

Christian Commitment And Personal Responsibility

In this article we will address certain questions.

What kind of character does the Creator God want us to be growing into?

Do the Ten Commandments describe the perfect Christian?

What is the standard by which we judge our lives?

Christians are at various levels of spiritual maturity

Christian character building is a personal obligation, to which all of us need to make a complete and unwavering commitment.

But not everyone makes that commitment.

Revelation 3:14-17 [New King James] *“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked,”*”

These Christians have blinded themselves to the fact that their character is “wretched” for they are “lukewarm” not committed to spiritual growth.

These are Christians who do **not** reject God’s way of life directly, but lack personal commitment to understanding what is needed in their lives to fully live God’s way of life.

The Creator God does not reject these Christians totally but finds their weak attempt at Christian living distasteful, “spew you out of my mouth.”

Revelation 3:18-20 [New King James] *“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”*

For these “lukewarm” Christians the Creator God, out of His love for them, may allow “fiery” trials to prompt them to action.

The decision to respond to the Creator God’s correction is a personal decision [verse 20] as God will never force us to be committed to His way of life.

Revelation 3:22 [New King James] *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Every Christian is admonished to heed what is said to all seven Christian congregations.

This includes every Christian for these seven churches represent a wide variety of human attitudes that can exist in every Christian congregation.

Christians should not judge those who are at different levels of maturity

1 Peter 5:1-4 [New King James] *“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”*

This is an instruction to all Christian ministers, but should be reflected in every Christian.

We **cannot** force people to build character, if we try it will create other serious problems in any fellowship of Christians.

One major problem will be the cultivation of a critical, judgemental atmosphere among the Christian fellowship.

Such an atmosphere is distinctly contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ, [**Matthew 19:19; Matthew 22:36-40**].

Romans 14:1-3, 10 [New King James] *“Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.” ... “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”*

Truly mature Christians are to accept that not all Christians have as yet reached their maturity.

Romans 15:1-2, 7 [New King James] *“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification.” ... “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”*

By showing love towards those who are not yet mature we can become an example that they can emulate. All the time we should remember that we will be in the end judged by one who is perfectly mature, and who accepts us as we gradually continue to grow in Christian love.

Matthew 13:23 [New King James] *“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”*

The “seed” that was accepted had at the time of “harvest” **not** all perfectly matured but had produced acceptable “fruit” in their lives.

Galatians 5:22-23 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

The “fruit” that the Creator God is looking for is godly character, and the growth of such character depends on personal circumstances and length of time that we are allowed by the Creator God to grow.

Luke 12:47-48 [New King James] *“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”*

The greater opportunity that the Creator God has given to us to mature, the greater maturity He expects in our Christian life.

James 3:1-2 [New King James] *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.”*

Every Christian minister has this scripture constantly in the forefront of their minds.

Acts 8:30-31 [New King James] *“So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.”*

In spite of the greater judgement that mature Christians face when they accept the calling to become teachers, they are needed for Christian growth to take place in Christian fellowships.

God’s laws set a minimum standard

We need to understand that only the Creator God is the lawgiver, we are **not**, [**James 4:12**].

Romans 3:20 [New King James] *“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”*

The law tells us what is sin, what we should quit doing.

The law defines the point where repentance and change begin and where transgressions cease.

1 Timothy 1:8-10 [New King James] *“But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,”*

The law was given to define who is a sinner **not** what the ultimate in righteousness is!

Luke 17:5-10 [New King James] *“And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ So the Lord said, ‘If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, “Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,” and it would obey you. And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, “Come at once and sit down to eat”? But will he not rather say to him, “Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink”? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.””*

Those who do only what is commanded in the law are unprofitable servants, lacking faith.

True righteousness involves faith in what God has done for all humanity through the life, death and resurrection of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 64:6 [New King James] *“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”*

All our righteousness that is the result of our seeking to keep the law is stench in the nostrils of the Creator God.

Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24 [New King James] *“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” ... “Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is*

the father of us all” ... “who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,”

This is the righteousness that is acceptable to the Creator God, total faith in His grace and promises.

Ephesians 2:8-10 [New King James] *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”*

We are saved from death by God’s grace **not** through our law-keeping, which would allow us to boast.

But we are saved *“for good [loving] works”* which the Creator God has prepared for us to do, if we surrender our lives to Him in an act of worship.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

The Greek word translated *“bodies”* is *“soma”* meaning the whole life, body, mind and human spirit, [Job 32:8].

Romans 12:2 [NIV] *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

The Holy Spirit will then re-educate our minds and develop within us godly character, [Galatians 5:22-23].

Love is the greatest commandment

Matthew 22:35-40 [New King James] *“Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’”*

When Jesus Christ was asked to identify the greatest commandment, He did **not** quote any of the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant.

Instead, Jesus Christ gave two commands that summarise God’s ultimate intent and purpose for all humanity.

To grow in love towards the Creator God and other human beings.

As our eternal future will be living with God and other human beings it is essential that we learn to love both our Creator God and other people.

The Ten Commandments lay out the minimum standards for love, anyone who violates one of the Ten Commandments falls below the acceptable standard for love.

People who commit idolatry, blaspheme God's name or violate the Sabbath day are **not** showing love and respect for God, no matter what they profess.

In like manner, those who steal, lie, kill, covet, etc, do **not** love their neighbours, all other human beings.

However, merely refraining from stealing, lying and killing is **not** the same as loving our fellow human beings.

1 John 4:20-21 [New King James] *“If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”*

To love God is shown by the way we love our fellow human beings.

1 John 3:16-18 [New King James] *“By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*

Love is more than words, it **must** include actions.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 [New King James] *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

This is **not** a complete description of Godly love, **for it is mostly passive rather than outgoing.**

Philippians 2:1-4 [New King James] *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*

Here is a more active description of Godly love, looking out for the interests of others, considering how we might help others.

John 13:34-35 [New King James] *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

We only become disciples of Jesus Christ when we have this love for our fellow human beings.

We should become like Jesus Christ

Hebrews 4:12-13 [New King James] *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”*

God's Word, the Christian Bible, contains information that helps us to see the thoughts and intents of our minds, if we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal to us the truth that is recorded in it, [**John 16:13**].

All Christians who are satisfied with meeting the minimum requirements of the law, only the letter of the Ten Commandments, miss the point of God giving them.

Such people do **not** see the purpose of the Ten Commandments and blind themselves to the growth and development of Godlike character expected of all who are Christians.

Romans 5:1-5 [New King James] *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

The preposition translated “in” [verse 5] is Greek “en” which is translated “through” in other scriptures. If we consider these verses with **John 7:38-39** we see that the Holy Spirit in us **cannot** be static but must flow “through” us in loving works towards other human beings. These are the “good works” for which we received the grace of God to perform, [**Ephesians 2:8-10**].

Ephesians 4:13-16 [New King James] *“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”*

Jesus Christ is our ultimate standard.

Galatians 3:26-29 [New King James] *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

The present and future life of every true Christian is bound up in Jesus Christ.

John 15:1-8 [New King James] *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*

Without Jesus Christ in our lives, in the form of the active Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, [Romans 8:9], we can bear no fruit, that is the God-like character, [Galatians 5:22-23].

Matthew 25:24-30 [New King James] *“Then he who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.’ But his lord answered and said to him, ‘You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”*

Those who fail to see the need to grow in God-like character, the “fruits” of the active Holy Spirit in our lives, risk having God take from them what they have received from the Creator God, life.

God expects us to mature spiritually, to become more like Jesus Christ if we are to be given eternal life in His created family, the Kingdom of God.

Conclusion

Romans 13:8-14 [New King James] *“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law. And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.”*

We are to model our lives to that of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:5-11 [New King James] *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Model our lives, our attitudes and motivations after Jesus Christ’s humility and obedience.

This is the “*fullness of Christ*,” [Ephesians 4:13] that we should make our personal goal in life and make it what we are totally committed to obtaining.

We all are personally responsible for this growth towards being filled with the very characteristics of Jesus Christ that are that of the whole Triune God that we worship.

Galatians 5:22-25 [New King James] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”*

This is how we “seek first the Kingdom of God,” [Matthew 6:33].

No-one can make this decision for you, only your personal commitment can fulfil what is your personal responsibility in the eyes of the Creator God who has given you life and sustains your life.