

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus" — John 12:21

How To Please God

by Dee Bowman

Solomon lived life in a way that no one has ever done. He looked at life from every angle, viewed it from every standpoint, scrutinized it completely. He sought diligently for ways to answer the questions of life. He came to see the futility of life without a relationship to God. He concluded that man, when he is separated from God, fails miserably. He attains little that has any value, becomes more and more restless, and deteriorates into little more than an animal.

Solomon, first of all, possessed great wisdom. Even when he was involved in the strangest of pursuits, he said, "my wisdom remained with me." In other words, he was able to stand off and see himself while he was immersed in some experiment in order to see what life has to offer. His wisdom was always might nigh as he tried everything—pleasure, wine, agriculture, architecture, botany, and a host of other things—and he kept coming to the same conclusion: "Vanity. Vanity of vanities. All is vanity and striving after the wind." In frustration, he concluded that, apart of a few things, life has little to offer.

His conclusion is one of the wisest sayings ever to fall from the lips of any man. "Fear God and keep His commandments. For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it be good or bad."

There is great joy in doing what Solomon has concluded. To fear God is to bring oneself into a right relationship with Him, to recognize Him for Who and What He is, to glorify Him as Creator and Sustainer, as Savior and Sovereign. To keep His commandments is to accord to Him the service and obedience due one of His stature and holiness. It's what man is actually all about. It's why he was created. He alone, of all God's creatures, is fitted for such service. He alone glorifies God of his own free will and because he has deliberately determined to do so. 'Tis a noble privilege indeed!

We please God when we are dedicated to Him (Rom. 12:1-2). God is our first order of business. Men may be carried away with various projects, consumed with various plans, but at the end of matters when they come to face the ultimate enemy, death, it is God they seek. It pleases God when we deliberately determine to present ourselves before Him as living sacrifices, as those who are totally committed to pleasing Him and honoring His word. To do otherwise is to waste our time, squander our energies, demean our purpose for living.

It pleases God when we care for our brethren (Rom. 15:1-3). The action of being devoted to others makes us like the One we adore, "for even Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written, The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me." It is lamentable indeed how brethren treat one another sometimes. They slander one another, attack one another's motives, seek to destroy one another's influence—and all in the name of religion. How can it be? "He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." We cannot do despite to our spiritual kin and still glorify our Father in heaven; it's not possible.

It pleases God when we have faith in His provisions (1 Cor. 10:12-13). We cannot do it ourselves, folks. We can't overcome our enemy alone. He knows that. And He has provided. Why do we not avail ourselves of His provisions? And why do we not seek them actively so that we can use them to confront our problems and solve our difficulties? It's sad how few people actually look for His ways when there is trouble. "Therefore, let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." We need to be careful about confidently affirming that "I can handle it myself." But neither must we despair,

Wear Masks

Today's

Schedule

The Lord's Day

8:30 - Assembly
Building

9:30 - Assembly
Building

10:30 - Assembly
Building

for He is there. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” How are we able to bear it? Because He is faithful to provide. And please be advised: there is no other way. God is faithful. You can count on Him. Do you believe it?

It pleases God when we walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8). Solomon’s quest for the quality life is found not in dark places and shadowy corners, but in the light of the gospel. We are to “walk as children of light.” Verse 11 of this same context says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.” There is no true and lasting happiness for those who pursue what darkness has to offer, no real joy in running after the mundane. Only when we dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of light, only when we look with a bright hope to the joys of that Eternal Light, “the light that lighteth all men” (Jn. 1:9), can we find true joy and genuine peace. All else is futile, doomed to failure.

How about your life? Where are you headed. What is your true purpose? Is it to please yourself or to please Him? It’s your choice you know, but know this—if you make the wrong choice, it is your eternal destiny you have frittered away!

The Illusion of Knowledge

In his book, *The Discoverers*, Daniel Boorstin wrote, “The greatest obstacle to discovering the shape of the earth, the continents and the ocean was not ignorance but the illusion of knowledge.” Many of the great discoveries about the world we live in would have come sooner had not those who had erroneous theories been so reluctant to take a fresh look at the situation. And in our own lives as well, the growth of our knowledge is hindered by the “illusion of knowledge,” the conviction that we know something when, in fact, what we know is inaccurate. Will Rogers seems to have understood this when he said, “I’m not worried about what folks don’t know — it’s just that so much of what they do know ain’t so!”

There is nothing that will more surely block out new knowledge than the closed-mindedness of the man who thinks he already has all the information he needs. It’s hard to impart new facts to a person if he is immutably satisfied that his present knowledge is all-sufficient. Since omniscient people make poor students, the know-it-all’s attitude will keep him from ever really knowing much of anything. In regard to spiritual matters, Paul wrote, “And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know” (1 Cor. 8:2). And he described certain ones this way: “Professing to be wise, they became fools” (Rom. 1:22). The wiser we think we are, the more foolish we truly are, and our foolishness is probably obvious to everybody but us!

In the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, one of the main differences between wisdom and folly is that the wise person is teachable, while the fool is not. No matter how much he thinks he knows, the wise individual has the humility to be corrected, to learn, and to improve the accuracy of his understanding. The fool, on the other hand, never advances beyond the limitations of his present thinking because he thinks he’s right about everything already. “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15). “A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart” (Prov. 18:2).

These truths in the Old Testament are consistent with what is taught in the New about the need for us to be more ready to hear than to speak: “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, etc.” (Jas. 1:19). We learn so much less than we could learn because our mouths are in motion when our ears should be operating. Too much of the time, our communication apparatus is set to “transmit” when it should be set to “receive.”

What is needed in life generally, and especially in spiritual matters, is the humility to recognize how little any of us do know. We need to guard against the “illusion” of knowledge — the false impression that we know much when really we know only little. We need to be suspicious of any of our ideas that may be mistaken. If not, we will never correct those which are.

There is, of course, a problem in the opposite direction. If our idea of open-mindedness requires us to put a question mark over everything we know, then we’ve simply exchanged one kind of foolishness for another. Unfortunately, thinkers in our age often seem to do exactly this. In a day when respectable philosophers can say they’re not “sure” even of their own existence, the worst sin a person can commit on any subject is to be “dogmatic” about it. The words “truth” and “knowledge” have acquired condescending little quotation marks, and we’re told that we can believe anything we want . . . as long as we’re not sure of any it. Certainly, it would be dangerous to give in to this skepticism about knowledge in general. But it would be equally dangerous never to re-evaluate any notion once we have accepted it as true.

There are times to honestly reconsider what we have believed and there are other times to stand firm for what is assuredly true. Common sense can usually tell the difference. Paul wrote, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1 Cor. 3:18). Real knowledge and wisdom are always accompanied by humility. It is the person who is willing to learn who will learn. Admitting that one is yet uninformed about many things is a painful, pride-destroying step, but it is one that must be taken around nearly every bend on the road to true wisdom.

Gary Henry