

The Christian's Personal Sanctification and Testimony in the World

Stark Road Gospel Hall Bimonthly Bible Reading (3/22/97)

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“Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” (Col 3:17). “Consider your ways” (Hag 1:5,7). “The unexamined life is not worth living” (Plato, *Apology* 38a).

Readings: Rom 6:5-14; Eph 5:2-6:4; Heb 13:10-15; 1 Pet 2:11-12; Jam 1:26-27.

God's Aim: To Develop the Mind of Christ in Us. God intends to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18). Our destiny is to bear the likeness of the Man from heaven (1 Cor 15:49; Php 3:21). Thus the key to pleasing God is to develop the mind of Christ. Christ loved God holistically--with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut 6:5). He excelled in all areas of life (Mark 7:37) as He worked for God's pleasure (John 8:29). The world looks at success through the single dimension of career achievement, but God expects faithfulness in several areas, not just work. The world measures success in dollars, but God looks at the quality of our lives. At the judgment seat, Christ will not inquire about how much money you made, but rather about your devotion to Him, your faithfulness to your family, your contribution to the assembly, your diligence at work, and your witness to the world.

I. Honoring Christ in your personal life. *Christ sanctified Himself to His Father (John 10:36) and to the redemption of His people (John 17:19).* God requires holiness (practical sanctification) from us (Lev 20:23-26; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 2:15).

- **The doctrinal basis of holiness:** Our old man (what we were in Adam) died (Rom 6:6); our new man (what we are in Christ) is alive (Rom 6:8-11).
- **The practical requirements for holiness:**
 - **Positively:** Setting ourselves apart for God. Presenting our whole selves to God (Rom 6:13; 12:1; 2 Cor 8:5), renewing our minds (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:22), and “putting on” the deeds of the new man (Eph 4:22). Christ must be Lord of every area in our lives.
 - **Negatively:** Separating ourselves from sin (Rom 6:12-13; 1 Pet 1:15; 2 Pet 3:11). We are to mortify the deeds of the body (Rom 8:13; Gal 5:24; Col 3:5), to cast off the deeds of the old man (Eph 4:22). We should not do what Christ could not share in, or go where He is not welcome.
- **Holiness depends on God's grace (2 Cor 1:13) and God's Spirit (Gal 5:16-18).** We are fully responsible, however, to rely on God's grace and to cooperate with His Spirit (Rom 6:11-13; Eph 4:17-32).
- **Holiness grows by obedience** in Bible study, meditation, and worship (Psa 45:1; 2 Cor 3:18).

#1. *If my heart is devoted to God, does my appearance matter?* Examples: Length of hair (1 Cor 11:6,10,15), ostentatious or provocative apparel (1 Tim 2:9; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:3).

#2. *I can't seem to find the time for reading, prayer, and meditation. What can I do?* Points: God is first (Isa 44:6). We are to handle time wisely (Psa 90:12; Eph 5:16). List your values, and set boundaries in legitimate things: *Opportunity is not a mandate.* Consider Christ: He kept to a timetable, an agenda, a goal (John 9:4). He worked long hours, but maintained a calm, balanced life. Nothing distracted Him. He was never in a hurry. He accomplished *all* that the Father intended for Him. God will not give us more to do in a day than can be done. If we run out of time, then things got on our schedules that God did not put there.

II. Honoring Christ in your family. *As a child, Christ obeyed His parents (Luke 2:51-52), and He looked after His mother even when He was on the cross (John 19:27).*

- **Husbands** are to love (Eph 5:22-23), lead (1 Pet 3:7), and provide for (1 Tim 5:8) their wives.
- **Wives** are to love (Tit 2:4-5) and complement (complete, reinforce) their husbands through honor and obedience (Eph 5:22-23; Tit 2:5; 1 Pet 3:1-7). They are to keep the home (1 Tim 5:14; Tit 2:4-5; Prov 31).

- **Parents** are to reproduce (Gen 1:28; 9:1,7; Psa 127:3,5; 128:3; 1 Tim 2:15; 5:14), love (Eph 6:4; Col 3:21; Tit 2:4), model (Mat 5:16; Prov 23:26), provide for (1 Kings 2:52), instruct (Deut 11:18-21; Prov 22:6), and discipline (Prov 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-4; 29:15; 29:17; Eph 6:4) their children.
- **Children** are to honor (Ex 20:12), love (Prov 23:26), and obey (Eph 6:1; Col 3:20) their parents. They are to care for their parents in their old age (1 Tim 5:8; 6:10).
- Christian families should keep traditions and set rules that assure God's honor and make the children candidates for salvation (Deut 4:9-10; 6:6-9; 2 Tim 3:15).
- Marriage to an unbeliever violates the unity God intends (Eph 5:22-23) and is forbidden (Deut 7:3-4; 1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14-18). This flawed union, however, is better than divorce (1 Cor 7:12-3). Godly living speaks louder than words (1 Pet 3:1-2)--a general principle in dealing with unbelieving relatives.

#3: *An unsaved sister has left her husband and wants to marry her new boyfriend. She asks you to stand up at her wedding. What would you say?*

#4: *Your unsaved son, a high school junior, has shown unusual ability in football. The coach wants him to join the varsity team, and thinks he has a shot at professional football. What would you say?*

III. Honoring Christ in the Assembly. *Christ girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17).*

- Corporate worship (1 Cor 11:20; Heb 13:15, 1 Pet 2:5) and prayer (1 Tim 2:1-8; Acts 2:42) honor God.
- Faithful attendance pleases God (Heb 10:25) and provides instruction (1 Tim 3:16).
- Generous giving is a collective priestly activity of the assembly (1 Cor 16:1-2; Php 4:18; Gal 6:6-7).
- Willing service includes exercising gifts, such as helping (1 Cor 12:28), showing mercy (Rom 12:8), serving others (Rom 12:7), and giving (Rom 12:8).
- Gospel preaching is a priority (Mat 28:19-20; 2 Tim 4:3-5; 1 Thes 1:8), and requires unity and effort (Php 1:27).
- The assembly is called to bear reproach (Heb 13:13).

#5: *Your children seem to have few friends at the Gospel Hall. A local evangelical church is known for its active youth ministry. Should you have your children attend?*

#6: *You disagree with the stand the elders of your assembly have taken on a divorce case. Should you leave? Should you stay and publicly promote your view? What should you do? (Heb 13:17.)*

IV. Honoring Christ at Work. *Christ was known for the outstanding quality of His work (Mark 6:3; 7:37; Luke 2:47,52).*

- **Excellence.** Competence in our field and quality in our work honor God (Mat 25:21).
- **Enthusiasm.** Our delight in God should produce unmistakable joy and energy (Prov 15:13; Eccl 9:10).
- **Ethics.** God expects the highest personal integrity, even if we suffer for it (1 Pet 2:11-12). If a field of work or study is found, after due effort, to be impossible to locate under the Lordship of Christ, the burden of proof is on us to demonstrate why we should continue in that field.

#7: *A number of your business contacts are women, and you are frequently asked to join them for lunch. Should you go to lunch with another woman alone?*

#8: *As part of a promotion, your company wants to relocate you to a city with no scriptural assembly. There is a chapel with an "open table" and no gospel meeting. Headcoverings for women are optional. Should you go?*

V. Honoring Christ in your community. *Christ was the perfect neighbor (Luke 10:30-37) who faithfully bore witness to the truth (John 18:37).*

- As salt we retard the earth's decay, and as light we bring the message of life in the context of truthfulness and visible good works (Mat 5:13-16).

- “Pure religion” has compassion for the temporal needs of people as well as concern for their eternal welfare (Jam 1:27; Mat 25:35-40).
 - While our social involvement with the unconverted has limits, if we have no unsaved friends at all we have no mission field. Our motive for mixing with the lost should be to seek gospel opportunities (Mat 28:18-20).
- #9. *Your neighbor is running for city council and wants to put a campaign sign on your lawn. What do you say?*
- #10. *A Christian neighbor suggests that the two of you start a neighborhood Bible study. What would you tell her?*