

THE CHRISTIAN CAN

Levi Sides, Jasper, AL

Paul said, "I *can* do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). The Christian must be careful with his interpretation of this verse. The Christian does not wish to do some things. There are other things which God has not placed in his power. What Paul is saying is that the Christian *can* do all things which God desires and expects him to do. In many cases this may be far more that the Christian ever dreamed he might be able to do.

1. THE CHRISTIAN CAN BEAR BURDENS THAT OTHER MEN CANNOT BEAR. He can do so because he is not bearing them alone. The Christian is to burden God with what burdens him (Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7). Christians help other Christians with their burdens (Galatians 6:2). When the Christian *yokes up* with Jesus Christ, his burdens become light (Matthew 11:30). The business of living the Christian life provides strength for burden-bearing unavailable from any other source. But above all, the Christian can shoulder burdens which would overwhelm any other person because he knows there is no burden which he has to carry alone.

2. THE CHRISTIAN CAN RESIST TEMPTATIONS THAT OTHER MEN CANNOT RESIST. The Christian lives a circumscribed life (1 Peter 2:9). The Christian never faces a temptation that Jesus Christ has not already examined and allowed to pass because He knows the Christian can face it and conquer it (1 Corinthians 10:13). The temptations of evil are strong, but the Christian has the power to resist and put Satan to flight (James 4:7).

3. THE CHRISTIAN CAN BEAR DISSAPOINTMENTS IN WAYS OTHER MEN CANNOT BEAR THEM. This world is not the "everything" of the child of God. When this world is gone, the Christian has another world that is far better (2 Peter 3:11-13; Revelation 21 and 22). This is not so with the "*worldly person.*" The worldly person either gets it here and enjoys it here or he does not enjoy it at all. When the Christian is risen with Christ (Romans 6:3-4), he has affections set on things above, not on things here below (Colossians 3:1). The realization that one day all things will be made right enables the Christian to bear earthly disappointments.

4. THE CHRISTIAN CAN BEAR SORROWS IN WAYS THAT OTHER MEN CANNOT BEAR THEM. Sorrows will come and there is no way to avoid them. Life must go on in spite of sorrows. The question is what effect it will have on the Christian. Will sorrows break him, leave him bitter and full of resentment, or will sorrows form and mold him so that God can better use him? With the grace of God, sorrows can be endured. Only the Christian is equipped to bear sorrows properly.

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for your love and assistance in living the Christian life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

WOT

EDITORIAL

THE EVANGELIST'S TOOLBOX

The mission of the church must be the same as that of her Lord and Master. Jesus stated his mission in these words, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The work of the church has become lost amid financial seminars, weigh-down workshops, softball and basketball leagues, and the like. We have become so self-centered and self-serving in the church that we have neglected the one thing we are here to do—win souls for Christ! In a time when many congregations are spending more on internal programs of work for the church than they are mission efforts, when many are trimming back money from the mission budget to accommodate more and more inward workings, we need a reminder of the true purpose of our being the called out of God. The church exists to win souls to the Lord that God might receive the glory (Eph.3:20-21). In times when the church has held to its primary purpose multitudes were added by the Lord to his church (Acts 2:47). We must get back to evangelizing the lost, spreading the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We don't need self-styled church growth "experts" and seminars to teach us how to reach the lost. We simply need to go back to the Book of books to see how the early church grew at such a phenomenal rate. When we imitate the characteristics of these pioneer soul-winners, we will help the church to grow wherever we may be. Just what are the necessary tools to being a successful soul-winner? Let us note what belongs in the toolbox of every Christian who desires to bring souls to Jesus.

Concerned Eyes

Opportunities to reach and teach the lost are almost limitless, if we but take the time to look for them. Perhaps we feel we can escape our responsibility to evangelize the lost if we avert our eyes and act as if we have no idea the lost are all around us. Jesus reminds us, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields: for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). We must open our eyes to the magnitude of the task ahead of us, realizing that the majority of those in the world are separated from God

(Matthew 7:13-14). The successful soul-winner sees lost souls everywhere he looks, and is cognizant of the value of the soul (Matthew 16:26). Evangelizing the world for Jesus begins with every Christian first looking for opportunities to teach the gospel.

Compassionate Hearts

We live in a society that in many respects seems to have lost any sense of compassion and concern. Many "pass by on the other side" when it comes to dealing with their neighbors (cf. Luke 10:30-37), and many in religion treat the lost in the same fashion. When we come to grips with the truth that those outside of Christ are lost, that those who are part of man-made denominations are lost, that those who become unfaithful to the cause of Christ are lost, we ought to be moved with compassion to reach out to them with the word of God. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). Our hearts should break when we see a soul lost in sin. May we have the heart of the apostle Paul: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). Remember, you, too, were once lost and in need of someone to reach out to you with the soul-saving gospel!

Competent minds

In order to be successful at soul-winning, we must know what God would have one to do that his soul might be won to Christ. Some lean upon this idea too much, thinking that they do not know enough to teach others the gospel. That line of reasoning is merely an excuse. Every Christian has a responsibility to teach others: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers..." (Hebrews 5:12-14). We must have a proficient knowledge of God's word so that we may be prepared to instruct others in the way of Christ. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). We have no one to blame but ourselves if we "do

not know enough” to evangelize the lost. Let us be diligent students of the word (2 Timothy 2:15) so that at any time we can point a lost soul to Jesus

Caring hands

The old adage continues to be true, “People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care.” While some may be reluctant to open up to a direct discussion about religion and matters pertaining to salvation, many times doors can be opened by seeing to the needs of those around us. Part of “pure and undefiled religion” is caring for those who are in need (James 1:27). Even our Lord recognized the necessity of seeing to the physical needs of the multitude: “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat” (Mark 8:2). “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). Perhaps in exhibiting care for their needs, a door may be opened to teach the gospel to those who are lost.

Calloused knees

Those who fail to invoke God’s blessings and guidance in reaching out to the lost are doomed to fail. If we are to be successful in leading souls to Jesus, then we must bow the knee to the Almighty in prayer on a regular basis. Like the early church, we should pray that we may speak the word of God with all boldness in the face of opposition and persecution (Acts 4:29). We should pray that God open doors of opportunity through which we may walk with the glorious gospel of Christ (Colossians 4:3). A successful soul-winner appreciates and avails himself of the awesome power and privilege of prayer. “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice” (Psalm 55:17).

Committed feet

The Great Commission begins with the word “go” (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). In a time when we can reach around the globe in a split second with myriads of high-tech communications, we rarely reach next door to speak to our neighbor about his soul. We have almost lost the ability to converse with one another face to face due to the impersonal communication highway. If we are to win souls to the cause of our Lord, then we must be committed to taking the gospel to the lost. Let us not be guilty of praying that God open doors of evangelistic opportunity for us, and then expect someone else to walk through it. Someone has well said that we

cannot expect the world to come to us simply by building a church building and putting up a sign that reads “the church of Christ meets here.” We must go “everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). Certainly we should take advantage of every form of media and technology available to get the gospel into the hands of those who have never heard it, but nothing beats face to face, “personal” evangelism. “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Romans 10:15).

These are some vital characteristics that we must imbibe if we are to be successful in evangelizing our world. May we look for opportunities, sympathize with the plight of the lost, prepare ourselves to lead souls to Jesus, reach out with hands of care and concern, bow before the throne of God in prayer that our efforts bear fruit to His glory, and commit ourselves to going where God opens doors of opportunity. May God grant us the wisdom, knowledge and opportunity to reach every creature under heaven with His word!

WOT

MY GREATEST DESIRE

Eva Nell Brown Naramore

Known only to God, my greatest desire,
That comes from my heart in my secret prayer,
Names are too many, I know but a few,
But God understands I’m praying for you.

My greatest desire, that sinners obey,
God’s word that gives life, death takes not away.
Come now and find rest, Christ paid all the cost;
To die without God your soul will be lost.
Why longer delay, this journey’s not far,
To life eternal, my greatest desire.

There comes a sweet thought in my feeble prayer,
When I tell to God my greatest desire.
If you feel condemned, obey now and pray.
Hear Jesus calling, don’t turn him away.

Here we’re so often heartbroken it seems,
But heaven’s enough to fulfill our dreams.
I’ll never give up as long as I live,
To wish you the best that God’s love can give.

WAYS TO MAKE THE CONGREGATION BETTER

Riley Nelson, Richmond Hill, GA

Can the congregation be better than it currently is? The answer to that question has to be an unequivocal "yes!" There is always room for improvement in any congregation, because as part of the church of our Lord we are striving for God's standard of greatness. So, in thinking that the congregation can be better, what can we do to make it happen?

Clearly if the congregation is going to be better each individual must take a definite interest in the congregation. Too many people in the Lord's church act as if they are not a part of the congregation. It is as if they do not have to be a part of the work of the church, as if it is an optional thing, a thing that just really does not matter. This way of thinking is way off base. When works are planned by the leadership of a congregation, each member should have a desire to be a part, and show interest in what is going to take place. Works of the church normally are such that they are either outreach programs or edification programs. Take, for instance, a gospel meeting. This is an item that is for outreach to those not members of the body, but also serves to edify and uplift those who are members. The same could be said of the weekly services: what a great time to invite friends and family to study and worship God! We are not to forsake the assembly (*Heb. 10:25*). Yet, some seem to show no interest in being a part of such works. If the congregation is to be better, show an interest in what is going on.

If the congregation is going to be better, each member must constantly keep in mind that there are those who are yet unsaved and that it is our responsibility to reach out to them, and to work and pray for opportunities to show them the way. This responsibility has been given to us by God (*Matt. 28:19 – 20*). Some seem to think that only the preacher has this obligation, but that is far from the truth. The words spoken by Jesus are a command to each Christian, not just to the preacher. In fact there are some people that the preacher might never reach simply because he is the preacher. Yet his friend or family member may be just the one to show him the way to God. Former San Francisco shortstop Johnnie LeMaster was led to Christ by his wife, and then worked for ten years to convert his mother and father. If more Christians had this kind of zeal and love for lost souls, the church would once again be the fastest grow-

ing religious body today. Each member needs to have their own personal work program, working to bring lost souls to the Lord. They also should seek to be involved in visitation programs, showing others their love and concern for them.

Another way to help make a congregation better is to spend some time each day doing something to help prove the worth of the cause of Christ. We must do good as we have opportunity (*Gal.6:10*). There are so many ways to carry out this idea. It might be as simple as sending out a card to someone who has been sick, or just to thank someone for doing some work that they normally do. It might be visiting with the sick and shut-in to bring a bit of joy to someone's life that seldom has any joy. A nursing home is a great place to work on this idea. So many who inhabit such places seldom see a friend or family member; a short visit not only will help the individual but also the one who made the visit.

In most congregations there are those who are wayward and need to be brought back to the fold. Many again wrongly believe this is a job only for the preacher. Paul did not believe this nor teach it. The faithful brethren were told to restore the wayward (*Gal.6:1-3*). Tragically, sometimes when one is found to be in sin, Christians will talk to others about the sin, but fail to go to the brother or sister and plead with them to repent. Some act as if a sin ignored will get better. Again Paul tells us this is not a right way of thinking. Do you remember what he wrote to the Corinthian brethren about the man who was living with his father's wife (*1 Cor. 5:1 – 5*)? The sin and the remedy for the sin was to be brought to the man's attention for his good and the good of the congregation. If sin is allowed to exist within a congregation, the congregation will not be better; it only will serve to destroy the work going on in that location. Therefore, we as Christians must work to restore those who have strayed.

Finally, if we want the congregation to be better we must remember that we are to be a reflection of Christ to the world (*Matt.5:14-16*). In everything we do we must act Christ-like. Every Christian should seek to make the congregation where they attend better. May God help us to always live up to the task. **WOT**

LACK OF RESPECT

Todd Morrison, Norfolk, VA

One day at work, I was called to visit the Captain on the pier. When I arrived, the Captain was standing on the pier and one of the young sailors from my department was standing beside him. I rendered the appropriate courtesies and asked how I may help. The Captain proceeded in telling how the young sailor apparently did not know who he (the Captain) was. The young sailor was sitting at his watch station and did not stand when the Captain approached. When asked to stand, the sailor stood up. The Captain then asked if he knew who he was. The young sailor said, "I believe you are the new Captain" [*The Captain had been in charge for over 6 months when this happened.*].

This situation brings to mind how military protocol is becoming a lost art. The honors, courtesies, and respect that are taught (or should be taught at many different levels) are not being demonstrated. It seems as if there is no genuine concern for these types of "manners".

Dig a little deeper in thought. The same manners or courtesies are not seen much today in relation to our older people. Young people, in general, do not talk in a way that is respectful to those greater in years. Manners are a thing of the past. In fact, if you were to point out that something is bad manners, you might get a funny look. There seems to be a lack of manners demonstrated by the younger generations. Why is this? (The reasons I could justify would take another whole article.)

Let's apply this to spiritual living. How many people today "fear" God? How many people show the proper respect when it comes to spiritual things? How many people stand in awe of the mighty power of Jehovah? Let us go to the Word and see what would cause such a lack of respect.

People do not really know who God is

People today might have an idea of who God is or know of a god. But many people do not really "know" who God is. The bible teaches that there was a generation that did not know Jehovah (Judges 2:8-13). Of course, there was a plan in place to prevent this from occurring but many people failed to fulfill their responsibility.

For individuals today to really want to know God, they must understand who He is and should be fearful of His Sovereign Power. A proper knowledge and fear of God

will prompt one to seriously pursue a study of who God is. (Pro. 14:26-27; 16:6) It will also cause a change in behavior toward others and how they are treated.

People are not familiar with the truth

There are many today that will profess to read their Bible. There are also many that claim to know the "truth". But knowing some truth or having a growing hunger for more knowledge of God's inspired Word are two different things. It is not enough to dust off your bible before Sunday service just to put it back on the shelf Sunday night. It is not enough to read every so often when you find yourself with nothing to do. We should hunger (Matt. 5:6; 1 Pet. 2:2)!

As stated before, a proper fear of God will cause us to want to search the scriptures daily. We will want to study to live righteously (II Tim. 2:15) and to teach others (I Pet. 3:15) about God's plan for mankind.

People are not concerned about life after death

"Live life to the fullest; have a good time; do the things that make you happy in this life; just have fun!" Does this sound familiar? These among many other statements are being sounded from your TV, radio, MP3 player, movies, etc. It is the lifestyle of today's society pouring over the world like a plague! It has made its way into every home, school, and even the church. But two things are certain: Christ will come again and we will someday die (Heb. 9:27-28).

The reason many are not concerned about their lives after death is the lack of the two items recently discussed. They don't know God. They don't know the truth. This could be a result of them not wanting to know. Knowledge would make them liable. Some might have some knowledge but choose to ignore it. The bible provides insight as to the consequences (Heb. 10:26-31)

Our manner of life as Christians should be reflected in everything we do or say. The way we act with those we come in contact with should reflect Christ. If so, we will use the proper courtesies, respect, and manners that are appropriate in every situation. And by doing so, people will see that there is something different about us compared to the world. They will see what respect should look and sound like.

FLIPPANT DRESS

Tyler Young, Roanoke, TX

There is something a bit incongruous about the scene. The picture shows the President, in all his executive dignity, in the midst of a bevy of smiling, bare-armed co-eds, their sundresses and flip-flops contrasting with the cut of George Bush's suit and tie. When the Northwestern University championship lacrosse team made a visit to the White House for a photo-op last summer, a small controversy centered around the casual dress of the girls. Four of the teammates photographed in the front row with President Bush were donning flip-flops. A *Chicago Tribune* headline, reporting on the horror of a brother of one of the girls, blared in all caps: "Fashion Footnote: 'You Wore Flip-Flops To The White House?!'" The event generated sufficient attention for two of the girls to tell NBC they were going to auction off their offending footwear on eBay.

That the young ladies (and apparently, their older chaperones) thought nothing of baring arms and exposing toes at a once-in-a-life-time meeting with the leader of the free world reveals the growing ignorance of (and often, indifference toward or disregard for) decorum, especially among the younger generation. Meghan Cox Gurdon commented on this troubling trend:

You would think that well-brought up young women would know that flip-flops are inappropriate for any remotely formal event...Chad Pergram, who runs a Washington internship program out of Ohio, recently told *The Hill* newspaper he finds it necessary to label each intern's daily schedule according to the formality of clothes required (D for Dressy, BC for Business Casual, C for Casual, and VC for Very Casual)....

It is obvious from a stroll through any mall, or along the National Mall, that relatively few parents now bother to intervene in what their children wear, unless it is maybe to pay for their \$175 low-rise jeans. No one is handing down the proper knowledge because parents are so desperate for their children to be cool and popular. Instructing young women in the suitability of their clothes means having

to exercise taste and judgment, and *that* can mean having to say "No," or even, "I forbid you to leave this house looking like a trollop. Modern adults find putting any brakes on hipdom excruciatingly difficult. That is why insisting on a certain elegance in dress—such as, say, demure, closed-toe heels for White House events—is becoming as retrograde as explaining how rings are worn with tea gloves, or when a lady should remove her veil.

Unfortunately, we see this same phenomenon when it comes to the way our young people dress for worship. Brother Wayne Jackson lamented this situation:

What has happened to the dignity of dress that one would expect to be associated with public worship services? First, there is the matter of flesh exposure. It is not uncommon to see women so scantily clad as to be an embarrassment to godly men who are attempting to focus their attention on the Lord...Some garments are so sprayed-on tight, that one holds his breath in dreadful anticipation that a sudden cough will reveal more than anyone cares to observe.

There also are increasing numbers of men who seem not the least bit troubled about wearing into the worship assemblies tank-tops and cut-offs, as if they are oblivious to the sacred environment into which they have entered. There is also the matter of common dignity. Apparently, some parents have no sensitivity about how their youngsters dress, or else they have lost control almost entirely. Belly buttons are on display and hip-huggers are barely hugging anything...The worship atmosphere is turned into a carnival-like side-

show.

Why is that the Mormons and “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are easily identifiable by their neat dress styles as they propagandize with their error, yet our people, who are supposed to be interested in spreading the precious gospel of Christ, are some of the sloppiest advertisements in town?

There was a time, years ago, when people would speak of wearing their “Sunday best,” or their “Sunday-go-to-meeting” clothes. Even the most humble farmer had a dress shirt and shoes for worship. Young boys were proud to wear their little suits and ties, and girls their dresses and shoes, so they would look like dad and mom and the adults in the church all dressed up for Sunday. Getting clothes ready and looking “nice” for church services were weekly rituals in most homes in the church. Because worship was thought of as a special time, brethren wanted to look their best.

A glance around our assemblies shows how much times have changed. Frequently we see mom and dad dressed up, but junior is allowed to drag in looking like he is on his way to Six Flags or a backyard bar-b-cue. At other times even our adults, wearing jeans and T-shirts, are not setting much of an example themselves. Can it be long before some of our congregations adopt the practice of some community churches, whose preachers wear sneakers, jeans and golf-shirts while their members are encouraged to dress any way they please? If that day hasn’t already arrived, it doesn’t appear to be too far off.

We’re not suggesting it is necessarily wrong to wear a T-shirt to worship. (Disclosure: I allow my daughters to wear flip-flops to Sunday or Wednesday night services.) There is not a formal dress code which one must meet to be fit for worshiping the Lord. And it’s true, as advocates of completely casual dress for worship are quick to point out, that “the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). But at the same time we should remember our outward appearance is a reflection of the inward attitude. Dress, to a large extent, is a reflection of one’s heart (Mat. 15:18). How we dress for a given activity may indicate the value we place upon that event.

Certainly we do not want to create the impression that visitors are unwelcome if they are not “dressed up.” When it comes to our young people, we would rather have them here and dressed sloppily, than not be here at all. But can parents not set an example of dressing neatly and nicely, and require the same of their children,

in order to demonstrate an attitude of respect and reverence which ought to characterize our worship assemblies? More than merely requiring our children to wear modest attire—something parents ought to absolutely demand of their kids at all times, but which some obviously do not—can we not go further? Can we not also show them the Sunday worship assembly is a special time of communion with God and fellowship with the saints, and that therefore it is a good thing to dress our best? If we can dress up for other things, is it too much to make the same effort for what ought to be the most important time of our week?

Let’s help our youth understand, by precept and example, that when it comes to our worship assemblies, it’s not good to be flippant.

Works Cited:

Gurdon, Meghan Cox, *National Review*, Aug. 8, 2005, p. 17.

Jackson, Wayne, *Christian Courier*, Jan. 2005, p. 35.

WOT

“TRUTH BE TOLD” Seminar

On **Saturday, July 26th**, brother **Kyle Butt** from **Apologetics Press** will host a seminar at the Community Health System building in downtown Jasper, from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm. He will address the creation/evolution controversy in the light of reason and revelation. Three lectures will be delivered, with time for questions and answers after each lesson. In a day and time when we are constantly bombarded with evolutionary theory and humanistic philosophies, our faith needs to be strengthened to withstand these onslaughts of Satan. The Sixth Avenue Church of Christ invites you to take part in this day with us. Should you have any questions regarding this event, or if you would like directions to the CHS building, please contact the church office at (205) 384-6446, or you may contact Gary Taft at (205) 483-7929.

ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: Does God care what I wear and how I dress?

ANSWER: Men and women, young and old, have a serious responsibility to God and fellow Christians to dress in a descent and modest manner in public, school, work, recreation and when gathered for worship. However, the world has greatly influenced many Christians to dress immodestly. This is a serious problem that must be corrected! Let's follow the instructions of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:9-10. First, we must adorn our body in "modest apparel." The word immodest means, "gaudy, outrageous, too little, too much, obscene, grotesques, offensive, sloppy and extreme." Modest dress reflects a heart and mind that is set on godliness (2 Cor. 4:16; 5:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:3-4; Prov. 23:7; Mt. 12:34). Modesty is not established by culture, a certain era in history, season of the year or a particular gender; it is determined by the Word of God. Second, we must adorn our body with "shamefacedness and sobriety." Shamefacedness means, "bashful, blushing, ashamed, the avoidance of extremes." The person clothed with shamefacedness is aware of what causes shame and disgrace and avoids it. However, some are embarrassed by nothing (Jer. 6:15, 16; 8:12). Sobriety means, "good, sound judgment; good sense." This involves putting thought into what one wears each day. Pure thoughts will lead to pure actions and modest dress (Phil. 2:2-3, 5; 4:8). Third, we must adorn our body with "good works" as those who profess godliness. Chaste conversation means, "pure, holy, modest and decent life." Pure lives will produce pure works (1 Pet. 3:2). A meek and quiet spirit means, "gentle and respectful soul." The beauty of a Christian man or woman comes from their soul and is reflected in the way they dress. God has bestowed upon us the privilege of adorning our body in a modest and descent manner. May our life and the way we dress bring glory and praise to His High and Holy name.

—Mark N. Posey
Decatur, AL