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"Preaching The Same Truth We Preached Before Kentucky Was A State"

THE GOSPEL SHIP

C. D. Cole

Job 9:26, "They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey."

For brevity, Job likened his life to a post, that is, a runner; to a ship; and to an eagle. He watched the runners of his day hurry by with their messages and said, "My days are swifter than a post." He saw the ships of his day leave port with their cargos for a port on the other shore, and said "My days go by like swift ships." He saw the eagle swooping down upon its prey and said, "My days go by like the eagle that hasteth to the prey." And we modern Jobs might look at the ocean liner as it plows the sea, or the airplane that crosses the ocean in hours instead of days, or the streamline train as it hurries across the continent and compare our days to these things.

Let us think about life as a voyage across the ocean of time to the shores of eternity. We have all embarked upon the sea of life, and no man knows how near he is to the port of debarkation. Many of our troop

movements today are under sealed orders. Our soldiers sail the high seas without knowing where or how soon they will reach the port of debarkation. Humanity is something like this: multitudes do not know where they are going, and none of us knows when he will disembark.

Every one of us has to make this voyage. We are here on the ocean of time and cannot, if we would, blot ourselves out of existence. Suicide is such a foolish thing, that many believe that every suicide is unbalanced. Death is not sinking out of existence, it is debarking on the shores of eternity. We may not have to go the beach, or to the mountains, but we do have to make this voyage on the sea of time.

The sea is rough and the weather is stormy at times. There are billows of temptation, tropical storms that threaten to blow us off the straight course, and land us on the lonely island of despair. The sea is infested with soul-eating sharks of fleshly lusts.

The need of every one is a good ship in which to make

this voyage, a ship that is seaworthy in every respect, and a pilot that knows the heavenly port. The call of the hour is for all to examine his ship, check and double check to see if it is safe. Religiously speaking, humanity is broken up into many groups, and sailing on many ships. And many are deceived as to the condition of the ship they are on. The Titanic was thought to be a good ship, but it struck an iceberg and went down. The passengers felt safe but they were not safe. No man is safe because he feels safe. Salvation is not in feelings; it is in a person. A lost person may have better feelings than a saved man has. Feelings, of necessity, are based upon what one believes. The Atheist does not believe there is a God, and of course he has no fear of judgment or hell. If he is strong in his belief then his feelings are bound to be good, for there is no God to be afraid of and no hell to escape. The saved person has mixed feelings. When he thinks of himself and his record he feels bad; but when he thinks of Christ and his record He feels safe. He

can sing: "My hope is built on nothing less..."

There are a lot of deceptive vessels, they are all painted and fixed up with gaudy tinsel. "There is a way that seemeth right unto man..." Appearances may be deceitful. Outward show is not everything. All is not gold that glitters. Ever cow that bellows does not fill the pail. A long tongue generally goes with a short hand. Spurgeon, playing the

role of John Ploughman, said, "As a rule, the smallest boy carries the biggest fiddle, and he who makes most boast has least roast. He who has least wisdom has most vanity."

Let us look at some of these deceptive vessels:

A. The No-God Ship. All on this ship are fools for the fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God." Atheists claim to be smart people; they hold up their heads like a hen drinking water, but there's really nothing in it.

B. The No-Hell Ship. Those on this ship are smart in their own eyes. They tell us that we cannot understand words. They tell us that soul means breath, that hell means the grave, and that all there is of a man is what you can see.

C. The Ship of Character and Good Works. Folks on this ship are braggarts. Their filthy rags of self-righteousness are perfumed with their own praise. This ship is already destined to land at the wrong port, for those who sing their own praises shall not be allowed to disrupt the harmony of heaven with their sin. He who talks forever about himself has a foolish subject, and is likely to worry and weary all around him. Before honor is humility, but a prating fool shall fall and

when he falls few will pick him up.

D. The Little Ships of Sectarianism. There are those who put salvation in their own particular church or denomination. Every denomination puts salvation in their church. I am a Baptist--old-fashioned Baptist--but I have never yet told anybody to join any Baptist church to be saved.

But I must spare you further pain along this line and bring you to the one ship that is seaworthy. This is THE GOSPEL SHIP. Let us look it over and describe it:

A. It is seaworthy. Passengers are safe from every danger. Billows of temptation will not sweep them off the deck. He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. Safe in the face of all adversities, for nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ. Safe from the iceberg of cold indifference, for God who began a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Safe from being thrown overboard by the hand of justice, for Christ made satisfaction for their sins.

B. The fare is the same for all and there is no reduced rate. It is expensive. Gold and silver will not buy a ticket on this ship. The fare has to be paid in the coin of righteousness. Nobody but righteous people on this ship, but their righteousness is not the result of their deeds, but the result of Christ's finished work.

C. The passengers are poor people. Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven." The passengers are not necessarily poor in this world's goods, though many of them are, but consciously poor in merit. They did not have a thing to

pay their fare with. They got on this ship without money or price. It was paid for by another, even Jesus Christ. The price was paid all the way to the destination. There is no danger of being put off in mid-ocean. Every passenger is going at the expense of another. Jesus paid it all!

A Teenager's Letter to His Parents

Dear Parents—

I am your child... You have brought me into this world and raised me to what I am today... If I am not what I should be, please don't be too harsh with me... for I am your product... My actions advertise the quality standards of our home... Do not point at one of my playmates as an example of how I should behave... By doing so you are admitting that his parents are doing a better job than you... You say that you are a Christian... Yet when Church time comes you make little effort to attend, giving me no encouragement to go either... You say that you love me... Yet it has been years since you put your arms about me at bedtime and with tears in your eyes asked your Heavenly Father to watch over me as I slept... You seem to be more interested in my school grades than in the condition of my soul... You give me the impression that it is better to be popular than to be pure... better to be attractive on the outside than to have that "inner beauty" that comes to one who loves the Lord... So next time you feel like throwing up your hands and saying, "I just can't do a thing with you," please remember you have had the opportunity to influence me since I was born... "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it"... That's from the Bible... If you're not happy with me, I'm not the only one to blame...

Love is a giving thing.

WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?

YOUTH: Too happy to think--time enough.
MANHOOD: Too busy to think--more money fast.

MATURITY: Too anxious to think--worry over work.

DECLINING YEARS: Too aged to think--fixed habits.

AS DEATH APPROACHES: Too ill to think--weak and suffering.

DEATH: Too late to think--the spirit has flown.

ETERNITY: Forever to think--God's judgment day.

THE FOLLY OF THE SINNER RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT

C. D. COLE

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51).

From a child I have heard of sinners resisting the Holy Spirit. I have heard other ministers warn sinners, and I myself have warned them against resisting the Holy Spirit. I have heard strange stories of the conduct of sinners in resisting the Spirit. In several states I have heard the same story of a man who, in resisting the Spirit, jumped out of a window of the church house to get away from the striving of the Spirit. I have listened to evangelists urge sinners to yield to the Holy Spirit, warning them that they might drive Him away never to return again. I have heard of men (though I have never met one) who asserted that they, having refused to yield to the Holy Spirit, were deserted by the Spirit and never again felt His strivings. Now the writer does not deny that there is an element of truth in the above expressions, but he believes that there is also a vagueness in them which is confusing and misleading.

What is the sin of resisting the Holy Spirit? Just what does the sinner do in resisting the Spirit? What does the Spirit do in striving with the sinner? It is the purpose of this article to clear up some things which appear to be vague and obscure in the minds of many people.

The only N.T. passage that relates directly to our subject is Acts 7:51 and context. An exegesis of this text in the light of its context will answer three questions, namely--Does the sinner resist the Holy Spirit? How does the sinner resist the Holy Spirit? Why does the sinner resist the Holy Spirit?

Does the Sinner Resist the Holy Spirit?

The passage under consideration gives clear answer that sinners do resist the Holy Spirit. This was the charge brought against the Jews by Stephen. In resisting the Spirit they were following in the steps of their fathers. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."

There is an idea prevalent that a few times in the lifetime of a man the Holy Spirit comes to him in an effort to save (regenerate) him; that he may resist and overcome the effort of the Spirit; and that after repeated and unsuccessful efforts, the Spirit leaves never to make another effort to save that man. This is called sinning away the day of grace and many evangelists get visible results by warning men that they better come forward in profession of faith lest they drive the Spirit away and forever seal their doom. Such an invitation is confusing, misleading, and dangerous. It is not a Scriptural invitation. Under such an invitation the unenlightened sinner naturally thinks that in coming forward he is yielding to the Holy Spirit. Many a man has doubtlessly thought he had yielded to the Spirit when he came forward and gave the minister his hand, when in fact his eyes had never been opened to the Gospel way of salvation. Salvation is an experience in the life-giving work of the Holy Spirit enabling the sinner to understand Gospel

truth. Let the reader ponder prayerfully John 3:3; 2 Cor. 4:3,6.

Stephen said, "Ye do ALWAYS resist the Holy Ghost." It is not something that the sinner does occasionally but is that which he does repeatedly and continually.

How Does the Sinner Resist the Holy Spirit?

Resisting the Holy Spirit is rejecting the Word of God of which the Holy Spirit is the author. The sinner is resisting the Spirit when he hears the Gospel and rejects it and opposes the one who bears the message to him. The Jews to whom Stephen preached resisted the Holy Spirit in the

same way their fathers did. "As your fathers did, so do ye," were his words to them. Their fathers resisted the Holy Spirit by rejecting the preaching of the prophets and by persecuting them. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?"

Light is thrown upon the subject by reference to Neh. 9:29,30. Nehemiah is explaining the cause of Israel's punishment and captivity by saying that Israel hardened their necks and refused to hear (Neh. 9:16). They rebelled against God's prophets (Neh. 9:26). And in all this they were resisting the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit was speaking through the prophets just as He was speaking through Stephen. "Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear" (Neh. 9:30).

REJECTING THE WORD OF GOD IS RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT; PERSECUTING THE PREACHERS OF THE WORD IS RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT. Andrew Fuller calls this the indirect influence of the Holy Spirit. The following quotation from him (Fuller's Works, page 742) is in full harmony with what we have said above--

"I conceive there is what may be termed an indirect influence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, having inspired the prophets and apostles, testified in and by them, and often without effect. . . . The message of the prophets being dictated by the Holy Spirit, resistance of them was resistance of Him. It was in this way, I conceive, that the Spirit of God strove with the antediluvians, and that unbelievers are said always to have resisted the Holy Spirit."

Fuller then speaks of the direct influence of the Holy Spirit which is effectual in renewing and sanctifying the sinner. This is a good distinction to make. The sinner resists the indirect influence of the Spirit in presenting the truth to him through the preacher; but the direct influence of the Spirit is the direct impact of the Holy Spirit on the human spirit, and this is not resisted, because it is the power of the Almighty.

There was much and bitter controversy in the days of Stephen. "Then there arose certain of the synagogue which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able

to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake" (Acts 6:9,10). And because they could not meet his arguments, they killed him. In

rejecting his message and stoning him to death they were resisting the Holy Spirit.

Why Does the Sinner Resist the Holy Spirit?

The passage before us gives clear and unmistakable answer to this question. "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." The sinner resists the Holy Spirit (His indirect influence) because his heart is wrong and his ears are not attuned to the Word of God. He neither understands nor loves the Word of God. God's words are full of wisdom but to the natural man they are foolishness.

A dear brother once remarked that I did not believe the sinner could resist the Holy Spirit. I replied that I believed that the sinner did nothing but resist the Holy Spirit until his resistance was overcome by the Holy Spirit. The preached Word is the objective ministry and the indirect influence of the Holy Spirit, and this the dead sinner rejects and resists because it is foolishness to him. Our Lord told Nicodemus that except a man be born from above he cannot see or understand the Kingdom of God. The indirect influence of the Spirit in the Word is resisted until overcome by the direct influence of the Spirit in quickening power.

The Gospel must not only be presented to the sinner, but a divine work must be wrought in the sinner if he is to be saved. Objective truth, however plainly presented, is not sufficient for salvation. The sinner must be given eyes to see and a heart to understand it. Putting a larger lamp in the light socket will not enable a blind man to see; he must be given the ability to see. In the new birth the Holy Spirit gives eyes to see and a heart to understand and love the Gospel. This is His direct and subjective ministry and is not resisted. The child does not resist its birth.

Thus we see that it takes more than the indirect influence of the Spirit in human conversion. Paul describes his conversion as the effect of being apprehended (laid hold of) by Christ (Phil. 3:12), and of having Christ revealed in him (Gal. 1:16). The objective ministry of the Spirit is resisted, but not the subjective. When this distinction is made the truth of man's impotence and the Spirit's omnipotence is conserved, otherwise we have the creature mightier than the Creator.

