

Rom. 14:19
So then let
us follow
after things
which make
for peace,
and things
whereby
we may
edify one
another.

John 8:32 And
ye shall know
the truth and
the truth shall
make you free.

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IS YOUR HEART RIGHT WITH GOD?

by Jim Stauffer

How many times do we hear someone admit they are dishonest or prefer evil to good? Usually people mask their desires for things sinful by saying they made a mistake. We use euphemisms to avoid *telling it like it is*.

We learn from Scripture how the heart controls the actions of a man. Remember Pharaoh? His heart was hardened toward the word of God and it all ended in his personal destruction. **Ex. 4:21** tells us God said, *I will harden his heart*. **Ex. 7:13** says of him, *Pharaoh's heart was hardened*. **Ex. 8:32** says, *Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also*.

What we learn is the heart is where a man's decision is made regarding the word of God. Pharaoh disobeyed, rejected and stood against the will of God because in his heart he preferred to keep the Israelites enslaved to his will. On the contrary we see in **Rom. 6:17,18** *But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness*.

Jesus said of false teachers, *So then you will know them by their fruits*. (**Mat. 7:20**) He also told us, *"The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart"*. (**Luke 6:45**)

How does the passage of Scripture that says the word of God can judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart actually play out in our lives? Let me cite an example. In **John 12:42,43** tells us many of the rulers of the Jews believed on Jesus, but would not confess Him for fear of the Pharisees expelling them from the synagogue. It concludes they loved the praise of men more than that of God.

We are taught by Scripture that *...faith comes by hearing and by hearing the word of Christ*.

(Rom. 10:17) But as we observed earlier when we accept the word into our hearts, we become slaves of righteousness. Righteousness is God's nature and we learn it from Him.

Our hearts then must turn to Him and His word and respond favorably to what He says. There has been a change in the heart of man when he obeys the word of God. He accepts the word of God because he realizes it is the *...power of God unto salvation...* (**Rom. 1:16**). He obeys it because he realizes Jesus is *...to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation*. (**Heb. 5:9**)

God will know the hearts of all men by their fruits just as Jesus said about the false teachers. We can know the thoughts of our own hearts in relation to His word by a careful study of the Scriptures.

Things We Learn From Jesus Walking on Water

In the Gospels we read in three places where Jesus walked on water, **John 6:16-21**; **Matthew 14:23-33** and **Mark 6:47-52**. All of these refer to the same occurrence. This miracle, given such a prominent place in the scriptures, teaches us a number of things.

1. Jesus is the Master of the Natural World. It is true that we owe him allegiance because he gave himself for our sins, however, we must understand that it was not just a good man who hung on the cross, but the very Son of God. A good man would have accomplished NOTHING toward the salvation of our souls. The Son of God, however, in that one act and the Resurrection soon to follow, accomplished everything that God had to do for the salvation of the whole world.

2. It shows us what we can accomplish when we are paying attention to Jesus and ignoring the storms of life around us. Peter is often criticized for taking his eyes

off the savior but ask yourself this, "Would YOU get out of a perfectly good boat in the middle of a storm?" At Jesus' word Peter did, and thus became the second person in history to walk on water not frozen stiff. It's amazing what we can do when we decide to obey Jesus' words in spite of all!

3. Even those with the most faith fall short! Peter, whose words are recorded for us in **Acts 2** on the Day of Pentecost, denied Jesus three times, once with swearing; became a hypocrite in **Galatians 2** and had to be rebuked by another apostle, Paul. His hypocrisy even lead Barnabas astray, how sad. Yet, God used him to open the door of faith to the Gentiles like us!

Cleveland Reddinger

CONFLICTS AMONG BRETHREN

"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17).

Most will agree that it is possible to offend a brother or sister in Christ. If you have never done that, great! On the other hand, maybe someone has sinned against you. How do you react? What should you do? Do you say: That person should come to me? What did Jesus say? He warns about revenge; forget about an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth (**Matthew 5:38-42**). The religion of the second mile compels kingdom citizens to reach beyond hurt feelings and temptation to retaliate. Rather than complaining or trying to smear the other person, WE are to go to that person privately. When we go, we tell him his fault; we rebuke him; he is wrong, he needs correction. This action is private; we are not trying to destroy a fellow Christian; we are trying to gain him or her back for the Lord. They hear; they repent; the matter is over.

What if he or she will not listen? Next, take someone with you. Two or three witnesses can hear about the problem and help to resolve the matter; the intent is not to make the matter worse (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). This step says that the matter is serious; resolution is needed. If the first two steps fail, then the matter is brought before the church. In this case, *church* is a local congregation. The offended and the witnesses will bring to light their previous attempts to make the matter right; the offender has refused to correct the matter; the church (collective action) now has no choice but to recognize this person as one who will not repent.

Petty differences, small slights, pretended hurt

feelings are to some, not really "big deals." Some are better able than others to just "go on" and will try to "get along" for the sake of peace and harmony in the church. On the other hand, Jesus says our actions speak to the importance of the life of Christians, kingdom citizens, members of the same body. Earlier in **Matthew 18** Jesus spoke about not being the cause of stumbling to little ones. The same thread is woven into the life and conduct of the church. We cannot, we must not, ignore what Jesus tells us to do. If we do, we are destroying the very fabric of His community. When someone refuses to participate in the body of Christ as commanded, that person hurts himself and hurts others, too.

Conflicts among brethren will continue. But conflicts can be resolved. Is it easy to deal with problems among brethren? No! What if I don't know that I have done something wrong to you? Please tell me. Correct me. Don't wait 5 or 10 years from now to come to me and then dredge up the past. Help save my soul now. Could it hurt? Yes! But if I am wrong I am hurting the body of Christ. Jesus intends that we live in peace with Him. That also means that we can and must live in peace with each other.

Randy Harshbarger

Does the meaning of the Greek word "psallo" authorize instrumental music?

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:19).

In this famous text, the expression *"making melody"* comes from the Greek word "psallo." Some have argued that this word, in its original usage, implied the use of instrumental accompaniment to the singing that occurred during the worship services of the early church. In response to this claim, consider these points:

1) All authorities and commentators are in agreement that the early Christians in the first century did not use musical instruments in their worship assemblies. Therefore, those who knew the language and used it as their native tongue **DID NOT** understand the meaning of the word to include the use of the instrument.

2) Around 600-700 AD, the Greek Orthodox church split from the Roman Catholic church, and one of the main contentions was the use of musical instruments. Those who knew the Greek language at that time **DID NOT** understand "psallo" to include the use of instruments. Interestingly, the Greek Orthodox church continues to this day to only sing and not use instruments in their assemblies.

3) In the last several centuries, there have been dozens of English translations of the New Testament. Among all of the hundreds of scholars who translated those versions, **NONE** of them believed that the word "psallo" should be translated to mean "sing with instrumental accompaniment."

So, think of it this way: in the first century, then around 600-700AD, and in this modern day, those who knew and know the Greek language the best have **NEVER** believed or taught that the word "psallo" should be translated to include the idea of instrumental accompaniment.

by Greg Gwin

Dishonest Religious Discussion

"I also will ask you a question" (Luke 20:3).

It is days before Jesus' death. The religious leaders are concerned. The man has entered the temple—their turf!—and presumed to drive out the merchants. To make matters worse, now he is *"teaching daily in the temple" (Luke 19:47)*. The chief priests want him dead but are hampered by the people who are *"hanging on his words" (Luke 19:48)*. Since force (for the moment) is not an option, they attempt to discredit him.

"Tell us by what authority you do these things, or who it is that gave you this authority" (Luke 20:2). Just who do you claim to be? It is likely they are looking for Jesus to claim that he is from God so that they can accuse him of blasphemy. Perhaps there were more steps to their trap—asking for a sign to prove his authority, for example—but we will never know. Jesus stops their question in its tracks.

"He answered them, 'I also will ask you a question. Now tell me, was the baptism of John from heaven or from man?'" (Luke 20:3-4). It is a simple question: what is your conclusion about John the Baptist? Was he a prophet—a man of God—or just another guy? But it is a question that requires an amount of honesty these priests cannot muster. *"And they discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will say, "Why did you not believe him?" But if we say, "From man," all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.' So they answered that they did not know where it came from" (Luke 20:4-7).* Their answer is not couched in terms of their personal beliefs. They think in political terms. What will be the fallout of our answer here? Will Jesus expose our hypocrisy if we answer he is from God? Will the people turn on us if we admit we don't really believe in John? Ultimately they decide it is just better not to answer. Jesus, receiving this "answer," shuts down the conversation. *"Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things" (Luke 20:8).*

What Jesus teaches us here is that **dishonesty makes religious discussion unproductive**. Their inability to answer a simple question honestly means that

there is no need for further discussion. If they miss on the John question, what will their response be when Jesus tells them where *he* is from? Can we imagine that going well?

It is important to remember that just because the topic of our conversation is religious does not mean that all our motives are pure. If we are truly seeking to do God's will (**John 7:17**) because we love the truth (**2 Thess 2:10-12**), religious discussion can be of tremendous value. But if we are seeking the praise of men, or seeking to justify some behavior, or seeking to show how smart we are, or seeking to use religion as a weapon to control others, religious discussion will hold little value. Jesus guides us to the north star of people's hearts—are we willing to be honest about spiritual things? It is in this way that the word of God is *"discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).*

None of this is to say that we should stop having religious discussions. These men are literally out for Jesus' blood and this is certainly not the first discussion he has shared with them. Rather, this truth shows us that it is not the genius of our arguments that convinces people in religious discussion. It is about their hearts and God's word. When our efforts to convert others are unsuccessful, we are in good company!

But this truth cuts even deeper. Dishonesty *in me* makes religious discussion unproductive. I cannot expect others to be honest when I will not seriously consider the impact of God's word myself. Do I twist it to say what I want? Do I ignore the parts that challenge me? If I ask others to consider the possibility that long-held beliefs are wrong, am I willing to consider it for myself? Do I truly listen to the other side—or do I just bide my time until I can tell them how right I am? The shocking thought is that these same chief priests and scribes will continue to teach others in their dishonesty! How tragic that we could be in their number!

This scene also shows us that there is more to honesty than factual accuracy. We can speak truth yet be dishonest. The dishonesty of the chief priests is about insincerity. They claim to serve God but care more about the political dimensions of their views than whether they are true. Worldly consensus does not establish truth (**see Rom 3:4**). When we wear the name of Christ yet truly show allegiance to our fellowman, we are dishonest—even if all our statements pass their fact-checks. Others may agree with me or they make think I'm crazy, but am I honest?

Are you honest with God's word?

***focusmagazine.org* By Jacob Hudgins**

NEW MEMBER

Maxwell Harrison Price entered this world Monday 8/28/17. Weighing in at 7 lbs. and 5 oz., he was 20" long. Congratulations to Matt and Emali Price for this new addition. We know Madylin will enjoy her new brother.

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

Elders: Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer

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OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-764-9170

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PLEASE REMEMBER JAN
PATRICK, STEPHEN KIMKER, JIM
NEWMAN, STEVE WIMP AND
WENDY TAYLOR'S SISTER IN
LAW IN OKLAHOMA IN PRAYER
AS THEY DEAL WITH HEALTH
ISSUES.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS
- FOLLOWING THE MESSIAH
RON PECK

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE
CLASS - FORGIVENESS
JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON:
THE FEAR OF THE LORD



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10