful lives. To illustrate: Here are a man and a woman who have been married for half a century. Does that mean that they have been perfect? Have they been faultless? Have they never mistreated each other and had to apologize and forgive and overlook wrongs? No, it does not mean that. But it does mean that they have never been divorced. So the man who has been faithful to Christ has never been divorced from Christ. He has not deserted Christ or ceased to believe in him or serve him, even though his service has been imperfect. The grace of God will make that one faultless who has been faithful. If in our efforts to serve him, we make mistakes, our opportunities for forgiveness are legion; he has provided a plan whereby we may be forgiven. This plan involves repentance, confession, and prayer (Acts 8:22; James 5:16). Our high priest, in loving sympathy and perfect understanding, intercedes for us at the throne of mercy. He 'can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,' since he 'was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin' (Hebrews 4:15). The Son of God, as our advocate, constantly

represents us at the court of heaven. 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous' (1 John 2:1). But if we spurn and reject the opportunities of his advocacy until death overtakes us, we cannot expect a home in heaven: There is no sin there. Life's pathway is crooked, rugged, and dangerous. We can safely travel it only by following in the footsteps of him who gave his life for us. The turbulent stream of death must be crossed by all of us. Only by clinging to the hand of him who conquered death can we safely cross this stream and find rest under the shade of the tree of life. When the children of Israel, in their march to Canaan, came to the Jordan river, they were told that they could not stem its turbulent tide. From the viewpoint of man that was, no doubt, true; but God was leading. On the approach of God's appointed leader, Joshua, the dangerous water receded, and those who followed in the footsteps of Joshua crossed safely."

"I beseech you, my friends, that you walk in the footsteps of the Christ, not just for awhile, but down to the very end of life's journey. When you touch the waters of death, you will find that the chill has been removed by the great burning heart of the Son of God. Holding to his gracious hand and looking to the light of his glorious countenance, you may cross the otherwise dark and chilling stream in the blessed warmth and light of him who is our 'all in all.'"

"May God bless you!"

CONTEMPLATING: THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS **(Part 3)**

We have shown thus far by our articles that the Bible teaches that sin separates man from God, both in this life and in the life to come. Those that receive forgiveness from God will live eternally in heaven after this life, while those who do not receive forgiveness from God will be confined to hell eternally. We also presented several passages of scripture which show that the GOSPEL is that which provides the means of salvation.

Our next consideration in the study of forgiveness is the HEART of man. Most of the references to the "heart" in the Bible mean something other than man's physical blood pump. Indicative of this are the following passages showing the action of the heart: (a) The heart thinks, "And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, "Why are you thinking evil in your hearts?" - Matt. 9:4; (b) The heart understands, "And the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge, ..." - Isa. 32:4, ASV; (c) The heart knows, "The heart knows its own bitterness, ..." - Prov. 14:10; (d) The heart believes, "for with the heart a person believes, ..." - Rom. 10:10; (e) The heart doubts, "and does not doubt in his heart, ..." - Mark 11:23; (f) The heart purposes, "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his

heart, ..." - 2 Cor. 9:7; (g) The heart plans, "The mind of man plans his way, ..." - Prov. 16:9; (h) The heart reasons, "But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts," - Mark 2:6; (i) The heart desires, "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation." - Rom. 10:1; (j) The heart presumes, "... Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?" - Esth. 7:5, ASV; (k) The heart despises, "... she despised him in her heart." - 2 Sam. 6:16; (l) The heart loves, "... YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, ..." - Matt. 22:37.

We can see from these passages that the heart is more than the physical organ found in the human body. It can be thought of, in a general sense, as the mind of man, the seat of the will, intellect, and feeling. Notice Proverbs 4:23, "Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life." Notice also Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ..."

Jesus taught truths about the hearts of men in the parable of the sower which is found in Matt. 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8. The parable from Matt. 13 is this:

"... Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matt. 13:3b-9).

After questions from the disciples about why He spoke in parables, Jesus explained the meaning of the parable of the sower:

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it;

who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Matt. 13:18-23).

In this parable Jesus describes four different kinds of ground which represent four different conditions of the human heart.

(1.) THE WAYSIDE GROUND (beside the road). This ground is packed so hard that it is impossible for the seed to enter it. Some people hear the word of God, and it does them no good because they do not let the word alter their lives. The hard soil represents the individual who has closed his mind to the word of God. There may be any number of reasons for the resulting hard heart. Arrogance, pride, persistence in wrong-doing, thoughtlessness, preoccupation, apathy, procrastination, and all such things that prevent us from recognizing ourselves as standing in any relation to the word of God can make us harden our hearts and thereby reject the gospel.

(2.) THE ROCKY GROUND. People followed Jesus in droves, trailing Him almost everywhere He went. When trouble and persecution came, they gave it all up. Some people today accept the gospel quickly and then reject it just as quickly. They do not live by their convictions, but rather by their feelings. Many find that it is not as easy to be a Christian as they once thought it was, and because of such demands on their faith, they depart from the faith. Their faith is shallow, like a thin layer of soil over a bed of rock.

(3.) THE THORNY GROUND. This describes the person that is so busy with other things that he has no time to be busy in service to God. In Mark 4:19, Jesus describes the thorns as "the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things." It is not that the concerns of life and its earthly things are necessarily bad in themselves. But anything that crowds Christ out of our lives is a thorn. The problem comes when we allow the cares of the world to consume our energies and turn our hearts away from God. We allow our worries and desires to be our master, smothering out what should be our first interest. We do not have to deliberately decide to rebel against God to have this kind of heart. We can just neglect the cultivation of spiritual things, and thereby crowd Christ out of our lives. In doing so, we become unfruitful.

(4.) THE GOOD GROUND. The word, when sown in the good heart, is understood; one's thoughts are on the word so that he really comes to know its meaning. The good heart also receives the word; he takes it in and it becomes a part of him. The good heart also keeps the word; he holds on to it and practices it in his life. His heart continues to be open and receptive to the word. He seeks not to hear what is easy or popular, but what is true. He brings forth fruit "with patience" (Luke 8:15). He does not expect a harvest overnight.

Which kind of ground represents your heart? Are you living in harmony with the truth that you know already? What is your attitude of heart as you read the word of God and/or hear it preached?

- Gary Smalley

- > “Perseverance is strong will. Stubbornness is strong won't!”
 - > “Christianity is not about living in a way to feel good about ourselves, but in a way that God feels good about us!”
 - > “Sometimes what hinders us from following Jesus is not life’s hardships but its comforts!”
 - > “Gossip and anger are like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die!”
 - > “Love for enemies is overflowing good will toward unfriendly people!”
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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)