

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Overtaken in a Fault

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

One characteristic of a spiritually minded person is that he will acknowledge the commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). The passage in Galatians does not indicate that the one overtaken in a fault was not spiritual, but if those who are responsible for restoring such an one do not behave in a spiritual way, they are no better off than the one who was overtaken.

There seems to be a different standard used by some when restoring a preacher who has been overtaken in a fault. True, a preacher's sins may affect more people, simply because he has more influence to begin with, but there should be no double standard employed when deciding what constitutes sin, or when trying to restore a fallen preacher.

Preachers must pay the penalty for, and accept the consequences of their own sins, the same as anyone else. I know of one preacher who is incarcerated now because he violated civil law. I know others who are suffering mental anguish because they brought reproach upon the church, their families, and their own reputation. Atonement can be made for guilt, but often the consequences of sin linger on. These facts should deter those who have not yet sinned, who have not yet been overtaken in a fault.

However, "though we thus speak," I verily believe that there are times when we could salvage a soul, and even a reputation, by being more "spiritual" when apprehending and restoring fallen brethren, including preachers.

There are such things as secret sins (Psalm 90:8), and these should be dealt with as such. There are also personal transgressions, and these should involve no more people than what are necessary to resolve the situation (Matthew 18:15-17). If a sin becomes public, then proportionate measures need to be taken in order to correct the matter. We cannot do less; neither should we seek to do more.

There is a mentality abroad in the land and apparently present in the church, which seems to "rejoice in iniquity" (1 Corinthians 13:6), and derive pleasure from the sinful acts of others (Romans 1:32). Those who thrive on gossip and backbiting may not have committed the same sins as the subjects of their juicy conversations, but the penalty for "and such like" sins are the same as for murder and adultery (Romans 1:29-32; Galatians 5:19-21).

This is not to say that false teachers should not be identified and branded, especially when such will not repent. Neither do we condone sweeping a fault or a practice under the rug when it needs to be dealt with forthrightly.

But once a matter has been aired and resolved as well as humans can do such things, let it rest. And, if a matter has escaped public detection, and you are the only one capable of turning it into script fit for an afternoon soap opera, resist the temptation to wash someone else's dirty linen.

Judas Iscariot turned out to be a hypocrite, but the eleven disciples found someone to take his place, and the Lord's caused survived. The church in Jerusalem survived the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. Paul rebuked Peter for dissimulation, and Peter had to face the consequences of such an act, whatever they may have been. But Peter still endorsed the writings of the apostle Paul (2 Peter 3:15-16).

The cause of the Lord has suffered reproach from Eden to David and Bathsheba, and in our time. It will continue to do so as long as the devil tempts people beyond their desire or will to resist.

But those of us who consider ourselves to be spiritual will determine to a great extent just how deeply the cause of Christ will be wounded, and how many souls will be lost or saved, including our own (James 5:19-20).

- P.J. Casebolt, via *Guardian of Truth*, 10/7/1993

The Prayer of an "Old Preacher"

We may not think of that shepherd boy as a preacher, but perhaps we should. When David arrived at the battlefield, almost every word he spoke proclaimed the power and majesty of God. His words give great insight into the heart that God described as being like His own heart. David's older brother saw him as a youth who had abandoned the sheep and said David was filled with pride and was insolent in his heart (1 Sam. 7:28). But he was wrong.

That young man had seen the providence of God when he killed a bear and a lion who were ready to kill a helpless lamb. David knew God's nature and the challenge of Goliath had to be answered. He was not concerned about how big that giant was, for he knew how big God was!

As a youth he had also faced sin's temptation and dealt with it. He showed how a young man could cleanse his heart "by taking heed according to Your word" (Psa. 119:9). It was in the sheepfold that he learned of God's green pastures, still waters, the rod, the staff and the cup overflowing with oil.

Yet he was not always a young man. His words in Psalm 71:17-18 give us great insight into the devotion he had first as a youth and the devotion he had in his old age. Look at the words of that psalm.

"O God, You have taught me from my youth;

And to this day I declare Your wondrous works."

David knew God from his youth and he had declared God's glory to others. He knew God and he unashamedly taught others about Him. What was he like as he grew old?

"Now also when I am old and grayheaded,

O God, do not forsake me,

Until I declare Your strength to this generation,

Your power to everyone who is to come."

David understood that the truths which he had used to cleanse his young heart were the same truths that following generations needed to cleanse their hearts. They needed them because God's words are eternal and truth does not change. David said, "The entirety of Your word is truth and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever" (Psa. 119:160). He had taught those truths as a young man and now as he grew old he asked God to continue using him.

Read his words again. Every generation needed God's words, and David emphasized that that needed the entirety of His words—every single one of His righteous judgments. Mankind does not change. The needs of every generation are the same. God's remedy for sin does not change.

It was an older generation who taught young David. He owed them a great debt. The same is true of you!

- Dan Jenkins

BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

Growing up my mother assured me that when we were outside and heard approaching thunder, the best thing we could do was to go inside the house. Security was found there, away from the threat of lightning strikes. "Let's go inside." We were safe and secure.

Friend, what about your soul today; are you safe and secure "inside" when it comes to your relationship with Christ? You will not want to be found by Him on the outside! Observe: "remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Ephesians 2:12). Please be aware that your own biases could promote your convincing yourself that you are not separate from Christ and are good enough in your present state. (Please see Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 10:2-3.) I will not test you; test yourself; examine yourself (2 Corinthians 13:5). Make absolutely sure that you are in Christ!

You might be a religious person who reads the Bible. You may know of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for the sins of mankind. But as you noticed from the passages above, knowing what the Bible says is not the sole requirement of Christ for getting to the place of safety. You may be close at hand; you may be near: "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13).

How do I get "into Christ"? "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27). "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4). Please let the word of God answer your questions and speak to your heart.

The "newness of life" is in Christ: "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Corinthians 5:17). Getting into Christ assures that we have contacted the blood of Christ, hence have been reconciled to God through forgiveness: "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:14). In Christ we find the security of God, that He has saved us from the consequences of our own sins: "For this reason I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." (2 Timothy 2:10). In Christ we have the assurance of eternal glory. In Christ we have the gift of eternal life: "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (1 John 5:11). God blesses all people with physical blessings such as food (Psalms 136:25) and rain (Matthew 5:45). But spiritual blessings belong to those who are in Christ: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," (Ephesians 1:3).

In Christ we find everything that God has prepared for us by being forgiven, thus we become "holy and blameless" by His estimation (Ephesians 1:4). In Christ we find the new life, "adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will," (Ephesians 1:5).

Friend, find God's way into Christ. You will be eternally happy that you allowed His word to guide you into Christ! May we assist you?

- Gary Smalley

* "No danger can come so near the Christian that God is not nearer!"

* "To realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the stress of the storm!"

* "We sail into the uncertain future surrounded by the faithfulness of God!"

* "The storm couldn't disturb Him, but the unbelief of His disciples did!"

* "Better to go through the storm with Christ than to have smooth sailing without Him!"

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)