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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER
THINGS**

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Question from Colorado about Origin of Satan

Question

Did not God create Lucifer (also known as Satan) with the angels? When Lucifer rebelled, Isaiah 14:12-16 states he was cast out of heaven. Luke 10:18 in the N.T. seems to confirm that Satan is a fallen angel.

Answer

In Isaiah chapter fourteen the prophet specifically states the object of his "proverb" ("taunt" - New American Standard Bible, English Standard Version) is "the king of Babylon," whom he identifies with "the golden city" (verse 4). He states, "... The maggot is spread under you, And worms cover you" (verse 11), hardly a description of a fallen angel, a spirit being (Hebrews 1:14), who does not have flesh (Luke 24:39). He is a "man" (verse 16). He was "Thrust through with a sword" (Verse 19). Isaiah again declares, "'For I will rise up against them,' says the LORD of hosts, 'And cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, And offspring and posterity, says the LORD" (verse 22). "Lucifer" is the king of Babylon.

The context of Luke 10:18 demonstrates the Lord is not talking about the origin of Satan but his loss of power as Christ was preparing to establish His kingdom.

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in

heaven" (Luke 10:17-20).

This is parallel to Matthew chapter twelve.

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house (Matthew 12:28-29).

This is speaking of the Lord and His disciples triumphing over Satan to establish the kingdom of Christ (cf. Colossians 1:13).

Christ created all things, including all spirit beings other than God.

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16).

Satan in ancient times appeared among "the sons of God," apparently angels (Job 12:6; 2:1; 38:7), but he was already the enemy and accuser of man (Job 1:8-19; 2:3-8).

The only thing we know about the origin of Satan is that he is a spirit being created by Christ, and that's all we need to know (Deuteronomy 29:29; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Question from Kenya

Question:

Hello brother Keith, please harmonise for me Romans 6:14 and Rev. 14:12.

Answer

This is a good question, Brother Obabo. Romans 6:14 states, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." Revelation 14:12 says, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Keeping the commandments of God and that as a requirement for being right with God, implies we are under divine law. In fact, Paul so plainly states. The Gentiles, though without law, were "under law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:19-21). In fact, if we have no law, we cannot sin (Romans 5:13), because "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, **King James Version**).

In the book of Romans, Paul contrasts two systems. That which came through Moses, the Old Testament, he calls "the law," or simply "law" (cf. Romans 2:12-20). The law, the Old Testament, cannot justify the sinner; it can only show him his sin (Romans 3:20). This is because the sacrifices of the law were animal sacrifices which cannot take away sin (Hebrews 10:4).

But the law of Christ, the law of faith, can take away sin (Romans 3:27-28), because it has the sacrifice of Christ (Romans 3:24-26), which takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29; Hebrews 9:13-14).

Thus, the apostle John states: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). It was not that the Old Testament had no grace or truth. It was abundant in grace (Exodus 34:5-7) and was true throughout (2 Samuel 7:28). But its emphasis was law, requirements that demanded obedience. There is law through Christ, commandments we must obey (Matthew 7:21; Romans 6:17-18; Hebrews 5:8-9; Revelation 22:14), the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2), but the emphasis through Christ is grace, undeserved favor in the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 2:8), and truth, the full revelation of the nature and will of God (Matthew 11:27).

We must obey the law of Christ to be saved (Romans 6:17-18), but our salvation is by the grace of God (Ephesians 2:8). Though we can never earn forgiveness of our sins, if we repent, the Lord will forgive (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9).

Question from American Samoa About the Apostles and Baptism

Question:

I had an interesting comment in my class yesterday about the apostles being baptized. Can you share your thoughts on that.

Answer

Nothing is said about it in Scripture. Old time preachers spoke of them as “charter members” of the church who were simply part of its original founding, but that is just an uninspired explanation. Since the Scriptures are silent about this, no necessary conclusion can be drawn, and it doesn’t change the fact that one is added to Christ, his body, the church (Ephesians 1:22-23) by baptism (Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:26-27).

The Righteousness of God and the Self-Righteousness of Men

Sunday Ayandare | Ibadan, Nigeria

Romans 10:1-3 reads:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Implied in this passage of Scripture are two kinds of righteousness, to wit, the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man, or better still, self-righteousness. Of course, there is another kind of righteousness that the Bible talks about, that is the righteousness of the law (Philippians 3:9). “The law” in this context has reference to the Law of Moses (John 1:17; Acts 13:38-39). Properly understood, however, the righteousness of the law boils down to self-righteousness under this present dispensation. For it is clear in this passage that Paul uses the righteousness of the law to explain “mine (Paul’s) own righteousness.” In any case, that is outside the purview of this piece. Here we want to zero in on the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man.

What is Righteousness?

According to Thayer, righteousness has to do with “the state of him who is such as he ought to be... The quality of being right.” He goes on to say that the word “righteousness comes from a root word that means straightness.” Beyond all this, “Forever, O Lord,” the Psalmist says, “thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89). Jehovah God had settled His word from eternity. The definition the Almighty has placed on every word is far and above all other definitions of men. His explanation is above all the explanations of the wisest of men. “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25). The term “righteousness” has been defined and explained in simple terms in the word of God. In Psalm 119:172, we are told that “all Thy (God) commandments are righteousness.” That forever settles the question! When Peter got to the house of Cornelius, he declared, “Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:34,35).

The Righteousness of God

If it is settled - and it has been settled - that all the commandments of God are righteousness, then it follows that every command of God that we obey comes under the righteousness of God.

Let us go back to our text which serves as our springboard. In Romans 10 verses 1 to 3, Paul brings to the fore the problem of the Jews. They weren’t a people stupefied in indifference but ardently religious. They weren’t sodden in lukewarmness in things pertaining to God, but they had a zeal for God (Romans 10:2). What then was the trouble? Their ardent zeal for God was without knowledge! Their ignorance derived

mainly from their failure to acknowledge that there is no other way to justification in the sight of God other than by faith in Jesus Christ.

As McGarvey and Pendleton have pointed out in their **Commentary on Romans**, “misguided zeal miscarries like a misdirected letter and the value of the contents does not mend the address.” It is in the light of this that Augustine postulates that “it is better to go limping in the right way than to run with all our might out in the wrong way.” According to Paul, the Jews “being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3).

The implication of this is that when the Jews refused to submit to God’s own righteousness, they sought to establish their own righteousness. To reject or spurn the commandment of God and embrace what seems right to us in the way of salvation is nothing more than clothing ourselves with a garment of our own spinning. Truly, “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

The Importance of Obeying God

Since all the commandments of God are righteousness (Psalm 119:172), it follows that we must obey Him and keep His commandments in order to be righteous before Him. Jesus Christ says, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). John says, “By this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and keep His commandments and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:2-3).

We must obey even those commands that we consider to be trivial (Matthew 15:1-9). At times, a command of God may seem to be unreasonable to us, like Christ’s instruction to Peter to “launch out into the deep” (Luke 5:4). This instruction was against the backdrop of having “toiled all the night and have taken nothing” (Verse 5). It should be noted that Christ did not take Peter to another body of water, but the same lake of Gennesaret (Verse 1). Moreover, Christ did not provide another boat for Peter but the same boat with which he and his colleagues caught nothing over the night. Indeed, Peter was to use the same net he had used through the night! Well, Peter understood how imperative it was for him to obey Christ. He said, “nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5). We must imbibe the mind of Peter. We need to remind ourselves at all times that it is “not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father in heaven...” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Certainly, Jesus Christ “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Indeed, Christ gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6). But who actually are going to enjoy the benefits of the blood He shed for all? This question goes beyond all guesses and postulations. The Scriptures have given a plain and direct answer. “Though He were a Son yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). This underscores the fact that obedience to God is imperative for our salvation.

Does this mean we earn our salvation? No! As someone has aptly put it: “salvation is not by attainment but by atonement.” This is the thrust of Titus 3:4-5.

“But after that the kindness and love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness (that is, man’s righteousness) which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

This corroborates Ephesians 2:8-9. “For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

Self-righteousness

If the foregoing is true of the righteousness of God, then self-righteousness should be obvious to all. Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the king of Israel provides for us an excellent example of the righteousness of man. Instead of Jerusalem which was the center of worship according to God’s own arrangement

(Deuteronomy 12:5; 2 Chronicles 7:12; John 4:20), Jeroboam set up two golden calves at Bethel and Dan and fatuously described these as “the gods which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt (1 Kings 12:29). Besides, he made shrines of high places and made priests “from every class of people which were not of the son of Levi” (1 Kings 12:31). Moreover, he changed the feast of tabernacle from the fifteenth day of the seventh month to the fifteenth day of the eighth month “which he devised of his own heart” (1 Kings 12:31-33).

The obvious reason for this infringement of the law of God by Jeroboam was political expediency. He did not only fear the loss of his firm grip on the newly founded kingdom, but also the loss of his own life (1 Kings 12:27). But the dummy he sold to the people was that he was saving them the trouble and expense of distant journey to Jerusalem (verses 38-30). Anyway, “this thing became a sin unto Jeroboam” (Verse 30). It was the righteousness of man on the part of Jeroboam!

Thus whenever men reject the word of God and construct a system of religiosity that is after the teachings and desires of man, then we are in the realm of the righteousness of man.

Conclusion

We must abide by the word of God in everything that we do and teach to have the righteousness of God. To deviate from the word of God and glorify ourselves in human wisdom is to slip into the region of the righteousness of man (1 Corinthians 1:21). Every attempt of man to introduce a new doctrine or to establish another denomination is nothing more than self-righteousness (1 Corinthians 3:9).

The Need for Foundations

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

In news reports from Atlanta, Georgia, there have been pictures of a service station/convenience store that is collapsing. What is the problem? There is a large water conduit running under the property, and evidently a huge leak has formed, perhaps even a collapse of some sort. This has caused the collapse of the foundation of the building. It is evident that the whole structure is on the brink of destruction.

So, what's the point? We all understand the obvious need for solid foundations. No building will ever stand without a foundation. That is the first step in construction. And in the spiritual realm we sing songs with the words “On Christ the solid rock I stand.” Another song is “How Firm a Foundation.” We are familiar with Christ's teaching concerning the need to build on a rock.

“Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47-49).

The point I am making is that according to research, at least 70% of students that come from “Christian” (denominational) homes lose their faith while they are in college. How does this happen? There are at least two contributing factors. (1) They are not given any foundation for their faith. I know of few, if any, denominational organizations that teach on evidences—evidence for the existence of God, evidence for a creation rather than mindless evolution, evidence for the resurrection of Christ or evidence for the inspiration of the Bible. (2) Another major problem has to do with the liberal bias of college professors. Estimates show that in 1990 42% of professors were liberal. That percentage increased to 60% by 2014, with liberal professors now outnumbering those of a more conservative perspective by a ratio of 5 to 1. One survey I saw identified the percentage of liberal professors at 91%.

We can couple this with the admitted aim of many professors, as noted in the following quotes by those who stand before our young people in the classrooms, as I have written before.

“We try to arrange things so that students who enter as bigoted, homophobic, religious fundamentalists will leave college with views more like our own...We are going to go right on trying to discredit you (fundamentalist parents) in the eyes of your children, trying to strip your fundamentalist religious community of dignity, trying to make your view seem silly rather than discussable. We are not so inclusivist as to tolerate intolerance such as yours” (Prof. Richard Rorty, in his essay “Universality and Truth”).

“Every child in America entering school at the age of five is insane because he comes to school with certain allegiances towards our founding fathers, towards his parents, toward a belief in a supernatural being... It is up to you teachers to make all of these sick children well by creating the International Children of the Future” (Chester M. Pierce, Harvard Professor addressing public school teachers. [Berit Kjos, Brave New Schools, p. 161, as Kjos writes in opposition to Pierce)

It is no wonder that the defection rate is so great among denominational young people. But what about our own? I am afraid I have known of too many who have left the faith. There may be various reasons, as Satan is still alive and working to draw disciples away, and he has many weapons at his disposal. But one obvious weapon Satan has is his attack on weak faith.

Then the question is, “How do we prevent this loss?” There are at least three strategies to win the battle in this war with Satan.

1. The first step is quite obvious. Start at home. This strategy has been used for thousands of years, as we see in God’s instruction to Israel.

“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up...” (Deuteronomy 6:1-7).

Do we remember what Paul wrote in reminding Timothy of his childhood? “For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well” (2 Timothy 1:5). “...and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Although Timothy’s father was not a Christian, it is apparent that his grandmother and mother were diligent in providing this young man with a solid foundation. I seriously doubt they thought, “Oh, we’ll send him to Sabbath School every Saturday, and that will be enough.”

And we recall Paul’s admonition to fathers in Ephesians 6:4: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

Don’t leave it up to the church to do all the teaching of our young people. How many parents would be content if our public schools only met for three or four hours a week to educate our children? I don’t think that would work very well.

2. A second ingredient in building a successful and solid foundation would be for local churches to be

proactive in teaching evidences. It is obviously good for elders and preachers to plan for lessons in textual studies, for we need to have an understanding of God's word in the context of various books of the Bible. But especially, in view of the attacks on faith today, there is a need for studies in evidences. There is an abundance of good material available for studies on evidence of inspiration, studies in the resurrection, studies in the historical accuracy of the Bible, etc.

3. A third strategy in helping our young people to be strong in their faith is to be very thoughtful about where we send our children to college. There are some places of higher learning that should have a big "X" on them. Yes, they may provide a good education in the things of the world, but they also may seek to destroy faith in the world to come.

And with respect to our public schools—kindergarten through high school—there are dangers there, as well. Parents need to be involved in the PTA and other activities. I know that even in the 1970s one of my daughters was ridiculed by a teacher because my daughter was a Christian and "Miss Goody-goody Two-shoes," (whatever that was supposed to mean). And this was in the "Bible belt" south.

God has given parents a great treasure, and we need to take every precaution to protect his great gift. "Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward" (Psalm 127:3).

Dear reader, it is imperative that we establish a firm foundation for our children. We do that by establishing their faith. The Hebrews' writer declared, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). The word "assurance" is from the Greek "hupostasis." Among the various words used in its definition are "a setting under (support)... substance." What is a foundation? It is that which "stands under."

The **King James** translation renders the verse: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith "stands under." It is our foundation. It must be strong. It must be instilled in our children. Paul encourages us to "take up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16). If our faith is strong, it can overcome anything Satan can throw at us.

Wage The Good Warfare

Patrick Farish | Waxahatchie, Texas, USA

We are at war. This is not a carnal warfare, where the outcome is largely unknown before the end. It is, rather, a war whose end has been known from the beginning. God told the serpent, who had by deception seduced Eve to sin, "I will put enmity between you and the woman; and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15).

The manifestation of this enmity occurred when Jesus, the offspring of Eve, put to death for the sins of mankind (his heel was bruised) rose from the dead on the third day, thus bruising the head of the serpent (identified, Revelation 20:2). The Hebrews writer speaks of it this way:

"Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery" (2:14-15).

So: Jesus has won the war but battles continue. In wars between nations surrender may occur, or a truce be drawn, and soldiers on distant battlefields do not know these things; so the conflict goes on. The war is over but the skirmishes continue. So with the war between Jesus and the devil. The power of death is the devil's; he has been defeated by Jesus, Who destroyed him but many on earth do not know this. They allow the devil to lead and win and ultimately make him, though he has been defeated, a winner in the war for souls. It does not have to be this way. Ample instruction has been given, and provision made, for all to be soldiers of Christ.

First, we need to be alert. We must be on guard against the enemy; Peter said, “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). History tells of battles lost because an actually superior force was overcome; they were not sober, not watchful. We have an adversary; resist him!

Then, weapons – and how to use them. Paul, speaking of commending himself, in the midst of long list of “how” he does this, includes, “with the weapons for the right hand and for the left ...” (2 Corinthians 6:3-10, especially :7). He later in the same epistle said, “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds” (10:3-4).

The weapons of our warfare are therefore powerful, powerful enough to stand against “the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:11-12). Paul continues by enumerating “the whole armor of God” as the “belt of truth ... the breastplate of righteousness ... the readiness given by the gospel of peace ... the shield of faith ... the helmet of salvation ... the sword of the Spirit.” We make no comment regarding the first five other than to observe that they are for the front of the soldier; he is not expected to turn his back on the enemy. The sixth piece of the whole armor of God, the sword of the Spirit, is the only offensive piece in this panoply. The word of God, is the sword of the Spirit.

Paul emphasizes this in writing to Timothy that “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It is the Scripture that provides all that which man needs. Not my knowledge, nor my eloquence, nor my education, nor my logical approach, nor my wisdom – it is the Scripture that equips “for every good work.”

We need to so live that as our day approaches we can calmly say, with Paul,

“... the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

We are at war. We must therefore “Fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Timothy 6:12).

Shall We Continue in Sin?

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Romans 6:1-2).

Paul asked and then answers the question posed to those at Rome about continuing in sin. They had died to their transgressions, being separated from them, and were raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). He fully expected them to no longer have the love of sin in their hearts nor to practice sin in their lives. If they remained slaves to sin it would lead to their spiritual death (Romans 6:16). He further reminds them that they had obeyed from the heart the doctrine delivered to them and had become slaves of righteousness (Romans 6:17-18).

Let me also suggest to you some other reasons why we should not continue in sin after receiving forgiveness that is offered through the blood of Christ.

Shall we continue in sin knowing the price that was paid to redeem us from it? It cost God His only begotten Son (John 3:16). Think of the pain that the Father must have experienced upon hearing Jesus utter the words, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). Jesus paid the ultimate price, His life. Before having the nails driven through His hands and feet, He was mocked, ridiculed, spit

on, beaten and scourged. Surely, we don't want to continue in sin knowing what the Father and Son endured so that we might be forgiven. This should motivate us to live better.

Shall we continue in sin knowing that it might lead others to sin as well? The Lord tells us to be the salt of the earth and lights to the world (Matthew 5:13-16). As Paul told Timothy to be an example in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12), we likewise must live so that our influence for good will affect those with whom we come in contact. Especially think of the consequences that a sinful life can have on our children or grandchildren. If they see parents or grandparents who are not devoted to God and who are hypocritical, they will likely follow in their steps. Jesus warned that if we cause others to sin that we would lose our souls as well (Matthew 18:6-7).

Shall we continue in sin knowing what it will cost us? Remember the words of Paul, "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). The death spoken of by Paul in this verse is spiritual. We will be separated from God throughout eternity and will be sentenced to eternal misery. Hell, is an awful place that we must avoid at all cost. We cannot continue in sin and be saved.

May we not let sin have dominion over us (Romans 6:14), using our members as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13), so that God will be honored and glorified by our lives. We cannot afford to continue in sin.

When Life Changes

Mike Thomas | Kokomo, Indiana, USA

Life is a series of changes, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...a time to gain, and a time to lose" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6). We see this truth every day. The kids grow up and leave. Our body morphs into a different person every year. People we know and love pass away. And the years fly by faster than they used to. Just when we get used to one scene in life, it quickly transforms into another. Nothing is constant in this ever-flowing river of change except change itself. Take a good look around. What you see today will quickly evolve into something else.

When life changes it is good to know there is One who is constant. This fact is developed when the psalmist said of God,

"Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end" (Psalm 102:25-27).

The same thought is said of our Lord: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

We need to thank God for being dependable, unchanging and constant. This enables us to rely on Him and should convince us to place our complete trust in Him, since the truth of God's word does not change. After he praised Jesus for remaining the same, the writer of Hebrews said, "Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace..." (Hebrews 13:9). God's righteous consistency should prompt us to establish our own commitment to holiness. The imaginations of men will always present us with strange and ever-developing doctrines, from how to worship God to how to define marriage, but the word of God is constant. Peter saw this truth and said

"the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.' Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you" (1 Peter 1:23-25).

Because God is reliable, we can build our entire faith on Him and know that our house will withstand any storm (cf. Matthew 7:24-26). This stability gives us real hope whenever our life takes an undesirable turn.

No other person in life can give us this refuge and security. Even our family, who may be loyal to us as we are to them, cannot give us this foundation of dependability since neither of us possess immortality in this life. We “all have one breath” and “all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20). Yet, “From the end of the earth I will cry to You, when my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:2). I love the thought that Henry Lyte wrote in his beautiful hymn “Abide With Me”: “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.” Who among us can find a better response to the diversity of life?

Success Without Compromise

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There are many godly men and women spoken of in the Bible who we would do well to imitate. We are able to follow Daniel's life from his youth to old age, and see in him the constant focus on the things of God that we should strive for in our own lives. Let us consider Daniel, and dare to be like him.

Daniel, A Preeminent Man

That Daniel was a man blessed with pre-eminence and power through his lifetime is evident. Nebuchadnezzar chose him to serve before him (Daniel 1:3-6). He gained pre-eminence among the wise men of Babylon (Daniel 1:17-20). Eventually, he was given power over all of Babylon (Daniel 2:48-49; 5:29). Likewise, he received power in the Medo-Persian empire (Daniel 6:1-3, 28). Daniel attained positions of power and influence without compromise. In studying his life, we can see how to be successful without selling out godliness.

Daniel, A Man Of Purpose

There was Daniel, a young boy in a strange land. Imagine the lure to violate God's law. Daniel had determined he would do what was right.

...Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself (Daniel 1:8).

Daniel made a stand for what was right, and God blessed him for it (Daniel 1:9).

Every child of God needs to be a person of purpose. There is no respect in this world, nor should there be, for the 'wishy-washy.' Those who live life with purpose tend to receive respect from others, even if they do not agree (though the chief of the eunuchs was unsure about Daniel's request, he was still willing to grant it).

What should our purpose be? We need to seek things that are spiritual (Matthew 6:33). Our focus must be on the Lord and serving Him, not upon the delicacies that surround us (Colossians 3:1-3). Like Daniel, we need to be focused on doing what pleases God, not on the consequences that might come from such a choice. A life that is consequence-driven is a life without purpose.

Daniel, A Man Of Principle

Daniel wouldn't compromise his convictions as a young man by eating the king's delicacies (Daniel 1:8). As an old man, he led the same principled life, refusing Belshazzar's gifts. It seems the king sought to influence Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall. He would not, but rather said:

Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation (Daniel 5:17, 26-28).

He proceeded to give the interpretation, and that night, Belshazzar's kingdom fell. The king insisted that Daniel be lavished with gifts (Daniel 5:29), but the man of God would not be moved from God's will. Darius, the Mede received the kingdom, not Daniel, as Belshazzar had declared.

Years later, we again are given a glimpse into the life of Daniel, and once more, we see that he lived a life of principle. Despite the threat of death, he refused to obey an evil decree which would require him to cease praying to God. Notice what we are told:

...when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days (Daniel 6:10).

This was a life long practice for him, not a ritual, but a close relationship shared with His God. He prayed, was arrested, cast into the lion's den, and survived - for God honoured him. He was a man of principle.

We need to be people who are led by principle rather than price, who focus on faith, not consequences. Those who walk in the integrity of their hearts are reliable, even when things get tough. And such individuals have the respect and blessing of God (Psalm 15:1-5).

Daniel, A Man Of Purity

Why did Daniel's enemies trick king Darius into signing a decree which would violate Daniel's conscience and cause him to disregard an edict from the king? Quite simply, it was the only way they could bring a charge against him. Though they searched, they could not find any fault in him. We read,

...Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him (Daniel 6:3-4).

Given great responsibility, Daniel proved himself faithful; and thus, he was granted greater opportunities. Of course, his purity in business affairs was a result of his desire to live a life of purpose before God, and his focus on walking with integrity.

Whether young or old (1 Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:6-8), we need to maintain purity in our conduct. Those who walk in purity will be found trustworthy, gain respect, and are often afforded greater responsibility and privileges. And most importantly, they are pleasing to God.

Daniel, A Man Of Prayer

The key which tied all these other attributes together was Daniel's focus on communicating with God. Daniel 6:10 tells us some important things about his prayer life:

- He knelt in prayer, demonstrating his humility;
- He prayed 3 times daily, demonstrating his dependence on God;
- He gave thanks amidst persecution, demonstrating his gratitude and the fact he had not lost sight of God's blessings;
- This was his "custom since early days," demonstrating his persistence and faithfulness in serving the Lord.

Are we constant in prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18)? If our effort to live purposeful, principled and pure lives falls short, could it be that we have an undisciplined prayer life? We need to be in constant communication with our heavenly Father.

Conformity and compromise are not the way to get ahead. Daniel met manifold success by maintaining a godly life. We can too!

The Good Confession

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Introduction:

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

Perhaps you have joined with Christians in singing this beautiful hymn:

*I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
Nor to defend His cause;
Maintain the honor of His Word,
The glory of His cross (Isaac Watts).*

But if you are unwilling to confess Jesus as your Lord, you cannot honestly repeat these brave words. Surely then you need to know what God's Word teaches about confession. What does the New Testament teach about confession for those who are not Christians?

Necessity of Confession

Does the law of Christ require that we declare our faith? The Spirit reveals that confession is essential if we are to obey and glorify God (Philippians 2:9-11), and one must obey Him to be saved. "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). In order to have God dwell in us and we in Him, we must declare our faith. "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1 John 4:15). In fact, confession is "unto salvation."

But what does it say? 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart' (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:8-10)

The Lord demands we confess our faith as a requirement to enter Heaven.

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32-33).

Indeed, confession is an absolute essential!

What to Confess

What, then, should we confess? Some would have us repeat, "I believe that God for Christ's sake has pardoned (forgiven) my sins." Not only is this confession unknown to the Bible, it places confession of faith after salvation, in violation of the New Testament (Romans 10:10).

Other religious groups demand an "experience of grace" - telling some unusual feeling or incident, supposedly miraculous, as evidence of salvation. This makes an inward feeling our standard of salvation; but Paul declared, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7), and "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

Still others require a repetition of the falsely so-called "Apostles Creed" or some church statement of beliefs. These all add to the scriptures in glaring violation of the command not to add to or take from God's Word as our standard.

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Revelation 22:18-19).

It is popular today to ask an unsaved sinner to repeat the "sinner's prayer." Not only is no such prayer found in the Bible, the New Testament never teaches those outside Christ to pray for salvation. "For the

eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12). Furthermore, "Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him" (John 9:31).

In contrast, the New Testament simply teaches us to confess Jesus is "Christ" (the anointed One, the promised Savior), "Lord" (ruler), and the "Son of God" (which includes the facts that He is divine in nature, born of a virgin, and raised from the dead to live eternally) (Philippians 2:11; 1 John 4:15).

Significance

What is the significance of this confession? Every system of religion has one fundamental principle or grand central fact. If the basic principle is true, the religion built thereon is true; but if it is false, the religion is false. The foundation of Islam is the belief, "None has the right to be worshiped but Allaah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allaah." Accept this, and you will be a Muslim. Mormonism contends "Joseph Smith, Jr. is the prophet of God." If you believe this, you will be a "Latter Day Saint" (Mormon). The proposition, "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" is the grand central theme of the Gospel.

And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30-31).

It is the foundation of the church. "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). When Peter confessed, "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:16), Jesus declared, "Upon this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18).

This truth is the saving fact of the Gospel. "And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household'" (Acts 16:30-31). If you truly accept this fact, you will become a Christian.

How to Confess

We confess "with the mouth," as well as by our lives (Romans 10:8-10). It must be before witnesses. There might be only one witness, as in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch.

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God' (Acts 8:26-40).

Or it could be many witnesses. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Why

Why should we declare our faith? Certainly not to join a denomination, for the Lord adds the saved to His church. "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). Rather, you should confess in order to be saved (Romans 10:8-10).

Conclusion

Christ was willing to make this "good confession" before Pontius Pilate even though the truth of it cost Him His life.

Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice' (John 18:37).

"Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate" (1 Timothy 6:13).

Some day you too will make this confession. "For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:11-12). If now, it will be to your salvation; if not until the judgment, to your damnation.

Why not confess Christ now, that you might be saved?

Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32-33).

Idolatry

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"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10:14).

The Scriptures tell us whom to worship and how to worship Him, but they never just command us to worship. Man, with a spirit derived from God and in the image of God, naturally worships something. Those who turn away from the worship of the one true and living God turn naturally to idolatry, sorcery, or both (Galatians 5:20). The Gentiles, who refused to know God, turned to idols (Romans 1:20-23).

"Idolatry originally meant the worship of idols, or the worship of false gods by means of idols, but came to mean among the Old Testament Hebrews any worship of false gods, whether by images or otherwise, and finally the worship of Yahweh (the LORD - KS) through visible symbols" (ISBE; cf. Hosea 8:5-6).

The first of the Ten Commandments forbade Israel to worship any gods other than the LORD (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). The second forbade making any carved image for the sake of worshiping it (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10). This included not only images of various animals or even humans representing foreign gods (Romans 1:22-23) but attempting to represent the LORD, who is an invisible spirit, in some visible way (John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17; Exodus 32:4-5). The primary reason the Lord rejected Israel and Judah and sent them into captivity was their idolatry, the most basic breach of His covenant with them (Acts 7:38-43).

Our Catholic friends are idolaters. They claim they don't worship the images before whom they bow but "venerate" them. Worship is "an act of homage or reverence" (Vine. 686). Veneration is worship. Catholics make a distinction where there is no difference. Catholics pray to Mary and the so-called "saints," but we are to pray to the Father through His Son, Christ Jesus (Colossians 3:17). This leaves out prayers to saints, including Mary, and leaves out Mary as the one through whom we pray to the Father.

The apostle Paul lists idolatry among the works of the flesh, because idolatry's appeal is to fleshly desires. The worship of idols was and is accompanied by the grossest of immorality (Romans 1:24-32; c f. Jeremiah 19:2-6; Amos 2:7-8; Hosea 4:13).

All idols are in reality nothing; there is no spiritual reality behind the physical image (1 Corinthians 8:4).

The New Testament describes anything that takes the place of God in our hearts as idolatry. Covetousness, the greedy desire for material things is idolatry (Colossians 3:5-6). We can make an idol of pleasure (2 Timothy 3:4), and many Americans do, living for the enjoyment of the moment. Many make an idol of human wisdom (Romans 1:22-23), and many others put their families ahead of the Lord, and thus turn them into an idol (Matthew 10:34-37).

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21).

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