

Words of Truth

Appalled Through Ignorance

By: Brian A. Yeager

A man whom professes to be a faithful Christian is talking to a woman whom professes the same. The woman is physically ill. Her health is fading to the point wherein she, and others, feels she is nearing the end of her physical life on earth. All faithful Christians know that this is both a sad time (John 11:20-36) and a time of joy as well (Psalms 116:15 and Revelation 14:13). As this man is talking with this woman he says that he is going to keep her in his prayers for her times of illness. She responds by stating there is no point in praying for such things. He says nothing. He ponders her statement. As the day continues, he grows angry and appalled that she said that.

This man is angry that this woman seems not to believe in the power of prayer. He is appalled that a Christian woman would not want prayers for her physical health. Yet, he has not stopped to consider that it is not she, but he whom is in the state of ignorance.

What prayer will stop physical death from happening to any of us (Hebrews 9:27)? The only event that will prevent any of us from death is if Christ returns before the time of our death occurs (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). Furthermore, asking God to heal someone who is sick is asking God for a miracle to occur today (James 5:13-18). According to the Scriptures, haven't those days come to pass (I Corinthians 12:28-13:13; cf. James 1:25)? If not, why doesn't this brother, who is appalled at what he believes is her unbelief, just wait for her to die and then prove the power of prayer to her and all (Acts 9:36-43; cf. Mark 16:15-20)?

Do you think this supposed Christian man had ever considered the points we just briefly and partially covered? Since this scenario is pretty close to something I recently discussed with an "appalled brother" (loosely speaking), I can tell you individuals like this have just prayed in ignorance all of their "Christian lives". Yet, they have concluded all whom do not share their unfounded views to be ignorant. Shouldn't we all learn from individuals like this to think before we condemn someone? Shouldn't we all start any examination of others with a self-examination (Matthew 7:1-5)? Ignorance, coupled with self-righteous zeal, will lead us to form our own righteousness and will keep us from following the Lord's righteousness.

When Our Self-Righteousness Keeps Us From The Righteousness Of God

Notice what the inspired Apostle Paul wrote about the children of Israel in the first century: *"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 of 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"* (Romans 10:1-3). Whole generations of humanity have been lost because of self-righteousness (Proverbs 30:12-13). Just because a person thinks they are right doesn't make such true.

In Romans 10:1-3 we read that the children of Israel were wrong, but were very zealous in their errors. Much evil has occurred throughout time wherein people were convinced that what they were doing was the right thing to do (John 16:1-3). God says: *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil”* (Proverbs 3:5-7).

Studies, such as these, are step back moments wherein we are awarded an opportunity of self-reflection (II Corinthians 13:5). Even though we may be sure in our own eyes that we are behaving righteously, we have to measure our thoughts and actions. Remember, every way of man is right in his own eyes (Proverbs 16:2 and Proverbs 21:2). However, such is only a tool of self-deception (Galatians 6:3). This is even true if we are judging another person as the individual did I mentioned earlier in this study. Just because you can become angry and appalled at what you consider to be an unrighteous act or statement doesn't make it such. Your zeal isn't the standard.

Your Reaction To A Situation Doesn't Become The Standard

Reason out the principles of our study thus far with the following situation that occurred between Jesus and the Jews: *“Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death. Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself? Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by”* (John 8:49-59).

The Jews were appalled at Jesus. They were angry. They tried to kill Him. Does their indignation change the truth that Jesus told them? NO! Their reaction to Christ kept them from hearing the truth that was presented to them. They held to their self-righteousness by clinging to the idea that being Abraham's seed made them eternally secure (John 8:33; 39; 53). They were appalled at the truth, through their own willful ignorance (Zechariah 7:11-12).

Conclusion

Members of churches of Christ have grown more and more arrogant in thinking that being in the one body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4) makes them right for that reason alone. We oppose such thinking. Yet, if we are not cautious, it is possible that we could get a “holier than thou” attitude because of how much we've grown spiritually here in El Paso (Isaiah 65:5; cf. I Corinthians 8:1). Let's remember that zeal can be misplaced (Acts 21:20-31, Galatians 4:16-17, and Philipians 3:4-6). Our growth doesn't make us fail proof (I Corinthians 10:12)!

Milkshakes

Can We Act Without Authority If It Feels Right?

By: Brian A. Yeager

We have been studying biblical authority and how to properly apply it. Yet, what happens when we come to a question of right or wrong and just cannot find a clear answer? Should we trust our gut in what seems right and hope that God will know that we acted or did not act in good conscience? Should we ask for the opinions of others and do what seems to be the consensus? The answer to all of those questions is the same. NO!

God teaches us not to trust in what seems right. Notice: *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Of course, people like to use the famous argument of, “I feel it in my heart...”. God answers that too: *“He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered... The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it”* (Proverbs 28:26 and Jeremiah 17:9). God did not create us with the ability to properly direct our own way (Jeremiah 10:23). We need His guidance (Psalms 37:23).

The fact that we have honestly, in all good conscience, done something doesn't make it right. David learned this when Nathan gave him an unauthorized go ahead in what “seemed” to be a good idea (II Samuel 7:1-7). In that context, it did not matter what the intentions of David or Nathan were. All that mattered was that David was going to do something God didn't authorize. That made it wrong. Nathan had to make a correction on his words. Our conscience is not a safe guide. Remember, before Paul [a.k.a Saul; Acts 13:9] obeyed the Gospel and became a faithful Apostle of the Lord, he was a persecutor of faithful Christians (Acts 7:57-8:4, Acts 9:1, Acts 22:1-5, Galatians 1:13, and I Corinthians 15:9). He did this, in ignorance, having always had a clear conscience (Acts 23:1).

God also teaches us not to trust in any man or woman's opinions. The beloved Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about using man as the standard. Notice: *“And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another... For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise”* (I Corinthians 4:6 and II Corinthians 10:12). The word of God is what we live by (Luke 4:4).

To summarize this brief study let's consider how this even applies to principles wherein God has given us freedoms of our own choosing. In the fourteenth chapter of the Roman Epistle, Paul wrote of how Christians have liberties in what to eat, days to celebrate individually, etc. He stated a qualifier in that if our liberties became a stumbling block to the weak, we ought to forgo that practice (Romans 14:1-22). At the end of those teachings, notice what was written: *“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23). That's a clear conclusion.

We have to test everything and hold to what is right (I Thessalonians 5:21). Yet, even in that there is a time wherein something lawful, still shouldn't be practiced. That'll be our next study!