

The Christian is called to Live Holy

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“Be ye holy; for I AM Holy.”

“. . . that we might be partakers of His holiness”

“. . . You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”

(1 Pet. 1:16; Heb. 12:10; Leviticus 19:2)

An important purpose of Scripture is to show the people of God how to live a life that is worthy of Him and pleasing to Him. But one of the most neglected aspects of the quest for holiness is the *place of the mind*, even though Christ Himself put the matter beyond question when He promised “. . . You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. . .” (John 8:32). It is by the truth of Christ, His truth rooted in the character of the living God, that Christ liberates the alien sinner from the fetters and bondage of the slavery of sin. The Master said, “. . . You will know the truth . . .” (John 8:32), because “I am the way, the truth and the life . . .” (John 14:6). The obedient believer comes to know Christ personally, and is also known by Him; therein is the liberating power of the Truth as revealed by Christ.

The *born again*, believer needs to have a clear picture in mind of the kind of person the living God intends the obedient believer to be. The Christian must come to know God’s moral laws and commands in order to behave accordingly. As John Piper expressed it, “The great end of all study—all theology—is a heart for God and a life of holiness.”¹ To this end, the Christian perseveres in thinking accurately, thinking correctly, and thinking habitually at all times.

In the miracle of regeneration and conversion to Christ, God gives to every born again believer the “. . . mind of Christ . . .” (1 Cor. 2:16). John Piper, commenting on Jonathan Edwards, said Edwards implies that the *Mind* (or understanding) and *Love* (or affection) correspond to two ways that humans in the *image of God* reflect back to God His own glory. Edwards continues, “God glorifies Himself toward the creatures in two ways: (1) By appearing to . . . their understanding. (2) In communicating Himself to their hearts, and in their rejoicing and delighting in, and enjoying, the manifestations which He makes Himself.”² Christians are redeemed and delivered from sin in order to glorify God by reflecting His glory in our obedience and holy living.

The best example of this may be found in the earthly life of our Savior. Three times the devil came to Him and enticed Him in the wilderness of Judea (Matthew 3 and Mark 1). Three times The Master recognized that the devil’s suggestion was evil and contrary to the will of God. Three times Christ countered the temptations with the Greek word *gegraptai*, which means: “It is written.” With Christ, there was no room for debate or argument with Satan’s temptations. The matter was settled in the mind of Christ at the outset. Scripture had laid down what was right. The Master followed the authority of Scripture to deal with the devil’s temptations head on! This is clear Biblical knowledge of God’s will, and it is the first mandate for a righteous and holy life.

It is not enough to *know* who we are, and what we should be, however. We must go further and set our minds or ‘our affections’ and/or ‘*our regenerate desire*’ (Col. 3:1-

¹John Piper, *God’s Passion For His Glory*, Published by Crossway Books, (Wheaton, Illinois), 1998, p. 75.

²Piper, pg. 79.

2) upon it. The battle is nearly always won or lost in the mind. It is by the renewal of our mind that our character and behavior become ‘transformed’ and not conformed by the power of God (Rom. 12:1-2). So Scripture calls us again and again to mental discipline in this regard. “Whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is honorable . . . **think** about these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Notice the importance, and the emphasis Christianity places on the human *mind*, or the regenerate *affections* in Christian living, “If . . . you have been raised with Christ, **seek** the things that are above, where Christ is . . .” (Colossians 3:1). “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:23). Yet again, “Those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. . . .” (Romans 8:5). This emphasis on the *mind* is not an abstract emphasis, but in fact, the Christian has the ability to *know* something and to *reason cognitively*. What we sow in our minds we usually reap in our actions.

The human mind needs to be fed just as much as the body. Therefore, the kind of food our minds devour will determine the kind of person we become. Healthy minds have a healthy appetite. The Master declared in the Sermon on the Mount to His followers, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). The regenerate believer must satisfy the appetite of the mind with healthy, life-giving food, and not with dangerous un-intellectual thought, drugs, and poisons.

The New Testament instructs the regenerate believer to consider not only what we should be, but what, by God’s grace, we already are in Christ. We are constantly to recall what the living God has done for us, and we are to repeat this to ourselves: “God has united me with Christ in His death and resurrection, and has forgiven all my sins, He has done away with my old life and given me an entirely new life in Christ. The living God has put His Holy Spirit within me and so has made my body His temple. This is what God has done for the obedient, regenerated believer.” The born again believer in obedience, lives and functions from the cross of Christ, “I am crucified with Christ . . .” (Gal. 2:20), and not from self or his/her works of merit.

John Stott said, “Paul was determined not to know anything among the Corinthians, “. . . save Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2), then, he keeps urging them and (us) to call these things to mind. And then some **ten times** in his letters to the Romans and the Corinthians he utters his incredulous question; “**Don’t you know?**” “Don’t you know that by being baptized into Christ you were baptized into His death? Don’t you know that you are the slaves of the One to whom you have yielded yourselves in obedience? Don’t you know that you are God’s temple, and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? Don’t you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God’s kingdom? Don’t you know that your bodies are members of Christ?”³ (See also, Romans 6:3, 16; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:9, 15; and also 1 Corinthians 5:6; 6:2-3, 16, 19).

³John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters*, InterVarsity Press, (Downers Grove; Illinois), 1973, p. 41-42.

Paul's intention in this series of questions is not just to make us feel ashamed of our ignorance. It is, rather, to prevail upon us to recall these great truths about ourselves, which in fact we know very well, and to meditate on them until the *truth* grips our minds and molds our characters. We are to remind ourselves of *what we truly* are, because the living God has made us *that way* in the risen and living Christ!

Summary:

Christ is Lord of the mind (therefore, the stewardship of the mind is of great importance). Christ is Lord of our morals and ethics. Christ is Lord of our time. Christ is Lord of the Church. Christ is lord of our relationships. Christ is Lord of our missionary tasks, and Christ is Lord of the universe. Therefore, evangelism involves both the saving of the soul, and the saving of the mind!