

Practical Godliness

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

“BE YE DOERS of the Word, and not hearers only, Deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22).

IT is much, very much to be thankful for when the Holy Spirit has illumined a man’s understanding, dispersed the mists of error, and established him in the Truth. Yet *that* is only the beginning. The Holy Scriptures are “profitable” not only for “doctrine” but also for “reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2Ti 3:16). Observe well the order there: before we are ready to be instructed “in righteousness” (right doing), there is much in our lives that God “reproves” and which we must “correct.” Necessarily so, for before conversion everything in our lives was wrong! For all we did was for the gratifying of self, with no thought or concern for God’s honor and glory. Therefore, the first great need, and the primary duty of every young convert is not to study the Old Testament types, or puzzle his brains over prophecy, but to diligently search the Scriptures in order to find out what is pleasing and displeasing to God, what He forbids and what He commands.

If you have been genuinely converted, then your first concern must be to form all the details of your life—in the home, in the church, in the world—so as to please God. And in the actual bringing of this to pass, the order will be “cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isa 1:16-17); “Depart from evil, and do good” (Psa 34:14 and cf. 37:27). There has to be a breaking down before there can be a building up (Ecc 3:3). There has to be an emptying of self before there is the filling of the Spirit. There has to be an unlearning before there is a true learning. And there has to be a hating of “evil” before there is a loving of the “good” (Amo 5:15 and cf. Rom 12:9).

Now to the extent the young Christian does use the Holy Scriptures in a practical way, regulating his thoughts, desires and actions by their warnings and encouragements, their prohibitions and precepts, will very largely determine the measure in which he will enjoy God’s blessing on his life. As the moral Governor of the world God takes note of our conduct, and sooner or later manifests His displeasure against our sins, and His approval of a righteous walk, by granting that measure of prosperity which is most for our good and His glory. In the keeping of His commandments “there is great reward” (Psa 19:11) in this life (1Ti 4:8). O how much temporal and spiritual blessing most Christians miss through careless and disobedient conduct: see Isaiah 48:18!

The tragic thing is that instead of the average young Christian studying diligently God’s Word so as to discover all the details of the divine will for him, he does almost anything and everything else. Many a one engages in “personal work” or some form of Christian “service” while his own life remains full of things displeasing to God! The presence of those displeasing things in his life hinders God’s blessings upon his soul, body, and temporal affairs; and to him it has to be said: “Your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer 5:25). God’s Word to His people is: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phi 2:12). But O how little of this “fear and trembling” is to be found anywhere today! Instead, there is self-esteem, self-confidence, boasting and carnal security.

There are others who give themselves unto the diligent study of doctrine, but, generally,

they fail to realize that the doctrine of Scripture is not a series of intellectual propositions, but is the “doctrine which is according to godliness” (1Ti 6:3). The “doctrine” or “teaching” of God’s Holy Word is given not for the instruction of our brains, but for the regulation of all the details of our daily lives; and this in order that we may “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Ti 2:10). But that can only be realized by a constant reading of the Word with one dominant purpose—to discover what God forbids and what he commands; by our meditating frequently on what we have read, and by fervent prayer for supernatural grace to enable us to obey. If the young convert does not early form the habit of treading the path of practical obedience to God, then he will not have His ear when he prays! John states plainly one of the main conditions which we must constantly seek grace to heed, if our petitions are to meet with acceptance: “and whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1Jo 3:22). But if instead of submitting unto God’s holy requirements, we follow our own inclinations, then it will be said, “Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa 59:2). This is unspeakably solemn. O what a difference it makes whether or not we have experimental access to God!

Not only does the young Christian, by following a course of self-pleasing, reduce his prayers to empty words, but he brings down upon himself the rod of God, and everything goes wrong in his life. That is one reason why many Christians are suffering just as sorely as the poor worldlings are: God is displeased with their ways, and does not show Himself strong on their behalf (2Ch 16:9). In this connection we have sought to point out in the past the remedy, which calls for real heart-humbling before the Lord, godly sorrow, true repentance, unsparing confession, the firm determination to reform our ways; and then (and not before) faith’s counting on God’s mercy and a patient expectation that He will work wonders for us if we now tread the path of full submission to Him.



© Copyright 1998 Chapel Library: annotations. Permission is expressly granted to reproduce this material by any means, provided 1) you do not charge beyond a nominal sum for cost of duplication; 2) this copyright notice and all the text on this page are included.

Chapel Library is a faith ministry that relies entirely upon God’s faithfulness. We therefore do not solicit donations, but we gratefully receive support from those who freely desire to give. Chapel Library does not necessarily agree with all the doctrinal positions of the authors it publishes.

Worldwide, please download material without charge from our website, or contact the international distributor as listed there for your country. In **North America**, for additional copies of this booklet or other Christ-centered materials from prior centuries, please contact

CHAPEL LIBRARY
2603 West Wright Street
Pensacola, Florida 32505 USA

Phone: (850) 438-6666 • Fax: (850) 438-0227
chapel@mountzion.org • www.chapellibrary.org