

A Light in the Valley

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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No Wickedness Before My Eyes

by: Justin Brewer

What does it take to be righteous in a wicked world? How can we, as the Apostle Peter stated, be “saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40)? There is no doubt a fine line between living in the world, while also refraining from being part of the world (reference 1 Corinthians 5). Too many Christians misunderstand or misapply Paul’s declaration of being all things to all men (1 Corinthians 9:19-23) as meaning that he wanted us to appear as the world in hopes of winning the world, but does this application fit with the rest of Scripture? How can we appear as the world while remaining separate from the world and not being caught up in wickedness?

When we look at the life of King David, it is clear that he had his shortcomings and that there was sin in his life. What sets David apart from King Saul, who also sinned? Why is David considered by God as a man after His own heart (Acts 13:21-23; 1 Samuel 13:11-14)? The distinction between the two comes down to their respective hearts; David’s heart was tender and devoted to God, whereas Saul’s heart was far from God. For example, in the midst of one of Saul’s many attempts

to murder David, David crept up behind Saul inside a cave and, rather than killing Saul, he cut off part of Saul’s robe. Of David, it is written that “David’s heart troubled him because he had cut Saul’s robe.” Why was David’s heart troubled? Because Saul was God’s anointed and David saw his own actions as being against God (1 Samuel 24:4-6).

Oh that we all had the devotion of King David! When reading the book of Psalms, it is easy to see into David’s heart; he expressed his love, respect, and fear of God while also showing His power, mercy, and justice. Depending upon the circumstance in which a particular Psalm was written, David frequently expressed his own remorse at not only his sin, but the sins of those around him. While it is clear that David was human and that he sinned, is there ever an instance in which David made excuse for those sins? Is there ever an instance in which David attempted to justify those sins as being acceptable because of God’s grace? Does he ever justify them as being OK so that he may blend with the world? On the other hand, are there instances in which Saul did so? Absolutely! In 1 Samuel 15, Saul did not obey God’s command to utterly destroy the people

of Amalek, and when questioned by Samuel about it, Saul sought to justify his sin by blaming the people and attempting to fit in. Even though both men sinned, God accepted David (who repented) and rejected Saul (who refused to repent).

How did David perceive sin? Was David under the mistaken impression that he should attempt to get as close to sin as possible without falling in? Consider David's approach in Psalm 101:3 where he wrote that he would "set nothing wicked before" his "eyes" and that he would "hate the work of those who fall away." Those works, he stated, would not cling to him. David's approach to sin was to remove the temptation from before his eyes. Do we, as Christians, have this attitude? Does wickedness appall us or does it appeal to us? We should adhere to David's decision: "A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness" (Psalm 101:4).

David's humbleness of heart is a lesson for us today; while he boldly stood up for God, he was not arrogant in any way. Today, this means that we can and should be bold in our defense of the gospel, but be humble in our service to the Lord. Because of his own approach to pride, David wrote in Psalm 101:5 that he would "not endure" the "one who has a haughty look and a proud heart." What did it take for David to regret his cutting of Saul's robe? Humbleness! What did it take for David to accept Nathan's rebuke in 2 Samuel 12 and repent? Humbleness!

Not only did David remove wickedness from before his eyes and refuse to surround himself with the wicked and prideful, he recognized individuals who were faithful and righteous in Israel. In Psalm 101:6, David stated that his eyes would be "on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me" and that he who walked "in a perfect way" would serve him. Again, there is much that every Christian can learn from this! David sought to surround himself with others who were righteous rather than wicked, which is clearly depicted for us once again in Psalm 101:7-8 where he writes that he "who works deceit shall not dwell within my house," that he "who tells lies shall not continue in my presence," and that he would "destroy all the wicked of the land."

While David ruled over a physical kingdom that was commanded to literally be separate from the nations around them (and thus David could literally execute justice for wickedness within the kingdom), there are applications that Christians need to take to heart. While Christians are to live in this world, we are not to be a part of the world; there will, unfortunately, be wickedness in the world so long as this realm persists, but that wickedness has no place within our own hearts nor within the church. This point is clearly established in 1 Corinthians 5; Paul showed how there is to be no wickedness within the church, but that we cannot control what happens in the world. Can we control what happens within ourselves? Within the church? Absolutely.

Too many Christians today seek to remain as close to the world as possible without "falling in." This approach, they argue, places them closer to the world and, they argue, this will convert more people to God. However, if the world sees no difference between Christians and the

wicked, then why bother to change? How close can we get before we “cross the line”? Should our approach be to get as close to the devil as possible, or as close to God as possible?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (KJV), we are commanded to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.” Should we appear as being sinful or evil to the world? If we seek to get as close to sin as possible, are we holding fast to that which is good? Do we view sin as appealing or as vomit (Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 2:22)? Too often, we view ourselves as “strong enough” to be able to handle being around sin and wicked circumstances and not be bothered by it. In 1 Corinthians 10:12, the Apostle Paul wrote, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” The context of this passage emphasizes the need to be cautious concerning things that would draw us away from God (particularly idolatry) and how some believed that they were strong enough to interact with such wickedness without falling. Is this wise? Is this how God would have us to think? Consider what the wise man Solomon wrote in Proverbs 6:27-28: “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared?” Can we get close to sin and not be impacted by it?

Our goal should be to achieve the same heart, the same attitude, and the same approach towards sin that David had. In Psalm 101:2, David wrote that he would “behave wisely in a perfect way” and that he would walk within his “house with a perfect heart.” Is our devotion to God or to sin? Do we show the world the glory of God by our strivings to remain free from sin, or do we show our devotion to Satan by seeking to remain close to him?

Too many Christians are distracted by the false arguments that presenting yourself as righteous is “self-righteous” or “arrogant.” This is a distraction tactic put in place by Satan! While it is clear that all sin (including Christians), we should not present ourselves as being sinners once we have repented (1 John 2:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, etc.). Should we present ourselves arrogantly? Absolutely not! Remember again our study of the humbleness of David’s heart, and let us put that into application in our own lives; similar points could be made concerning the Apostle Paul! While we are to be considered righteous once our sins have been forgiven, that gives us no reason to be arrogant; it does, however, give us reason to show the glory and grace of God through our faithfulness! Does it establish God’s grace, mercy, and power if we continue to talk about ourselves being sinners? Or does it establish such when we show that we were formerly sinners?

Let us conclude with the words of Joshua, one of the few who, because of his righteousness, was granted the reward of entering into the promised land: “And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Let us all have the same heart as both David and Joshua and be faithful to the Lord!

Pleasing God

by: Gilbert Alexander

Do you want to please God? Should you want to please God? How can one know what pleases God? Only one source of information gives us the answer: the word of God.

Abel pleased God by offering to God what God had authorized (Hebrews 11:4), but Cain chose to follow his own course and failed to please God because he did not “do well” (Genesis 4:1-7). Enoch walked with God and pleased God by faith (Hebrews 11:5). Noah pleased God by faith when he prepared an ark for the saving of his household according to God’s commandment (Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:9, 14-22). King Saul displeased God even though he asserted that he had reserved many fine animals for sacrificing to God, but he had disobeyed God (I Samuel 15:1-23). Jesus Christ pleased God because, as He expressed it, “I always do those things that please Him” (John 8:29). He was fully obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8).

“With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil?” (Micah 6:6, 7). Will He be pleased if Christ’s church offers Him a fine family life and recreation center, a gymnasium and fitness facility, a feasting hall replete with kitchen, a sports complex with fields for softball and soccer and tennis courts, a hospital or housing complex, a fall festival with games and hayrides, rock music concerts with famous entertainers, secular schools and day-care centers? If these things are the work of the church authorized by the Lord, we need to know where the scripture authorizing them is found so that we can preach it and practice it.

“He hath showed you, O man, what is good.” The New Testament tells us all that we can know about the church, its work, its worship, and its organization; and that instruction is complete (II Peter 1:3; II Timothy 3:16,17). Do you want to please God? Then humble yourself to walk with Him as an obedient servant and child of God, listening to the New Covenant of Jesus Christ and honoring His authority (Matthew 17:5; 28:18; John 12:48; 14:21).

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM

Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

Appreciating Our Citizenship

by: Stephen Russell

It is a general truth that those who acquire citizenship by choice have greater appreciation of it than those who have it by birth. That makes sense doesn't it? When you put forth effort to gain something you understand its value more than when you obtain something without even so much effort as making a choice. So it is with God's kingdom.

Under the Old Law citizenship was tied to birth and circumcision. Under the Law of Christ we are "grafted in" (Rom. 11:17). In fact even those who were formerly natural citizens have been made aliens and must become naturalized citizens so that we all must be "grafted in" (Rom. 11:19-24). So it stands to reason that citizens of the spiritual kingdom will (on the whole) have a greater love for their citizenship than did the citizens of the earthly kingdom. But what of those Christians who still seem to take their citizenship for granted? What is the cause of such ingratitude?

We must first consider the idea that perhaps they are not citizens. Citizenship means certain proofs will be in place. There is a foundational knowledge that goes hand in hand with becoming a citizen. Jeremiah prophesies of this and the Hebrew writer repeats that there will be a time when "they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen, and everyone his brother saying, 'know the Lord,' for they shall all know me..." (Heb. 8:11). So if you need to be told to know the Lord, then perhaps you aren't a citizen. Likewise, if you are unaware of basic truths such as the existence of the Holy Spirit then it will indicate that something is lacking (Acts 19:1-5). But some are citizens and fall back into ignorance forgetting what they once knew (Heb. 5:12).

So when someone actually becomes a citizen and then later fails to appreciate it, it really comes down to forgetting some great truths. They forget in whom they have believed. They did not sign on to become subjects of some imperfect monarch or even elected official. They confessed a faith in the Son of God (Matt. 16:16-18) who was and is God (Jn. 1:1) and to whom all authority has been given (Matt. 28:18). They have forgotten what wretched men they were without Christ (7:24) and have stepped away from the wedding feast to return to feasting on vomit (2 Pet. 2:22). They have forgotten that gaining citizenship was the beginning of a commitment,

Continued on page 7

She Speaks With Wisdom

Ladies

Corner

by: Machella Goad

*"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness."
(Proverbs 31:26)*

The woman from Proverbs 31 "opens her mouth with wisdom" because she is wise. Her speech is a reflection of who she is inside. Luke 6:45 records these words of Jesus:

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks."

*"A word fitly
spoken is like
apples of gold in
settings of silver."
(Proverbs 25:11)*

Therefore, what we say, and how we say it, is a reflection of our heart. As women striving for godliness, choosing our words and tone wisely is very important. With our words, we can edify (build up) or tear down (Ephesians 4:29), refresh or crush the spirit (Proverbs 15:4), bless or curse (James 5:9-10). Our words affect every relationship in our lives, and godly speech should be the goal of every woman in all stages of life. There are many passages in Proverbs that express the

impact our words can have on others, whether good or bad. Here are only a few:

*"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones."
(Proverbs 16:24)*

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." (Proverbs 25:11)

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1)

"The hypocrite with his mouth destroys his neighbor..." (Proverbs 11:9a)

So, what is our goal? Do we long to brighten someone's day, or destroy it; calm and encourage them, or stir up anger and strife? I'm afraid we often fail to realize the positive and/or negative effects our words have on those around us.

There are also New Testament Bible passages that emphasize the importance of

our speech. In fact, Colossians 3:17 implies that our words carry just as much weight as our actions!

“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Our words and deeds should always bring honor to our Creator, and be in compliance with His will. Therefore, we must know how God would want us to speak. That takes diligent study and determination.

“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.” (Proverbs 15:28)

In stark contrast to the Proverbs 31 woman is the wife of Job. After Job has lost all of his children and property, Satan then attacks his health. It is during this suffering we discover the true heart of Job’s wife.

“Then his wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!’” (Job 2:9)

As you continue in that context, Job goes on to tell her she speaks as “one of the foolish women.”

It is time for an honest evaluation! What do your words say about your heart? Are you choosing to speak wisely, like the blessed woman of Proverbs; or foolishly, like the wife of Job? How will you be known in the day of judgment? Remember the words of Jesus:

“For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matthew 12:37)

Continued from page 5

not an isolated event (Phil. 3:12-14). And no doubt they have forgotten a great deal more than that.

I think of some of the things people have done to gain American citizenship, risking life and limb because they are fleeing misery and see something better available. I wonder sometimes if we are half so appreciative of our heavenly citizenships as they are of their earthly ones. Or do we, like our physical predecessors forget the God who delivered us from bondage and into freedom?

Daily Bible Reading

June 2016

June 1 Psalms 142-145
June 2 Psalms 146-150
June 3 Proverbs 1-2
June 6 Proverbs 3-4
June 7 Proverbs 5-6
June 8 Proverbs 7-8
June 9 Proverbs 9-10
June 10 Proverbs 11-12
June 13 Proverbs 13-14
June 14 Proverbs 15-16
June 15 Proverbs 17-18

June 16 Proverbs 19-20
June 17 Proverbs 21:1-22:16
June 20 Proverbs 22:17-23:35
June 21 Proverbs 24-25
June 22 Proverbs 26-27
June 23 Proverbs 28-29
June 24 Proverbs 30-31
June 27 Ecclesiastes 1-2
June 28 Ecclesiastes 3-6
June 29 Ecclesiastes 7-8
June 30 Ecclesiastes 9-12

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