
NOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN

Tim Childs, Baldwyn, MS

Now that I have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," I will intensely crave "the sincere milk of the word" so I may continue to grow spiritually (1 Peter 2:2-3; Matthew 5:6). I must remember that when I am young and weak in the faith, I am in a vulnerable stage of my development. Satan wants to steal the word out of my heart, or otherwise render me unable to produce fruit for God (cf. Matthew 13:18-23). Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8). I must remember it is the Word of God that brought me to this point, and it is the Word of God that will move me along in my spiritual development and fortify my faith (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

Now that I have learned of God's love for me, I want to love him back and prove my love for him (John 3:16; 1 John 4:19). I am able to demonstrate my love for God by drawing nearer to him as James instructs his readers to do in his epistle, (James 4:8). Further, I will seek his counsel, walk in it, and obey his Son (John 14:15), whom he has made Lord (Acts 2:36), and the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). I will not be deceived by satisfaction in hearing only. I will be a doer of the word (James 1:22).

Now that I am washed, sanctified, and justified through Jesus' blood in the offering of himself, I will no longer engage in any works of the flesh such as fornication, adultery or homosexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Since I have been bought with a price, I do not own myself. I now belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). I must refuse any temptation to abuse

God's grace by continuing in a lifestyle of sin. I am now dead to sin, but alive to God's power of righteousness (Romans 6:1-2). Any sin or work of the flesh that keeps me from being solely under the power and influence of Jesus Christ is something I must put away from self. This also includes beverage alcohol and illegal substances. Through the gospel, God will empower me to overcome all forms of sin and vice so that sin no more has dominion over me (Romans 6:14).

Now that I have learned that my sins put Jesus on the cross, I will not crucify him over and over again, and put him to shame (Hebrews 6:6; Isaiah 53:6).

Now that I know God has revealed himself not only through nature, but through the Holy Scriptures and that He alone is worthy of praise and honor, I will assemble together with God's children upon the first day of the week to worship Him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24; Hebrews 10:25). I will worship Him in view of the fact that He seeks true worshippers and with a knowledge that we tend to become like that which we worship.

Now that I know that heaven awaits those who love God, who befriend His Son and follow him in truth and righteousness, I will follow him in fighting the good fight of faith every day of my life. I will pursue heaven's gate with vigor (Hebrews 11:10).

EDITORIAL

“WHY ART THOU CAST DOWN, O, MY SOUL?”

In moments of trial and difficulty, have you ever wondered if living the Christian life was really worth it? Have you ever felt as though God abandoned you in your moments of greatest need? Did tribulation make you question your commitment to your God? If so, you are not alone. The psalmist takes up the pen of inspiration to pour out his soul in the midst of great anguish and trouble. Psalm 42 is written from the vantage point of one who was forced to flee Jerusalem by one intent on taking his life. The authorship of this psalm is not fully known, but the evidence would point to either David as the penman, or perhaps one of the tribe of Levi who accompanied David as he fled from Absalom. Whomever the author may be, we are able to hear the heartbreak and heartache in the words of the inspired penman. Verse two poses the question, “...when shall I come and appear before God?” Here is one who longs to be in Jerusalem, in the house of God, to offer his worship to the Almighty, but who has been made to seek refuge in the wilderness due to Absalom’s lust for power. He recalled the former times when they were able to enter into the house of worship unmolested (vs.4). The psalmist had cried himself to sleep often as he reflected on the way things were versus the way things stood presently: “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?” (Psa.42:3). No doubt the question concerning his God was posed by the enemies of David and his band. These words were a stinging blow to the psyches of David and his entourage. The psalmist describes the taunts of his enemies in this fashion: “As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?” (Psa.42:10). Wasn’t David God’s choice to rule over His people? Why had Jehovah seemingly abandoned His anointed and left him to run scared from his own son? This flight from Jerusalem was to the enemies of David an evident token of God’s displeasure with David and the Almighty’s choice of Absalom as rightful ruler of Israel. These conditions had led the soul of the psalmist to great despair. He would cry out, “O my God, my soul is cast down within me” (vs.6). The questions asked by others had perhaps planted seeds of doubt in the mind of the psalmist, to the extent that he would ask, “Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” (vs.9).

The difficulties of life, and the added persecutions often brought upon the faithful by the enemies of

our God and our faith can wear us down under the immense weight and pressure of these experiences. Even the most faithful servants of God have, at least for a time, felt forsaken in the hour of need, and have questioned if the rigors of dutifully serving Him will ever bring a worthwhile reward. For all he suffered, Job was a man of remarkable attitude and integrity. Yet, in spite of his upright character and his amazing faith, Job still had many questions regarding why God had brought these calamities upon him and where the Almighty was as he endured these trials. David also struggled with similar questions. Psalm 73 describes his difficulty in understanding the prosperity of the wicked who had every desire of their hearts while living in rebellion to the Almighty. Contrast such to the life of David, who was made to flee for his life and live as a nomad and vagabond while trying to serve his God faithfully. Job and David, as well as the inspired penman of the Forty-Second Psalm, soon came to realize that their problem lay not in their God, but in their faulty perspective.

As the psalmist further considers the depression into which his soul had sunk, he arrives at an awakening if you will. He asks, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance” (vs.5). He is upbraiding his lack of faith. As he ponders the blessings of following God, he realizes that he has no reason to despair. How often do we allow the storms of life to cloud our vision to that which is truly important? Our days are consumed with worry, disappointment and discouragement because problems become our focus rather than the Problem Solver. We, like the prodigal, must “come to ourselves” and begin counting our blessings rather than our burdens. The psalmist reminded himself of the hope he enjoyed in his God. The world may rob us of all material blessings, time and circumstances may rob us of our physical health, family and friends may take advantage of us or let us down, but none of these things can take our hope! It is good to be brought back to a proper perspective in regard to the temporal versus the eternal. David’s struggles were so great that he proclaimed, “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency (Psa.73:13). He was “envious at the foolish” when he “saw the prosperity of the wicked” (vs.3). He was beginning to have some rather serious misgivings as to whether the righteous life he was trying to live was really worth it. It was difficult

for him even to ponder (vs.16). However, David soon came back to his senses: “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end” (vs.17). His trials were great, no doubt, but he had begun to pity his plight, as though his sufferings were particular to him alone. It was only after he went in to the worship of the Almighty that David began to see more clearly. The end of the wicked is eternal separation from God, and no matter how much they might prosper in the things of this world, the Day of Judgment will find the rebellious and disobedient without hope. Those who hope in worldly wisdom, or wealth, or earthly fame and friendship will be often disappointed and eternally rueful. But those who trust in the Lord will be blessed (Jer.17:7). The inspired writer calls to our attention the fidelity of the God whom we serve, and in whom we hope: “Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Psa.42:8).

Serving God does not provide us with immunity from the difficulties of life. The Bible clearly teaches that those who strive to live a godly life in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim.3:12). Life happens. Troubles come. Struggles are inevitable. We can allow these to make us bitter or make us better. The choice is ours. God will never disappoint us. He will never abandon us. Happy is the heart that is settled on these eternal verities! “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb.13:5-6). Hope thou in God!

WOT

SOLICITING ONLINE SUBSCRIPTIONS

Due to the uncertain nature of the recent economic down-turn, and with the increased cost of both printing and mailing a publication like *Words of Truth*, we are asking that all individual subscribers please consider taking *Words of Truth* by email. Most have the capability to receive our publication in such a manner, and we are asking all who can to please consider doing so. We wish to be the best stewards of the financial resources that God has entrusted into our care, and we feel that by taking such measures we can do even greater good with God’s blessings. You may sign up for the email version of *Words of Truth* by visiting our website, www.sixthavenuechurch.org. Under the “Resources” tab, you will find a place to submit your email address to receive *Words of Truth*. You may also email your request to sixthavenue@bellsouth.net. We will still mail bundles to congregations, and individual subscriptions to those who are unable to receive *Words of Truth* by email. Please consider taking *Words of Truth* by email so that we may continue to do the greatest good we can with the blessings God has given to us. If you are currently receiving *Words of Truth* and wish to receive it by email, please submit your email address as well as your mailing address so that we may cross-reference your records in our database. This will allow us to make the transition much easier.

www.sixthavenuechurch.org

We hope and pray that you will use our website for the honor and glory of God, and for your own personal growth in the faith of Jesus Christ. On our website you will find many resources available for your use. There are weekly bulletin articles, weekly newspaper articles that appear in our local newspaper, places to request Bible correspondence courses, Searching for Truth materials, and House to House/Heart to Heart materials, as well as audio sermons from our Sunday worship assemblies. You may also sign up to receive our weekly bulletin by email and submit Bible questions that you would like to have answered. On top of all of this, you will find each issue of the Words of Truth catalogued so that you may view them at any time. Miss an issue? Go online and you can read it in its entirety, or you may request a copy by emailing us. May God be glorified as we seek to spread His truth to all the world!

A TROPHY?

Jim Faughn, Paducah, KY

It is not unusual for me to get a reminder about my age. While I would like to think that I haven't changed much, the mirror and some (sometimes brutally) honest people tell me otherwise! Recently, I received a real "wake up call." I discovered how far "out of touch" I am. I learned a new definition for the word "trophy." I was attending a meeting for an advisory council on which I serve for a local high school. The discussion turned to a program designed to discourage sexual activity among the students. During the discussion about the need for such a program, I learned about something that takes place on a regular basis among high school students today. It is not unusual at all for a girl to be asked by a friend if she is planning to give her boyfriend (or any other boy, for that matter) a ***trophy***. *It shocked me to learn that a trophy is a ***baby!****

Long ago, the prophet Jeremiah identified the society in which he lived (specifically the *religious* climate of his day) in this manner:

"Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD" (Jer. 6:15, ESV).

It is of interest to note that the next verse is the one in which people are encouraged to:

"...Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls..." Jer. 6:16, ESV).

It would be difficult to imagine a time during the lifetime of most of those who read these words when there would have been a more urgent need to return to, and walk in, the "ancient paths" in the areas of morality, civility, and other related areas of

our lives. Most importantly, the "ancient *religious* paths" need to be explored and expounded. Many in our society (and some in the church) need to be reminded of God's Will as He reveals it to us in the pages of the New Testament.

This "Search for the Ancient Order" to borrow a phrase well-known to most of us, *must* include a plea to return to God's design for such things as the plan of salvation, the organization and worship of the church, etc. However, we cannot be content to limit our investigation and/or our practice to these matters. There is another pressing need.

It is *way* past time for God's people to wake up to what is going on in our society and to do all that we can to positively influence it. Our Lord called His followers the "...salt of the earth..." (Matt. 5:13) and spoke of the ineffectiveness of salt if it has lost its distinctive qualities. It defies both scripture and common sense to believe that Christians can influence the world if we are like the world.

I believe it is time to raise another question. What good does it do if God's people *are*, in fact, distinctive, but never "get out of the salt shaker?" What happens if we sit in the comfort of our homes and church buildings and never try to make an impact on society? I think I learned at least part of the answer to that question during the advisory council meeting I attended. Instead of a precious child being brought into this world by two people who have already determined to "... bring [their children] up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4, ESV), immortal souls begin their earthly journey as ***a trophy!***

Ever since the meeting at the high school, I've been asking myself an old question I'm sure you've heard before: "*What on earth am I doing for heaven's sake?*" Sometimes, I don't like my answer to that question. How about you?

WOT

“HONEY, IT’S TIME WE CUT OUR CONTRIBUTION”

Cliff Goodwin, Ironaton, AL

It is unfortunate that, in the present economy, the above words are likely being spoken in a number of Christian homes. Times are hard, indeed. Cutbacks and layoffs have affected many families who work in manufacturing and retail sectors. Contractors and business owners have likewise suffered the effects of an economic slowdown. All of this means that there is generally less money to go around, and in many instances less money is going to the Lord as well.

Before proceeding any further, please allow me to make something crystal clear: there may very well come a time in which a Christian family is forced to reduce the amount of their weekly contribution to the Lord’s church. However, something else needs to be equally clear: **the family contribution should not be the first thing cut** when budgetary reductions are necessitated. Let’s take an honest look at some considerations both scriptural and practical.

First, Christians are to give based on their prosperity, or how much they make. Paul wrote by inspiration, “Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come,” (1 Cor. 16:2). Naturally, then, when a Christian makes more money, he ought to give more; when a Christian makes less money, he may give less. This is all very straightforward. However, there is a practical observation often overlooked at this juncture. If and when contribution cutbacks are necessitated by the reduction of income, the amount of the cutback should be in proportion to the amount of income lost. For example, a family that loses 10% of its gross income may very well have to reduce the amount of their weekly contribution. Nonetheless, such a reduction should be **no more** than 10% of what they were giving previously. To cut the family contribution more than 10% in such a scenario would be **disproportionate** and would essentially mean that the family is using part of their contribution to cover shortfalls in other budgetary areas. Some families give no thought to cutting their contributions 25% or more, when their actual income reductions may be only 10 or 15%. “My brethren, these things ought not so to be!”

Second, Christians are to put God first in their finances, as in every other facet of life. This principle was demonstrated under the Old Testament by the offering of the firstfruits. “Honor the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine,” (Prov. 3:9-10). God, and our devotion to God, must be **the priority** of our lives. Jesus clearly empha-

sized this fact. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you,” (Matt. 6:33). “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment,” (Matt. 22:37-38). When God is truly first in our lives, such will be manifested in our giving. Like the Macedonians of old, **we first give ourselves**, and then our possessions naturally follow. “For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God,” (2 Cor. 8:3-5, NKJV).

Let us now consider a practical observation in regard to this second Biblical principle. If God is **first** in our lives, shouldn’t our contributions be the **last** items cut in our budgets? We live in an age that is filled with so many extras. In fact, there are many instances in which we have deemed various extras as “indispensable.” Most families today have at least two cell phones—many families have more. Few families rely on the old UHF antenna for television anymore. Such has been replaced by either cable or satellite service. Both wireless phone service and satellite television programming come in varying plans and packages—all at different costs. When a family’s income is reduced, shouldn’t cutbacks first be made in the areas of some of these “extras,” instead of the family contribution? A family truly desiring to put God first will seek to “cut all the fat” they can, before reducing their weekly offering to the Lord. The way we sometime treat God is astonishing. God blesses with every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), richly giving us all things to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). Then, when hard times come upon us, or reverses are encountered, the first thing to be cut is our contribution! Once again, “My brethren, these things ought not so to be!”

WOT

A DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S WORD

Chad Ramsey, Tupelo, MS

If you were given the task of describing God's word, how would you do it? You might talk about how the Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), and you might show how those individuals who wrote it were simply relating the message given to them by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Perhaps you would mention that the Bible is likened to a lamp that guides our feet in the way that we should go (Psalm 119:105). Or you might talk about how God's word is "living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Hebrews 4:12). There are, of course, many other ways that we could describe the word of God, but none is more simple, beautiful, or descriptive as the psalmist's assessment found in Psalm 19:7-9.

David wrote:

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;

The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;

The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;

The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

The Law of the Lord is Perfect, Converting the Soul

Paul wrote: "where there is no law, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). Accordingly, we may rightly conclude that if we can commit transgression there must be a law to transgress. This law, of course, comes from God. Therefore, it is ridiculous to argue that we no longer live under a law today. Quite the contrary is actually true. We live under the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2). We look into the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25), and our law, according to James, is a "royal law" (James 2:8).

It is also important that we do not forget that this law (the psalmist was writing about the general revelation of God), according to Psalm 19:7, is perfect. This word, of course, means that which is complete. And God's word is completely capable of doing that which God intended for it to do—teach man what he must do to be saved. As evidence, consider how Paul described God's word's complete or perfect nature. He wrote: "that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). All things considered, God's

word is perfect, as the Psalmist wrote, because it is able to convert the souls of those who read and obey it.

The Testimony of the Lord is Sure, Making Wise the Simple

Can we trust God's word? This question is perhaps one of the most important that man can ponder. If the answer is no, then Bible study is a waste of time, but if the answer is yes, then men must be dedicated to following the Bible in all things. Interestingly, there have been individuals throughout time who have attempted to prove the Bible to be false. Many have challenged its historical accuracy, only to be proven wrong. Others have challenged its geographical details, only to have their objections answered. Still others have questioned the methods and actions that are advocated therein, only to be shown that God's way is always the best. In truth, the testimony of the Lord is sure.

But how does this testimony make wise the simple? The answer is that it would make all men wise if they would be willing to follow it. But regrettably, all men are not interested. The simple, however, have always shown an interest in spiritual things. As a matter of fact, it was the "common people who heard [Jesus] gladly" (Mark 12:37). Thus, the simple are made wise because they are willing to hear. The word is available to all and wisdom awaits. As John wrote: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). No wonder Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

The Statutes of the Lord are Right, Rejoicing the Heart

By definition, a statute is a law that is backed by authority. Thus, God's statutes are more than mere suggestions, they are authoritative commands. For this reason, man must do what God says to do.

Interestingly, the psalmist described how these statutes of God will make the heart to rejoice. This reaction, of course, will only occur when one possesses the proper attitude. It should help us to know that God's statutes are fair. In other words, God's authoritative law does not demand more of us than would be right. Instead, it sets forth requirements that designed for our own good. Realizing this, our hearts can rejoice as we ponder the great love that God has shown to us by providing a framework to guide our lives.

***The Commandment of the Lord is Pure,
Enlightening the Eyes***

Since God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness” (Habakkuk 1:13), it follows that all of the commands that He issues will be pure as well. And since God wants man to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), it only makes sense that His commands would be designed to enable man to live a holy life. Fulfilling this responsibility, the commands of God enlighten the eyes of those who learn and follow them. Like a light that brightens a dark path, the commands of God reveal to men how they are to live. No wonder the psalmist penned, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Paul certainly understood that God’s commands opened the eyes of man. In describing the Law of Moses, he wrote: “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet’” (Romans 7:7). In other words, the commandment of God, “You shall not covet,” enabled Paul to see the sin of covetousness. The Law of Christ is no less enlightening. Describing this, James wrote: “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

The Fear of the Lord is Clean, Enduring Forever

Since “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18), there is a sense in which we ought not to fear God. In essence, we ought not to be so terrified of God that we fail to love Him as we should. At the same time, however, there is a very real sense in which we should fear, or perhaps it would be better to say reverence, God. Accordingly, we must always remember to pay the proper respect to our God. This kind of respect will actually lead us to be obedient to His will. No doubt, this is what the writer of Ecclesiastes 12:13 had in mind when he penned: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all.”

We must never get to a point that we become complacent about doing God’s will. This is especially true when we realize that doing God’s will is the very reason that we exist. So, as the writer of Hebrews penned, “since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire” (Hebrews 12:28, 29). If we fear God as we should, it is certainly clean, and no doubt, this fear or respect should endure forever. Thus, we view God’s word as authoritative, and because of our fear, we are willing to do as He commands.

***The Judgments of the Lord are True
and Righteous Altogether***

Realizing that man sometimes makes unrighteous judgments, it is comforting to know that the judgments of God are both true and righteous. The very attributes of God ensure this to be true. Since God knows all things, and since He is altogether holy and just, it only follows that the judgments that He issues will be according to truth and in accordance with what is righteous. For that reason, we can have confidence in God’s word. His judgments will never lead us wrong, and He will always treat us as we deserve to be treated.

Conclusion

We should be thrilled that the revelation that God has provided for mankind can be described as Psalm 19:7-9 does. Truly, God’s word is perfect, His testimonies are sure, His statutes are right, His commandments are pure, He is worthy of our respect, and His judgments are always right.

WOT

ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: By what will man be judged?

ANSWER: Society judges an individual based upon many subjective standards. How one dresses, those with whom one associates, what kind of automobile one drives are all factors used by society to determine the status of an individual. Will the same criteria be used when our spiritual lives are examined? Does God use such fluctuating standards in judging man's soul?

One's status in the eyes of society will not be the standard by which man will be judged. Those who seek the praises of men have their reward in that praise (Mt. 6:1-5), but this is not the standard for eternal judgment. One's wealth will not be the standard for eternal judgment. Man may pass judgment based upon one's wealth, or lack thereof (Jas. 2), but God does not. Man's eternal destiny does not rest upon such fickle standards, and we should all thank God for that! The final, and most important judgment will be based upon an immutable, purely objective standard—God's word. Jesus pronounced to the world that the word he spoke would be the canon of judgment for the entire world (Jn. 12:48). While on Mars' Hill, Paul told those to whom he spoke that Jesus Christ had been appointed by God to judge the world (Acts 17:30,31). However, on more than one occasion Christ made the statement that he did not come to judge the world (Jn. 3:17-19 [ASV]; 12:47). Is this a contradiction? Not at all. When Jesus said he did not come into the world to judge the world, he was saying that he did not come to condemn the world. The world was already condemned! When Christ came in the flesh for the purpose of dying on the cross, he gave all those who were under condemnation because of sin the chance to be saved. Those who rejected the offer of salvation in Christ condemned themselves. At the last day, Christ will merely pass sentence on all men.

—Patrick Morrison
Jasper, AL