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The Christian's Relationship To The World - No. 3

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Sumiton, AL

In our last study we showed how complete and drastic a change conversion is. Whereas the sinner's life is a life of spiritual impurity, conversion requires a life of purity. Most people are completely ignorant of what purity is, at least in spiritual matters.

In material things purity is generally understood. The word "pure" is defined to mean: "free from mixture or contact with that which weakens, impairs, or pollutes; containing no vitiating materials. Free from adulteration; clear; clean; hence, genuine; stainless." Pure water is water that is not polluted by chemicals or sewage. Pure food is food that is not contaminated with disease or poison.

Purity in the moral and spiritual realm is defined as "positive excellence of the highest order." The idea involved in purity is such that a babe cannot be called pure. An infant is innocent, one who knows nothing of evil and has experienced no touch of temptation. One is pure who, with the knowledge of evil and exposure to temptation, keeps heart and soul unstained. The definition even of physical purity is helpful if we think of purity as righteousness and pollution as sin. It is easy to understand that righteousness is defiled by wickedness.

A study of purity under the law of Moses can be most helpful in coming to a practical understanding of the subject. Consider the purity of sacrifices as an example. Sacrifices could definitely be defiled. There were a number of requirements for sacrifices to be acceptable to God. There had to be the proper animal. No lame or diseased animal could be used. The priests had to be properly attired. No leaven or yeast could be offered if a meal offering were given in connection with the animal sacrifice. The sacrifice had to be offered in the proper place--namely, where God commanded. The proper fire had to be used. Once when two priests offered incense, they used strange fire which Jehovah had not commanded them (Lev. 10:1, 2). For this they were slain by God. To sum up,

if God's requirements for sacrifice were not met, the sacrifice was not pure. Under the Old Covenant therefore, purity was *the state of being in harmony with the commandments of God*. Since it was possible to be made unclean or impure, there were provisions for purification, so that purity also includes the concept of *having been purged or cleansed from impurities*.

With these definitions in mind we are ready to study the New Testament teachings on purity. James says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded" (Jas. 4: 8). Those who are not in harmony with God but think they are pure are deceiving themselves. Let them truly harmonize their lives with God's commandments, and then they will be truly pure. Paul told Timothy, "Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins; keep thyself pure" (I Tim. 5:22).

Purity is proper behavior. The Corinthians had allowed a fornicator to be in their midst and had done nothing about the situation (I Cor. 5:1,2). Paul wrote to them rebuking them and, later, heard that they had responded properly to his instructions. He commended them saying, "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye were made sorry after a godly sort, what earnest care it wrought in you, yea what clearing of yourselves, yea what indignation, yea what fear, yea what longing, yea what zeal, yea what avenging! In everything ye approved yourselves to be pure in the matter" (2 Cor. 7:11). When they behaved in harmony with God's commandments they showed themselves to be pure.

Purity in the New Testament is maintained by making sure one's life is in harmony with the word of God. Naturally there are times when men fall short (Rom. 3:23). Christ had made purification of sins through His blood by which the forgiveness of sins is made possible (Heb. 1:3; 9:14). The Bible teaches that this purity is necessary to enjoy the peace and happiness pro-

{(Continued on next page)}

misled to the Christian. Notice that the hope for eternal life yields happiness. Notice secondly that harmony with God yields hope. "To them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life.. but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek..." (Rom. 2:7, 10). Lastly notice that harmony with God is purity. Thus we see that purity from the world and from sin are necessary in the Christian's life if we would enjoy the spiritual blessings that are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

As we saw in our last study in Rom. 6, when one is converted to the new life he commits himself to abhor evil and cleave to that which is good (Rom. 12:9). He is delivered from the defilements of the world; let him not be entangled therein again (2 Pet. 2:20). He must abstain

from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11).

The worldly person has no god but his belly (Phil. 3:19), no joy but in his pleasure. In his frenzied efforts to find satisfaction and contentment in the things the world has to offer he must be continually indulging himself in the pleasures of this world. He makes all things of the world sinful because he seeks to make them an end within themselves. The Christian, on the other hand, is taught self control. He is taught how to use the legitimate, lawful pleasures this world has to offer, so that they do not in themselves become sinful. The Christian is also guided to put away the principles and attitudes of this world which would lead him astray and destroy his soul. To put it briefly, the Christian enjoys the best of this world and enjoys the hope of the life to come.

How To Walk On Water

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"And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me."--Matt. 14:28-30.

Walking on water was no problem for Jesus, He is God's Son! (v. 33). It became a problem for Peter, but it should not have. (v. 30). He paid more attention to the boisterous wind, doubted, and began to sink.

Walking on water would be no big problem for anyone--if they take two important precautions:

1. WAIT On Word From Jesus Before Taking The First Step. Jesus told Peter to "come". He was now ready to walk by faith, since faith comes from God's word (Rom. 10:17). He was never in a position to step out on his own, he would have sank with the first step.

Peter, only, was told to walk on water. I am not about to step out of a boat until God tells ME to do it. A great number of people base their religious faith and practice upon instructions given to someone else. God commanded things in the Old Testament that were never meant for us today. The Old Testament law was abolished with the death of Christ (Col. 2:14-16; Heb. 8,9). The Sabbath, for example, was for folks under the Old Testament but not for the New Testament saints.

"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils," was commanded of some in the New Testament. Those so commanded were given the power to perform the deeds. "Forbid not to speak in tongues", was also commanded. But, were these intended for every Christian in every gen-

eration? Even in the early years of the church, the Lord was selective in giving out miraculous power. All did not have the gift of healing, nor did all have the gift of tongues, nor were all workers of miracles (1 Cor. 12:29-30).

Such powers were given at the time the New Testament was being revealed through miraculously inspired men. The miracles provided evidence (confirmation) that these people were speaking God's word. (See Heb. 2:3,4; Mark 16:20). The word of God is no longer being delivered to inspired men (we have the inspired writings), "the faith" has been once for all delivered (Jude 3), hence, no signs are needed today. In fact, the Bible says such powers would cease when "that which is perfect" came (1 Cor. 13:8). "Perfect" here is contrasted to "in part". It means to be complete, mature, or full. God did not give his complete revelation in one big blast, but in "parts" through inspired men. He gave proof of claims of direct revelation in the miracles that they did--but when His revelation was complete (perfect) and final (once delivered) the proofs of God's direct revelation ceased.

Every purpose served by miraculous gifts in the first century church is now served by the New Testament writings. They reveal God's will. They guide us into all truth. They bring the spoken words of Jesus to our remembrance. They edify the church. They give sufficient evidence of the deity of Jesus (cf. John 20:30,31). They establish the claims of the writers to inspiration. There is not one purpose that was served by "spiritual gifts" that is not now served by the New Testament. I challenge any man to name one.

So, my friend, before you try to heal the

sick, raise the dead, or speak in tongues--you need to remember that God did not tell you to do it!

God tells "every creature" to believe, repent and be baptized to be saved (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38), but we have now word to pray for pardon of alien sins, to rely on faith only nor to be sprinkled.

We, as Christians, are told to sing, pray, teach, observe the Lord's supper on the first day of the week and to "lay by in store" on the first day of the week (Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2), but no word on instrumental music in worship, incense burning, other than first day of the week Lord's supper and collections, commercial fund-raising, etc.

We have word on the local (congregational) organization of the church (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1). Each congregation was independently organized with its own oversight, but no word for organizations smaller than nor larger than the local church.

We have word on what the church was called (Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 1:1; Matt. 16:18), but no word for the many denominational names so popularly used today.

We have word on the mission of the church (Eph. 4:12-16; Phil. 4:15,16; I Tim. 5:16). It is to preach the gospel to the lost, edify itself and care for the physical needs of its own needy. But there is no instructions to make it a general welfare agency for the community and the world, nor to provide for the social needs of man, nor to be a political force.

Peter could walk on water, only because of divine words to do so. We can be successful spiritually only when we wait for divine authority to act.

2. WALK By Faith In The Lord Each Step Of The Way. Once you have authority to act, you must go ahead and walk by faith. Peter began to sink as his faith wavered (vs. 30-31). He was distracted by the storm, just as we are often distracted by life's problems (cf. Matt. 13:22). Peter was saved by the hand of Jesus when he asked Jesus to "save me". If we find ourselves sinking spiritually we need to ask the Lord to save us and then take hold of his hand by obeying the conditions of pardon.

Let us maintain faith in the Lord and His word. Do you really believe what the Bible says about punishment and rewards, providence, etc.? Do we back up our faith with action? We must (Gal. 5:6; James 2:24).

Yes, YOU could walk on water, IF Jesus had told you to do it. But he has not told you to walk on water, however, he had told you to do many things. Are you doing them by faith? Are you WAITING until the word of God tells you to act in religion before acting?

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"What Saith The Answer Of GOD?"

Send Questions to:

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QUESTION: "If God is looking at your heart, why can't man attend any church he desires?"--W. H.; Birmingham.

ANSWER: First, it is certainly true that "the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Sam. 16:7). Jesus, in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5,6,7) abundantly shows His concern for the condition of the heart in all that we do. But, He is not ONLY concerned about the heart. In John 4:24 He teaches that our worship, if we would please God, must be both "in spirit and in truth."

If it were so that one could worship God "in spirit AND IN TRUTH" in "any church he desires," then our answer to our querist would be "he can." However, since in order to please God, in "whatsoever(we)do, in word or in deed, (we must) do all in the name (by the authority) of the Lord Jesus..." (Col. 3:17); we must stay within "the doctrine of Christ" (2 John 9); then one must find the church that is in every way - organization, name, worship and work - according to the teachings of the New Testament; otherwise, his worship will all be in vain! "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9).

If we would have God to be pleased with our worship, then it must be "in spirit" (with the right attitude of heart) and "in truth" (according to the inspired scriptures, which "completely furnish the man of God unto every good work." 2 Tim. 3:16ff.) Vain worship is fruitless, unprofitable worship; and it makes no difference what renders it vain; whether the wrong spirit or the wrong pattern; such will not result in the salvation of the soul!

IN CONCLUSION - let me suggest that if one truly has the right "spirit", he will surely search to determine TRUTH in "all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3).

STUBBORN TYPEWRITER!

Our typewriter insists on misspelling! Last month's article, "THE WAY WITH WORDS," in the second paragraph mentioned "martial problems" but should have read "marital problems". Martial means "warlike"--some might think that it was an apt word for marital problems. But we did want the record straight.

E. O. B.

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EDITOR'S SPRING MEETING SCHEDULE

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April 10-15, Decatur, AL (Old Moulton Road)
June 19-24, Russellville, AL (Isbell).

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