

Practical Christian Living

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I. Introduction: dealing with shame.

A. Not being ashamed intellectually of the Biblical system. (Romans 1:16-17)

1. Paul was not preaching the gospel in a situation that was uninstructed or ignorant; he was preaching into the Greek and Roman system.
2. The basic premise is that one need not be ashamed of discussion.

B. Not being ashamed in practical Christian living. (Romans 5)

1. The peace of God is not psychological, but a peace that comes from justification with God; the subjective peace has not been extracted from the objective peace.
2. Hope makes one not ashamed; after we come to faith in Christ we will not be ashamed in daily life.

II. Evangelicals fail in treating the Bible as a book of unrelated stories: it is holistic.

- A. One cannot consider Christian living extracted from the whole Bible.
- B. Whenever living was taught in the first century it was taught in the context of everything.
- C. The context was a system of thinking where there was a personal triune God - not pantheism.
- D. We live in an intrinsically personal universe in a very real and basic sense, created out of nothing by a personal God who is now there.

III. Theology must begin with the concept that there is a personal God who is there.

- A. Men have made theology into anthropology in order to provide for the possibility that God does not exist (reference: Clark Pinnock); modern theology begins with man who is there.
- B. Reformation theology was built on the fact that personality was valid in this universe and that there is a personal God.
- C. Man is presented as being in line with this intrinsic line of thinking; man is personal and is created in the image of God.
- D. The Bible teaches that God is personal and infinite equally unlike other religious systems.

IV. In the area of morals, the Bible never begins as an abstraction.

- A. The God of the Bible is a character unlike the pantheistic gods that included among them opposites to cancel them out.

B. God is a limited God in that he does not include all that there is; he is a holy God demonstrating that there are things that are outside God such as sin.

C. The law of the universe is not something that is outside of the God; the law is the character of God that is objective and not based upon some subjective thinking.

D. Any moral teaching removed from the character of God leaves morality as a social structure. You cannot talk about the law as having value extracted from God.

E. Morality is absolute and has value because it is the propositional expression of God's character.

V. The beginning of the Christian life - justification.

A. You must be a Christian before you can have any sense of practical Christian living.

1. A Christian is a man who has accepted Christ as savior.

2. When one has accepted Christ as savior, the God of the universe has declared him or her justified.

a. God's judgment is an objective reality.

b. God is a judge just as much as he is a loving Father.

1) Once God's role as judge is dismissed, morality is dismissed also as a moral construct.

2) There is a difference between a mother treating her child's wrong trivially and a judge dismissing a criminal despite wrongdoing.

c. One has not gained anything by throwing out God as judge.

3. God has made an objective declaration that the guilt of sin is removed through Christ to open up for fellowship with God.

a. Marks for justification.

1) A once-for-all situation.

2) A moment in time; a present situation based upon a past event.

3) The basis is always the finished work of Christ - a historical event.

4) A faith is the empty hands that receive the gift in contrast to the Kierkegaardian teaching.

VI. The continuing life of the Christian.

A. The Christian life does not end with justification just like marriage does not end on the wedding day.

B. The real Christian life is living in light of who God is and what he did for me - it cannot be extracted from God's character and the living relationship we have to him.

C. Aspects:

1. When you sin...

- a. It is a romantic concept to think that the Christian will not sin.
- b. It is a moment-by-moment situation. My faith this morning will not due for tonight.
- c. The basis of forgiveness is still the death of Jesus Christ - it is not based upon our own energies.
- d. There is no spot so great that Christ cannot cleanse; the Christian man is someone with a quiet conscience because he can quickly have his guilt cleaned by recalling Christ's work.

2. Making progress...

- a. The Bible does not teach that we are to make autocratic progress.
- b. The Christian understanding of holy living is connected to relationship with God.
- c. The power of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit generates personal holiness within us when we draw upon it through faith.
- d. Becoming holy is not a passive activity - it involves proper response (Illustrated through the possible responses of Mary bearing Jesus).
 - 1) No. Joseph won't like it (wrong response).
 - 2) You made the promise, now I'm going to do it (wrong: she couldn't do it).
 - 3) Submission to God (right: an action based upon who she was created to be in the image of God).
- e. We are called upon to place ourselves in the risen Christ's hands through the agency of the Holy Spirit that He would bear fruit in our lives.

D. Reason for existence: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, etc. (Matthew 22)

1. We are to love God.
2. We are to be in a personal relationship with Him.
3. Laws will not suffice in the "final screen."

E. Our relationship to God is not to be mechanical - our purpose is to be personal with him.

1. As a consequence of mechanical thinking...

a. We are mechanical witnesses.

b. We are mechanical evangelizers.

c. We are mechanical liverers.

2. Mechanical thinking is death.

3. There is a proper legal relationship to God's character, but our relationship to God must not be primarily legal - it should be primarily relational.

a. Example: the legal circle of marriage.

b. Example: the legal circle of the church.

c. The new theology according to Christian living is totally relativistic and must be rejected

d. But the danger in orthodox circles is that our relationship to other men and to God is to end legally. All our relationships at the highest point must be within the legal circles, but also characterized by the personal nature that they were intended to be.

4. Love and communication are foundational to the personal relationships that we have in the proper legal circles. (John 17; Genesis 1)

5. It is always possible to go back and make a new beginning no matter the weight of our sin.

6. Love is never static.

VII. Conclusion.

A. The Christian life is a life lived in practice within the structure of the whole Bible's teaching on two basic facts: who God is and who I am.

1. I am a sinner in need of redemption.

2. I am an image bearer of God - a person that is not mechanical.