

The Old Paths

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“A Review Of The Jacobs-Holland Debate”

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On May 27th and 28th, this author and Mr. Roger Holland of Lafayette, TN met in Millwood, KY to engage in a debate about the “once saved, always saved” doctrine. Specifically, our proposition Friday night was: “RESOLVED: The Scriptures teach that the child of God, one who has been saved by the blood of Christ, is so saved that he is beyond the possibility of being lost in Hell.” Mr. Holland affirmed this proposition, and I denied it. On Saturday night, we debated: “RESOLVED: The Scriptures teach that the child of God, one saved by the blood of Christ may so sin as to finally and eternally be lost in Hell.” I affirmed this proposition, and Mr. Holland denied it. An added bonus to the debate itself was that each evening the disputants engaged in a question and answer session after the formal debate. The questions were provided by the audience assembled, and each man was given two minutes to answer the question or offer a rebuttal. We did this in February’s debate, and it was very popular with those present, so we repeated it in this debate. It allowed folks the opportunity to ask questions and probe deeper into certain points we did not have time to develop in the debate itself.

Courtesy Prevailed

As in February, courtesy prevailed before, during, and after the debate. It was obvious that

we had folks assembled who had differences concerning whether or not a child of God could sin and be lost in Hell, but it was also obvious that we could sit down together and study without it being turned into some type of “free-for-all” wherein insults are hurled or folks were treated in a rude way. Certainly, points and arguments were made with vigor and zeal, but none spoke in any hurtful or malicious way. Sometimes, folks try to negate the effectiveness of debates by saying that the disputants used abusive language and the like. You could not say that about this debate.

Arguments

To me, the subject of the “impossibility of apostasy” or “once saved always saved” is a doctrine that is easily defeated when we simply read what the Scriptures say. In fact, no less than 200 times in the New Testament, it is made clear that our salvation is conditional. Therefore, in this debate, I had several charts which just had passages of Scripture showing that salvation in Heaven is conditional. (Ex: Rev. 22:18-19; I Cor. 9:27; II Pet. 3:17; I Tim. 4:1, 5:8; etc.). These passages needed few comments from me, but were just read before the group, and then followed with this question, “What if one stops doing _____?” To me, this kind of reasoning is most effective. God gave us reasoning abilities, and He expects us to use them. Ascertaining the truth on this subject requires simple reasoning when we note the “ifs” and other conditional statements associ-

ated with one’s eternal salvation.

Another argument used was based on the word “pisteuo” (faith). This was the same argument used in the baptism debate, and it applies in this discussion, too. Mr. Holland, and many other folks today, believe that any time one reads the word “faith” in the Bible, it means a single moment in time when one said, “I believe in Jesus.” By charting the definition of “faith,” based on Mr. Thayer’s definition, we learned that “pisteuo” (faith) or its various forms, has reference to a “conviction” that Jesus is the Christ, “conjoined with obedience” (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon, p. 511). As the speeches continued, it was apparent that there was not a single “faith passage” Mr. Holland used that did not fit the definition of “pisteuo” in our chart! This became a point of frustration for him as we used this faith chart (#88) in every speech.

Another argument used reminded Mr. Holland that we do not believe in “perfect law-keeping” for salvation. A chart was brought out early to show we do not believe or teach such. Rather, the gospel is a remedial system that was given to men in sin (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, because man sinned, he needed a perfect sacrifice (Christ, Rom. 5:8). He then gave us conditions by which we can access pardon (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38). Therefore, when we submit to the Lord’s will, we are merely accessing God’s grace and pardon through the conditions He has provided. We have “earned” nothing!

The vast majority of Mr. Holland’s arguments can be summed up in two categories: 1) Perfect law-keeping. 2) Faith only. He spent much of his first affirmative speaking about law-keeping and implying that I was teaching “law-keeping.” Then, he proceeded to cite passages on “faith,” implying “faith-

only,” and saying that we can be eternally saved at the point of faith, and without any further acts of obedience.

Mr. Holland’s proof of “once-saved-always-saved” was to cite passages which speak of God’s power to “keep” folks, or to “preserve” them. He read John 10:27-29 in connection with this. He also read such passages as John 3:16, 18, and 11:25 which speak of one having eternal life, but completely ignored the fact that man has the ability to leave, or to remain faithful to the Lord. Often, the passages he used to “prove” his position of the impossibility of apostasy were answered in verses above or below the one(s) he had read!

Quibbles That Backfired

Simply put, a “quibble” is “a use of ambiguous, prevaricating, or irrelevant language or arguments to evade a point at issue” (Webster’s). Through the course of any debate, some debaters, when they do not have Scripture to prove their doctrine, will grasp for some “quibble” that they think helps their cause. Mr. Holland was no exception.

1) Mr. Holland read I Peter 1:3-5, which says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” After which, he said, “This is like when a mother calls the boys in from the field. They hear the dinner bell, and lunch is waiting on them in the house. It is reserved, and they know they’re getting their lunch when

they get inside.” In answer to this, it was not hard to show he actually had proven the Bible position, rather than his! The reason? When the mother calls for the boys to eat lunch, it is “reserved,” “promised,” and waiting on them in the house. Yet, they do not have the benefit of the food until they get in the house and eat! I told Mr. Holland that if his doctrine were true, then the very minute the boys were told that lunch was ready, their stomachs should have ALREADY been filled before they ever reached the house!

2) During the debate, Mr. Holland made it clear that any sins a Christian may commit will not condemn him to Hell. (This included murder, stealing, drunkenness, and not loving your neighbor, Jas. 2.) He even made the statement that I Timothy 4:1 (“...depart from the faith”) has reference to teaching false doctrine. Therefore, it was shown that if anyone actually practiced what he preached, no one would be safe in public! His doctrine allowed Christians to murder, get drunk, teach false doctrine, and hate their neighbors, and go to Heaven, anyway!

3) Even though he denied being a Calvinist, Mr. Holland leaned on Calvinism when it suited him. (“Once saved, always saved” is a Calvinistic doctrine!) One instance was when he said, “We do not make a mental decision to sin.” In

response, he was reminded of God’s words when He told the Israelites to “cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isa. 1:16-17)! That tells us these folks had to make a mental decision! Not only was this passage used, but several others were brought out, proving that folks make a mental decision when they sin!

Conclusion

I hope this short article provides some insight into what happened on May 27th and 28th. I am thankful that the gospel could be presented in such a manner, and pray that the folks present, and those who get the CD’s and videos, will allow God’s word to penetrate their hearts that it may produce much fruit for God. Yes friends, debates do good just as sermons and private Bible studies do good! Anyone who says otherwise is an enemy of the truth, trying to hinder the spread of the gospel. We find many examples of Jesus debating, as well as the apostle Paul, Stephen, and many others. In times of controversy, when both sides of a subject are presented, the truth shines even brighter! I honestly believe that the honest heart who was present, or who hears this debate through various media will be able to learn and follow the truth of God’s word. Let us be praying for more opportunities to teach God’s word, and be active in pursuing opportunities for both public and private Bible studies.

More Information About The Debate Can Be Found At:
www.southside-churchofchrist.com



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.
Our address is: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303.

MEETING TIMES:

Sunday Morning Bible Study _____ **9:30 am**
Sunday Morning Worship _____ **10:20 am**
Sunday Evening Worship _____ **6:00 pm**
Wednesday Evening Bible Study _____ **7:00 pm**

Our call-in radio program is on **WBIO, FM 94.7**, Sunday afternoon from 12:30-1:00 pm. **Call: 683-9246 (WBIO)** with your Bible question.

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