

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

June 7, 2009

Conduct Matters (1)

By Greg Litmer

One of my favorite books in the New Testament is the book of 1 John. In it John attacks a prevalent first-century philosophy known as Gnosticism. Without going into a great amount of detail, Gnosticism basically regarded evil as an ever-present characteristic of all matter and therefore, those who held to this view were unable to accept the doctrine of the incarnation, the assumption of flesh on the part of the Lord. Gnostics believed that it was impossible for sinless deity to occupy a material body. John addressed that false view directly in 1 John 4:2-3 when he wrote, **“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is in the world.”**

The majority of Gnostics embraced the following idea. Inasmuch as they regarded their bodies as evil, they concluded that their spirits were independent of them, and thus could not be defiled by anything the body did. Consequently, they could live lives of unrestrained indulgence, do whatever they desired, on the grounds that a precious jewel might be laying on a dung heap, but it was still just as precious a jewel as if it were laying in a fancy, costly box. They believed that it was inevitable that their bodies would sin and nothing they could do could change that. So, with such a clear and distinct separation between body and spirit, they were free to indulge in whatever they wanted without spiritual consequence. In the early church, some held to this view, and some today act like they do as well. The letter of 1 John repeatedly makes the point that *conduct matters*.

Let's consider 1 John 1:5-10. **“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is not darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”**

John's point is profoundly simple--do not claim fellowship with God and Christ, but then walk in an ungodly way. “God is light.” Not “a light” or “the light,” but simply “light.” That is His essence; it is what He is. I do not understand all that means, but I know that He is the Father of light” (Jas. 1:17), He is the creator of light (Gen. 1:3), He is bathed in perpetual light (1 Tim. 6:16), and I know that it is in His marvelous light that Christians are to walk (1 Pet. 2:9). I know that “light”

is used in Scripture to represent truth, purity, holiness, and goodness. I also know that “dark” is used as a figure of ignorance, superstition, and sin. And I know that, using it in that sense, there is no darkness in God--none at all, not even one tiny particle.

With this being true, how could anyone say that they have fellowship with God and walk in sin? It reminds me of Paul’s rhetorical question in 2 Cor. 6:14-16. **“For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ and Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?”** Do you see the point? *Conduct matters!*

A man’s “walk” is his continual practice, his way of life. Paul talks about “walking in newness of life” in Romans 6:4; also to “walk not after the flesh” in Romans 8:1. A person claiming fellowship with God (light), yet walking in sinful ways (darkness), has no fellowship with God. However, the truth is that to think that we are not going to be held accountable for actions of the fleshly body is a spiritually fatal view, both then and now! In Christianity, doctrine and practice are inseparably connected. True, saving faith always involves belief *and obedience*.

Receiving the benefits of the blood of Jesus is conditional, and that is as true for the Christian as it is for the non-Christian. A Christian cannot live in sin. He or she must confess those sins and pray for forgiveness. One of the requisitions of this “walk in the light” is that a Christian will confess his sins, as he is able to comprehend and repent of them. God has always required a confession of sins by the sinner, as well as repentance, as condition of forgiveness.

In Need of Prayers	General Information
<p>Sister Kimberlin has some health problems and needs our thoughts, prayers, and calls.</p> <p>Sharon Tirey has begun her treatments. These treatments can be rough for some people. Let’s continue to remember both her and Ron.</p> <p>Keep Will Markem in mind.</p> <p>Kristy Kidd, Ron Tirey’s niece, was doing some better in her pregnancy, though still needs our prayers.</p> <p>Kristen Osterling’s unborn baby (friends of the Thompson’s) has been diagnosed with a serious illness. I can only imagine how difficult this news was for the parents. Remember to pray for them.</p>	<p>The Summer Bible Study Series will be here before you know it (July 20th-24th). We need members who are willing to teach or to assist in the children’s classes. Classes will be held for ages toddler through pre-teen. If you are willing to volunteer we would very much appreciate it as we hope to have the teachers for each class in place soon. Please let David Collins know if you would be willing to teach. Thanks!</p> <p>The monthly men’s meeting will be next week. Men, determine to be involved in the decisions of the congregation and make your plans now to attend.</p>

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