

A Christian's Problem

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Introduction

A Christian's Problem – This e-book give us fresh answer about many questions that most Christians asked about.

Every question has been answered based on Holy Bible itself. This book try to explain question by question.

This e-book also made friendly UI so reader as you, as well as me too, better understand, It is not novel, poem, or short story.

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It is WORTHY for you to READ in silent place and relax condition. Keep try to understand the answer a lot.

LIST OF CONTENT QUESTIONS/ANSWER

1. Is Being Killed in an Accident a Punishment?

Answer:

No, it is not right even to think such a thing, and it is a gross slander on God to say it. Jesus was very explicit on that subject. (See #Lu 13:1-5*.) The tower of Siloam had fallen and had killed eighteen persons and Jesus was told of it. He took occasion to disabuse his hearers' minds of the idea that accidents were to be regarded as punishments. There was another case in which the question was put to him directly. He was asked who had sinned, a blind man or his parents, that he was born blind, and he answered, neither (#Joh 9:2,3*). The whole book of Job is devoted to the subject. Job's friends thought that his affliction was punishment for hidden sin. God himself interferes to reprove them. It is a wicked and a cruel thing to add to the affliction of a bereaved family by suggesting that their loss is a punishment of the dead or the living.

2. Should We Endure Uncongenial Association?

Answer:

In #1Co 7:15* the bondage of uncongenial association is meant. In Corinth, unbelievers were of a particularly vicious type. The newly converted Christian would be pained day by day by the conduct of an unbelieving husband or wife. The members of the church inquired of Paul whether it was their duty to separate in such cases. He advised their remaining together, and for the believer to try to lead the unbeliever to Christ. But if the unbeliever went away, the believer was not bound to seek a renewal of relations. Let the unbeliever go. There was no compulsion in cases requiring the believer and the unbeliever to live together.

3. How Can One Have Absolute Assurance of Forgiveness of Sin?

Answer:

The absolute inward assurance of forgiveness is to be obtained by a perfect surrender of our lives to God. If this is done in prayer, and without one reservation, the Holy Ghost performs its part as surely as God's promises stand. There is an expansion, an uplifting, an inward illumination that ever after establishes an assurance of forgiveness of sin to the individual soul. It is "the Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are the sons of God." This is the new birth. This assurance of God's forgiveness of sins is given in answer to prayer

through Jesus, and is communicated to our souls by the Holy Spirit. The degree or clearness of this assurance is according to our faith. Doubts cloud this consciousness of God's favor. The Holy Spirit imparts to the believer an assurance of pardon and adoption into God's family. "Ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." God "that cannot lie" says through the inspired apostle, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When the conditions are fully met, faith springs up in the human heart, and to believe "that my sins are forgiven" is without effort, the same as to breathe. Some obtain "absolute inward assurance" of sins forgiven more readily than others. Some souls are most trustful. The doubting and despondent may never in this life have assurance "absolute," yet even these may possess "assurance." The first step to "absolute assurance" is to believe that it is not assurance that saves, but faith. We may not see the bridge over which the train is safely carrying us. So faith saves, though we may not feel safe. The second step is to trust oneself to Christ, as a child lets his father take him in his arms. The third step is to willingly do and bear whatever Christ imposes. Absolute conviction will be found in your own heart after you have questioned it and can truthfully say these words: "I believe in and love the Lord Jesus Christ, enough to lay down my life, if need be, for his sake. I love him well enough, to live as long as he wants me to, a life of idleness or of labor, a life in prison or a life of freedom, a life of suffering or a life free from all care, a life wholly devoid of companionship, wealth, worldly pleasures and friends. I love him well enough to go down to my grave, if need be, branded by the world." When you can freely give such a pledge, then you will feel the blessed peace enter your heart, and God will come and talk with you.

4. Was the Atonement an Old Testament Belief?

Answer:

The expectation of the coming Messiah, who should redeem his people and should suffer for their sakes, is as old as the beginnings of Hebrew nationality. See #Isa 53*; #Zec 11:13*. The idea of propitiation, reconciliation and expiation was associated with his coming, and although substitution is not mentioned it is implied. In connection with the sacrificial offerings similar terms are sometimes used, but the broader view of vicarious sacrifice, with special reference to the Messianic atonement, is most fully set forth in #Isa 53*.

The Messianic mission was the salvation of the race (#Isa 11*). This expectation was not wholly confined to the Jewish people. The Samaritans held it; the Magi knew of it; even in the days of Melchizedek and Job it was understood by inquiring souls (#Job 19:25*). The very first recorded Scriptural allusion to it is in #Ge 49:10*. See also #Isa 9:1-7*; #Isa 40*; #Mic 5:2*. There were periods in Jewish history during which the Messianic predictions and expectations temporarily ceased, but they were never wholly extinguished. It should be admitted, however, that while some of the Jewish Targumistic writings refer to a suffering Messiah, the greater number deal with a powerful and conquering Messiah. Faith in God, belief in his word and a willing obedience were accounted for righteousness in the old dispensation. See #Ge 15:8* and #Ro 4:3-6,20,25* and other passages. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Job is supposed to have lived about the time of Isaac, some 1800 B.C., Daniel 600 B.C., Micah 950 B.C., Isaiah 750 B.C., Zechariah, 520 B.C.

5. Is the Efficacy of the Atonement Limited to Those Who Accept It?

Answer:

The subject has been discussed for generations, and with no practical benefit. It brings up the old and profitless question of foreordination, which is better left alone. It is sufficient for us to know that whosoever avails himself of the offer of salvation through Christ will be saved. If the ruler of a rebellious people proclaimed amnesty to all who laid down their arms, it would apply to all who complied with the conditions, but those who did not comply would have no part in the amnesty. The limit would not be in the offer but in the disposition of the people.

6. Is Celibacy Commanded in the Bible?

Answer:

Certainly not, and no enforced celibacy was known in the Church until long after the apostolic age. Chry-sostom opposed it, Polycarp, Eusebius, Cyprian, and other early writers mention priestly marriage as a common thing, and in fact, during the first three centuries there is no evidence of celibacy as a rule of clerical life. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) established the rule of celibacy. It originated officially with the edict of Siricius, bishop of Rome (A.D. 385), who argued that the reason why priests in Old Testament times were allowed to marry was that they might be taken exclusively from the tribe of Levi; but as no such exclusive limitation prevailed in the Roman Catholic priesthood, marriage

was unnecessary and inconsistent with the priestly office. The Roman bishops who succeeded Siricius sustained this contention and a long line of Popes confirmed it in their decretals. For centuries, however, there was a continuous struggle over it among the Romanist clergy and many lived openly in wedlock in spite of the decrees. Finally, about the sixteenth century it became a fixed rule of the Roman Church. It is a system which ever since its introduction has given rise to many abuses.

7. How Far May People Be Compelled to Accept Christianity?

Answer:

It is the mission of Christianity to preach the Gospel to all nations, but this does not imply the employment of force to compel a people to adopt the Christian religion against their will. In our own land, freedom of worship is guaranteed under the constitution. Any attempt to force the adoption of a religion would be a violation of the constitution. Lawful persuasion may be used, and there is, of course, no bar to discussion, but the individual and the community must be left wholly free. The attempt to force religion upon any people, and especially to force it upon any nation as such with the ultimate end in view of establishing a religious power in the State or nation, is in conflict with Christ's own declaration that his kingdom is "not of this world."

8. What is a Spiritual Church?

Answer:

In order to have a spiritual church, it is essential that there should be spiritually-minded leaders, men of ripe Christian experience and earnest faith, who can communicate their own enthusiasm for service and soul-winning to their fellow members. The true spiritual church is an active, working church, where the congregation vie with each other not merely in living up to their privileges in the matter of church attendance, but in active personal effort in their neighborhood, drawing others under the influence of the Gospel and organizing themselves for works of charity and kindness. An inactive church cannot have spiritual growth. The church should be directly connected with the work of home and foreign missions, hospital and sick visitation, shepherding of the children, keeping up the Sunday School, and doing good at every opportunity. Neglect of prayer meetings marks a decline of spirituality in a church which no amount of social attractions will repair. The ideal church is one in which every member has a share in the general activities of the organization. This means all, large and small, young and old, learned and ignorant for too often the educated

try to obtain an ascendancy. Intellectuality is not always an aid to spiritual life; on the contrary, there are very many cases in which it has proved a barrier. One does not perceive God through the intellect alone, and this is shown in the fact that many of the most spiritual natures have been found among the simple and unlearned. Intellectual vanity and self-sufficiency — an overweening confidence in the powers of the finite mind — are among the strongest impediments to faith. "Ye must become as a little child."

9. Will the Whole World Be Converted Before the Second Coming?

Answer:

There is nothing in Scripture to make one believe that the whole world will be converted before the Second Coming. On the contrary, we are told that up to and immediately preceding that event, there will be widespread apostasy and spiritual decline, with false Christs and misleaders of men. We should not overlook the fact, however, that the duty is imposed on all Christians to spread the Gospel throughout the world, and to do everything that lies in our power for the conversion of the nations, but the complete harvest can come only in God's own time.

10. Does the Role Laid Down by #Jas 2:10* Imply that All Crimes Are Equal in Guilt?

Answer:

No; it means that the violation of any of God's laws places the offender in the category of sinners. The writer is arguing with proud, self-righteous people who take credit to themselves for not committing certain sins. He shows them that in committing other sins that are not accounted by men so disgraceful, they are nevertheless sinners against God as surely as if they had committed the sins they condemn. A man who tells a lie has broken God's law and in that respect is under condemnation as the man is who commits a murder. Not that both are equally heinous, but that both stand on an equality in not being able to plead innocence before God. Both are sinners in need of mercy.

11. Why Did Paul Advise Timothy to Drink Wine?

Answer:

We suppose he thought it would do him good. He evidently believed that Timothy's ailment, whatever it was, would be relieved by a stimulant. Perhaps

if Paul had known as much as modern physicians do of the human constitution, he would not have given the advice. Drinking habits, in our day, do so much harm, that if he were alive now, we do not think he would counsel a young minister to drink wine. He was too much concerned about the general good to suggest an example which would be mischievous.

12. Can Evil Emanate from God?

Answer:

This is a topic that has caused much controversy. Evil is the negation of good. God is the source of all goodness, and no evil dwells in him; but with the withdrawal of his guiding and protecting spirit from man, evil comes. In #1Sa 16:14*, we are distinctly told that this was the case with Saul. The Spirit of God had forsaken him, and then his soul was an easy prey to the Spirit of Evil. He was hypochondriac and his distemper was aggravated by his wicked temper and his consciousness that as the result of his own sin and folly he was in danger of losing his throne. The passage in #Isa 45:7* "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil" does not refer to moral evil, but to discord or disturbance in the order of the universe as a whole. Thus, as light and darkness are opposites, so in the next clause of the verse, peace and disorder are opposites. Evil is the negation of good and distinction must be made between natural and moral evil. Among natural evils are wars, earthquakes, storms, plagues or whatever disturbs or disarranges the perfection of natural things; whereas moral evil is thought, word or act that is contrary to the revealed law of God and is therefore sin. It is the peculiarity of Hebrew writing to delight in contrasts. You find a long series of them in Proverbs. They are always of the same nature of parallelisms. Thus, in the passage in #Isa 45*, the prophet used the converse of the peace he has been talking of. We should say war or physical disturbance. He uses the word evil in the sense of punishment or misery. It is the state of the nation that he is considering. It serves God and is faithful to him and is prosperous. The prosperity comes from God. It deserts him and disobeys him and is punished by captivity and oppression. They also come from God. In that sense he creates the condition which they regard as an evil. There is a similar argument in #Ro 11:22*. Moral evil he never creates.

13. Does God Choose People for Destruction?

Answer:

Peter was right in saying (#2Pe 3:16*) that in Paul's epistles there were some things hard to be understood. The verses in #Ro 9:15-20* are confessedly

difficult. They appear to be contradictory to the conclusion which Paul reaches at the close of his argument (#Ro 11:32*) "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Perhaps we would understand his argument better if we knew more of the people to whom he was writing. It may have been, that among them were some who had the audacity to criticize God's method of government, and Paul wanted them to realize that God was not under obligation to save any who rebelled against him. That fact we must admit. No man can claim as a right that God shall forgive him. We know, from Christ's own words and from Paul's own letters, that God does forgive all who come to him in penitence. But when a man defies him, as Pharaoh did, Paul contends that God makes an example of him, that men of all times may see what is the end of defiance of his rule. We do not imagine that Paul meant that God directly hardened Pharaoh, but that the hardening was the effect of the removal of the plagues and was "permitted." The very mercy had the opposite effect on the man that it should have had. Pharaoh misunderstood it, as men now misunderstand God's long-suffering, and think they will escape altogether. Our side of the question is not God's sovereignty, which we can never understand, but the sublime fact that "whosoever will" may come to Christ and be saved.

14. Does Satan Interfere with God's Children?

Answer:

Paul, in common with the people of his time, had a firm belief in the interference of Satanic influence in human life. Not only in #1Th 2:18*, but in #2Co 12:7*, he refers to it. The "thorn in the flesh," whatever that affliction was, he regarded as a messenger from Satan. The writer of Samuel took another view. He said the evil spirit that troubled Saul was from the Lord. (See #1Sa 16:14; 18:10* and other passages.) The writer of the book of Job thought that the evil fortune might be the work of Satan under express permission of God. The origin of evil has always been a mystery and it is not solved yet. Though we cannot understand it, we may be sure that vexations and hindrances and temptations do not come to us without the divine permission, and they are intended to strengthen the character. Paul himself said that all things work together for good to them that love God. (#Ro 8:28*.)

15. What Was the "Sentence of the Serpent"?

Answer:

The "sentence of the serpent" as the passage in #Ge 3:15* is called, was a far-reaching one. The prophecy concerning the posterity of the woman, who were

to be at enmity with the seed of the serpent, "points to the continual struggle between the woman's offspring and the grand enemy of God and man — the mighty conflict, of which this world has ever since been the theater," between sin and righteousness. In the clause in question perhaps the more accurate reading would be: "I will permit enmity between thee and the woman," etc. God is not the author of evil; but when his holy Spirit is withdrawn from a man or a community or a nation, evil comes and takes the place of good.

16. Who Created the Devil?

Answer:

This question has puzzled theologians for ages, and has occasioned discussions which have had no profitable issue. There is no source of reliable information but that contained in Scripture and that is of a very meager character. See #Re 12:7,9*, and #2Pe 2:4*. The inference from those and other passages is that Satan was created by God as man was, that he was pure and innocent, but, like man, liable to fall. That he did fall and was cast out of heaven. It cannot be conceived that God created an evil being, though, as we know to our sorrow, he did create a being who became evil. The whole subject is wrapped in mystery and the Bible writers are more intent on the practical question of teaching us how to be delivered from the power of Satan than in giving us his biography. The less we know of him and have to do with him the better for us. That Satan was an angel of high estate, who fell through ambition, leading to rebellion, is the concrete form of a history which is a combination of Scripture and tradition. See #Joh 8:44*; #Mt 4:1-11*; #Mt 25:41*; #Lu 8:12*; #Lu 10:18*; #Ac 13:10*; #Eph 6:11*; #1Pe 5:8*; #1Jo 3:8* and other passages. In Job he is the adversary and the tempter. See also #1Ch 21:1*. Milton the poet described him as "the prince or ruler of the demons." See #Da 7:10* and #Jude 1:6*. These passages leave much unexplained and conjecture here is useless. His final overthrow and punishment are predicted in #Re 20*.

17. Are We As Christians Bound to Keep the Ten Commandments?

Answer:

The Christian is not under the law but under grace. That however does not free him from obligation. More is expected of him in the way of righteousness than if he were under the law. You lay down rules for your child and make him obey, but when he grows to manhood he is free from your rules. Do you not expect that he will behave without rules? That was your object in training him, to

produce in him a disposition which would keep him right when he became his own master. Now, which of the Commandments do you as a Christian, free from law, feel that you are at liberty to break? You would keep them out of love for God, whether you were bound or not. As to commands and injunctions of the Old Testament, when the question was considered in the first apostolic council (#Ac 15:5-29*) it was decided that Gentile converts were not to be bound by the Levitical law. Christ, also, in his sermon on the mount, said: "It hath been said by them of old time," and went on to say, "but I say unto you," etc., clearly regarding the law as it stood to be subject to his abrogation. It must not, however, be supposed that the Christian dispensation is less stringent. The man who obeys Christ is under obligations higher than those of the law. As an example, the law forbade murder and Christ forbade the anger that leads to murder. As love is higher than law, so Christ, by setting his people free of law and placing them under the obligation of love, inculcated a higher morality.

18. Is the Backslider's Case Hopeless?

Answer:

The passage in #Heb 6:6*, like that about the unpardonable sin, has caused much discussion and apprehension. The description in the previous verses of the persons to whom it refers, appears to indicate a condition of enlightenment and of personal experience such as some attain who do not become true Christians, but return to the world. The writer appears to be speaking of a fact rather than enunciating a doctrine. Every Christian minister and worker knows how difficult it is to win a backslider, especially one who has become a scoffer. The truth seems to have no effect upon them. Any person who fears having fallen into that condition can disprove the theory by going to Christ and asking forgiveness. Christ will receive him. The very fact of his being distressed about it indicates that he has not fallen beyond hope. The man who has need to fear, is he who does not trouble about his state.

19. Is There Any Hope for the Backslider?

Answer:

See #Heb 10:26-29*; #Joh 6:37*; #Heb 6:4-6*, and #1Jo 1:9*. The passage in #Heb 10* refers to those who sin after receiving "full knowledge" of the truth (see #1Ti 2:4*), and who after having been "enlightened" and tasting a certain measure of grace and the spirit of truth (see #Joh 14:17-29*), apostatize to Judaism or infidelity. Such is not a sin of ignorance or error, but the result of

moral wickedness or a deliberate sin against the Spirit — a presumptuous sin against Christ's redemption for us and the spirit of grace in us. Having fully known the one sacrifice for sin, and having a certain experience of the efficacy of that sacrifice, they have now rejected it In #Heb 6:4,6*, the same idea is emphasized. Such sinners crucify Christ anew, instead of crucifying the world (see #Gal 6:14*). The passage in #Joh 6:37* expresses the glorious certainty of eternal life to those who believe and stand firm — those who are given him of the Father and come to him with full surrender. Not the simply willing, but the actually faithful; not the waverers, but the true and abiding, are to realize the promise. In the backslider there has been no complete dedication, otherwise there would be no apostasy. #1Jo 1:9* emphasizes the assurance of forgiveness and acceptance of the faithful ones. Concerning the possibilities of a return to Christ on the part of a backslider, we can only assert that what to man may and often does seem impossible, is possible with God, and that his grace is boundless. Peter backslid in a most grievous way, and yet was forgiven. By a miracle of divine grace, the backslider, although beyond human hope of recall, may in God's abundant mercy find refuge and forgiveness.

20. Does Every Good Thing Come from God?

Answer:

It is impossible to say just what impulses proceed from self and what are the direct influence of God in the unconverted soul. Some impulses to kindness seem purely natural, such as the instinctive care of a mother for her child, which is found in beasts as well as in human kind. The affection of animals for people, like the affection of a dog for his master, is sometimes tremendously strong. While all these noble and beautiful things come from God, they do not necessarily indicate the presence of God in the soul He has planted certain admirable traits both in the instincts of animals and the minds of men; he also has, of course, the power of communicating with men, speaking to their minds and consciences by his Spirit and by his Word. Reason is higher than instinct and conscience is higher than both, but even conscience may not mean that God is dwelling in the soul. Only when it is enlightened or quickened by the divine power does it become a safe guide. Conscience, therefore, is not so much the voice of God as the human faculty of hearing that voice. But at conversion God's Spirit comes into a man's soul. He is no longer outside, but within; mystically though actually linked to the man himself. The great change then is that a man finds himself loving God, eager to get his messages, anxious to please him. The impulses to do good, instead of being vague and weak, become

definite and intense. The converted man feels that God is within him, making suggestions, awakening holy, unselfish, beautiful desires, and giving him power to carry out these good desires in vigorous and successful action.

21. Why Do Some Passages of the New Testament Use the Neuter Pronoun in Referring to the Holy Spirit?

Answer:

In the New Testament references to the Holy Spirit the masculine form is used almost without exception. In #Joh 14:26; 15:26* the relative pronoun "which" is employed, a word that in present-day English is always neuter. At the time the Bible was translated, however, the form "which" was used of persons as well as things, for example: "Our Father which art in heaven" (#Mt 6:9*) and "these ... which have received the Holy Ghost." (#Ac 10:47*.) As a matter of fact it would not have been surprising if the neuter form had crept into the translation of some other passages, as the Greek word for spirit (pneuma) is neuter. This makes it all the more remarkable that throughout the Greek New Testament the pronouns referring to this neuter word are masculine. The fact of the Greek noun itself being neuter has no bearing whatever on the question of personality or sex, as is well understood by any one familiar, for instance, with German, in which the same thing is often true.

22. Will the Jews Ever Return to Palestine?

Answer:

Will the Jews return to the Holy Land, and will they ever, as a nation, acknowledge Christ as the Messiah? is often asked, and again it is sought to be known how they can be God's chosen people when they reject Christ. There is no doubt that the Jews were God's chosen people and Paul says (#Ro 11:1*) that He has not cast them off. In that and the two preceding chapters the apostle fully discusses the question. The prophets assure us that they will return to the Holy Land. There are predictions, dating before and during the captivity in Babylon, which were fulfilled when they returned under the edict of Cyrus, but there are others indicating a later and permanent restoration. The passages in #Isa 2:2-4*, #Jer 3:18; 16:14,15*; #Eze 36:24; 37:21,25; 39:28*, and many others have not yet been fulfilled. They will probably return in unbelief but will be converted later (see #Ro 11:26*).

23. Is Justification the Same Under the Old and New Dispensations?

Answer:

Justification is the act of God and has ever been so, under both the Old and New Dispensations. Under the Old, those were accepted who rendered a faithful and willing obedience; thus we read, in #Gal 3:6*, that Abraham believed God, and this belief (i.e., faith) was accounted to him for righteousness. Under the New Dispensation, Jesus "came to bring life and immortality to light," that is, to give us a spiritual illumination which would disclose to man the great scheme of redemption ordained from the beginning. The contention, therefore, that none save those who are in the New Dispensation can attain immortality is untenable. Besides, the evidence of Scripture itself is against such a conclusion. Moses and Elijah were seen at the transfiguration. Paul held that while the race, as a whole, died in Adam's sin, as a whole it received life through Christ's redemptive work.

24. How Can the Kingdom of God Be Established before the Judgment Day?

Answer:

The Kingdom of the Messiah, which was foretold by many of the prophets and is further explained in the New Testament, is a divine, spiritual kingdom, to be built up in the hearts of men and ultimately to become universal. It is described in the early prophecies as a coming golden age, when the true religion should be re-established and universal peace and happiness should prevail.

Unquestionably, it was regarded by the Jews in a temporal sense only, but the Saviour himself declared it to be a spiritual kingdom, and his followers look forward to its highest realization only after his return. Meanwhile, it is being established now; from the beginning of the Christian dispensation, it has progressed in the hearts of men. That Jesus himself intended to convey this is made clear in #Mt 8:12; 11:12; 11:28*; #Mr 12:34*; #Lu 11:9,11*, and many other passages which deal with the various phases of the same subject #Mt 24* describes the condition of the believers at the judgment and their welcome to the fullness of the completely established kingdom, with all its blessings and rewards.

25. Can a Christian Keep the Moral Law?

Answer:

To unfallen man, obedience to the moral law would undoubtedly have been within human reach, but to fallen man it stands as an unattainable ideal, to which he may strive, but in vain. There is none without sin (#1Jo 1:8*), and as a perfect obedience to God's law implies entire sinlessness, it is obviously impossible that such obedience can be rendered by mortal man. But to those who are in Christ this difficulty is overcome. (#Ro 4:7*.) They are not under the law and consequently are not to be judged by the law. (#Ro 6:15*; #1Jo 3:9*.) Christ, by his perfect obedience, and his sufferings for their sins, has satisfied the law in their behalf. (#2Co 5:21*.) Thus, when grace enters the heart, its sinfulness is removed. The righteousness and perfect obedience of Christ being imputed to his people, they are accepted of God. (#Ro 3:24*; #2Co 12:9*.) Christians, therefore, should not serve in the bondage of fear, as under the law (#1Ti 1:9*), but in love, as under grace in Christ Jesus. (#Ro 8:1-15*.)

26. Does the Bible Say Anything About Life Insurance?

Answer:

There is nothing in Scripture bearing on the subject of life insurance, but there are various passages on thrift and on making provision for old age. If you turn to #1Ti 5:8* you will find a very definite statement on the subject. Evidently Paul did not believe that any man claiming to be a Christian was justified in leaving his dependent ones to be a burden on the community, either during his life or afterward. There are birds and other animals that give improvident man a lesson by the way they lay up a store of food against the winter season. Jesus in #Mt 6:31-34* was not rebuking thrift, but worldly-mindedness and vanity. He was referring to those who pursued the things of this life as the supreme object. He wanted his followers to "take no thought (anxious care or worry) for the morrow." He had no word of condemnation for attention to business, but business gains, wealth, possessions, etc., are all of secondary importance, and worry about them springs from the heart's distrust of God, and does no good, but rather evil.

27. Is the Love of God towards Man to Be Interpreted Individually?

Answer:

This question has often disquieted Christians under affliction. It has often appeared to the godly man, as it did to Job, that the children of God fare no better in the world than the wicked. But we are taught in a multitude of passages in the Bible, that God does know and care for the individual. Christ was very

explicit on the subject. (See #Mt 10:29-31*.) The promise in the New Testament to Christ's followers is not of prosperity, but that they shall receive strength to bear their afflictions and that those afflictions shall work for good to them. Our prayers would be simple mockeries if we did not believe in God's care for the individual. The Christian, like the worldling, is subject to natural law and other things being equal, a blow that would kill a worldling would kill him. It is often difficult to understand why so many afflictions fall to the righteous which the wicked escape, but God does not explain these particular trials. He expects us to trust him and to be assured that "he does not willingly afflict nor grieve" us, and to patiently wait the revelation which will make all things clear.

28. Does God Work Miracles at the Present Time?

Answer:

This is a question often asked. The arm of Omnipotence is not shortened that it cannot save. Thousands have been restored in mind and body in answer to the prayer of faith. Yet he never works unnecessary miracles. God has given us means and endowed us with intelligence to use these means, and he will not withhold his blessing upon their use when we ask it in faith. We ask him to feed us, but we must labor with our hands and not expect him to bless our idleness nor our lack of effort. So, if we ask him to heal us, we must use in faith the means he has supplied, with all the intelligence he has given us. It is simply "tempting God" to neglect his means. Jesus himself applied the clay and the spittle to the eyes of the blind. Naaman had to bathe in the Jordan. Even in the healing of the soul, which is an operation of the Holy Spirit, we must cooperate, and while he works in us, we ourselves must work with "fear and trembling." And if Divine wisdom should see fit to withhold the boon we crave in the form we ask, we must submit in faith to his will, as he knows what is best for us. Strength is often made perfect in weakness and many things we mistakenly call evils are blessings in disguise.

29. Did Paul Discourage Marriage?

Answer:

In the 7th chapter of I Cor., Paul had apparently been asked questions by the Church in Corinth which tended to disparage marriage and to regard it as an undesirable state when one of the parties is an unbeliever. His long reply may be summed up in a few words: "Abide in your present station, for the time is

short." He believed that, by remaining single, he could devote himself more acceptably to his Gospel work. The passage in #1Ti 5:14* is not inconsistent with the other, for the circumstances of the two cases were different, and in the latter he commends marriage under certain conditions, as an antidote to certain temptations.

30. What Has the Bible to Say About Marriage and Divorce?

Answer:

The Bible law on marriage and divorce may be learned from the following passages: #Ge 3:24*; #Mt 19:5*; by Peter in #Mr 10:7,8*; #Eph 5:31*; #Mt 19:6*; #Mr 10:8*; #Mr 10:9*; #Mal 2:16*; #Mt 5:32; 19:9*; #1Co 7:11*; #Mt 19:9*; #Lu 16:18*; #Mr 10:11*; #Lu 16:18*; #Mt 5:32*; #1Co 7:11*; #Ro 7:2*; #1Co 7:39*; #Ro 7:3*; #1Co 7:39*.

31. Does God Approve of the Marriage of an Unbeliever to a Believer?

Answer:

The whole question at issue is fully and fearlessly discussed in #2Co 6:14-18*. This is Paul's interpretation and it stands good today as a general rule of Christian conduct. Nevertheless, we are not to judge those who may ignore the injunction, for in #1Co 7:14*, the apostle shows how such a union may after all accomplish beneficent results. From this verse to chapter #1Co 7:1*, inclusive, the apostle seems to forbid too much social intercourse generally with idolatrous and heathenish people, rather than to have in view the marriage relation especially. In #1Co 7:12-16*, separation from the unbelieving husband or wife is discountenanced, because the believing spouse may be able to sanctify — that is, make holy — the unregenerate mate, and may effect conversion to salvation. In the same chapter and other passages of the apostolic writings marriage is encouraged without any restrictions. In #Gal 5:1*, and #Ac 15:10*, the word "yoke" is used in a somewhat similar connection to that supposed to contain the implied prohibition. In #Php 4:3*, Paul addresses some unknown individual as "yoke-fellow," and it is quite certain he does not mean his wife. But if it is admitted that the text cited prohibits intermarriage between Christians and unbelievers, it must be construed with reference to the conditions of sensual idolatry universally prevailing at that period in the city of Corinth. Paul was addressing a small community of Christians in a very large heathen city, and it is as if we should advise Christians in China and India not to intermarry with Buddhists and Mohammedans, only more aggravated.

32. Is It Possible that the Miracle of the Incarnation May Be Repeated?

Answer:

The word "possible" is inappropriate in such connection, because nothing is impossible with God; but when we hear of his doing something utterly inconsistent with his ways, we know that it cannot be true, because he would never contradict himself. All the teaching of the Bible, the Epistle to the Hebrews especially, leads to the conclusion that Christ is the one and final incarnation of God. There is no need of another, because he fully satisfied the Divine purpose and has been found to fully satisfy the need of man. Many have arisen since his time, as he warned us there would, who have claimed to be God in human form, like some who even in recent years have made such a claim; but they were and are impostors. They are deceiving many, as Christ said impostors would (see #Mt 24:24*), but not those who look to Christ for light and guidance.

33. What Is the "Call" to the Ministry?

Answer:

One of the best evidences of a genuine call is the possession of those special qualifications which add in marked degree to the usefulness of the Christian. If, under his addresses in Sunday School, or at prayer-meetings, or at mission churches God has acknowledged his work and souls are led to Christ, there is strong reason to believe that it may be his duty to devote all his time to preaching and pastoral work. A man's own intense desire to preach and the concurrent opinion of experienced Christians that his work would be useful in the pulpit, are also indications. The basis of all qualifications for the ministry, however, is that there must be in the heart an intense love of souls, consecration to Gospel service, and a sense of personal acceptance, pardon and regeneration through Christ. None but one who has himself traveled the road that leads to the Cross can guide others along the same path. See #Col 1:28*; #Mt 15:14*; #Lu 6:39*.

34. What Are the Qualifications of a Minister?

Answer:

A true minister of the Gospel must possess, above everything else, an intense love for Christ and a great love for his fellowmen. These two qualifications will

necessarily give him an intense passion to save souls, and this is the true secret of success. He must love Christ so much and love people so much that he will long to proclaim Christ's message to men and win them to him. He must understand the Gospel — must feel its operation in his own heart and must know that "it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth." He must understand that the Gospel is the message of God's free grace to men by which he forgives and sanctifies them, and he must know how to lead men, not to try to save themselves by efforts and vows, but to accept humbly God's infinite gift of a present salvation. A minister should have common sense and a well-balanced mind. He should have a clear voice and the ability to express himself clearly and forcibly in speech; if eloquently, so much the better. He should have modesty and tact, and these even without much social experience, will lead him to conduct himself correctly and winsomely. His studies should lead him to know more of Christ, to know more of the Gospel, to know more of men, and to acquire more skill in delivering the message. He must study voice culture, rhetoric and some elocution — though this last is dangerous, as it is apt to make a speaker affected, which is fatal to real success. He must study the Bible and should study theology, and psychology. Special emphasis must be laid upon understanding people. A technical theological education sometimes lifts a man away from the people he must help instead of putting him into closer touch with them. He must understand how people live and work and suffer and think and must be sympathetic with and well informed about the movements they are making toward greater liberties and better social conditions. This understanding of people, individually and in groups, will help him to convince them of their need of Christ for their souls and for society. He should, if possible, also have some knowledge of business affairs so that in the conduct of his church he will not fall into financial and legal snares.

35. How Long Have We Had a Trained Ministry?

Answer:

The Bible informs us that even in the days of Samuel there were "schools of the prophets," in which men were trained for the high function of moral and spiritual teaching. The priests and Levites were trained in the knowledge of the ecclesiastical law and the ceremonies, In later Jewish history, twelve great institutions for educating priests, teachers and elders existed. Jesus himself passed a considerable portion of his ministry in instructing and training his disciples. We read in Acts that the apostles imitated his example in personally instructing the younger disciples. John spent his later years teaching at Ephesus,

qualifying youths for the ministry, and Mark did likewise at Alexandria. Early Christian training schools were established in Cesarea, Antioch, Laodicea, Nicomedia, Athens, Edessa, Seleucia, Carthage and in Mesopotamia and there were many minor institutions of the same class. Thus all the evidence goes to show that even from the earliest days, those who were designed to convey God's message to the hearts of men were set apart, consecrated, and fitly prepared. It is so today. A trained and educated ministry is essential to the advancement of religion just as training and preparation are needed in other vocations. The apostles, even if they had nothing more, had a course of several years' personal training with the great Master as their teacher before they were sent out on their full mission. It is true that many converted laymen, and women, too, have done and are doing noble work in soul saving, but they are exceptional and the fact that their labors are owned and blessed of God is not a valid argument against a trained ministry, but rather the reverse. With due training they might have accomplished even more.

36. Is Misfortune a "Judgment of God"?

Answer:

We have no right to sit in judgment on others, and when some people censoriously announce that a misfortune which befalls a person or a community is "a judgment" of God, they assume undue authority. We are distinctly warned against judging others. See Christ's teaching on this subject #Lu 13:4*.

37. Has a Man Two Natures?

Answer:

In #Ro 7:25* Paul says: "So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." The argument of the preceding verses has been the hopelessness of the struggle which that man must fight who strives to obtain salvation through the law. He is defeated by his own body, or the flesh, as Paul calls it. It drags him down and forces him to obey and to yield to its cravings; so that in his despair he cries, "What I would I do not; but what I hate that do I." The picture is one that appeals to every unconverted man's experience. His reason, his pride, his manliness direct him to renounce some sin, such as drunkenness or lust. He resolves, but suddenly the craving arises, and in spite of the resolves of his mind — his real ego — he is swept off his feet, and yields to his passion. The revelation of Christ as a helper crosses Paul's mind, and he thanks God. In the eighth chapter he is going to explain this

at length, but he halts here at verse #Ro 7:25*, to mark the stage reached by the man he is describing. "With the mind, I myself," the real ego am serving God; while with the flesh, the animal nature, I am serving sin. In #Ro 8:10* this problem is solved. Through Christ the spirit is strengthened, and the flesh is controlled and subdued. He is freed by the spirit of life (#Ro 8:3*).

38. Will the Negroes Be Saved?

Answer:

The ablest scientists hold to the unity of the race, and in this they are in accord with Scripture, which declares that the Creator "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (#Ac 17:26*), and that the "free gift comes upon all men to justification to life." Climatic variations extending over long periods account for physical differences. The negro is the descendant of Ham, the head of one of the three great divisions of the human race. He was the progenitor of the Egyptians, the Cushites and the African nations, and his descendants were the founders of great empires in Ethiopia, Babylonia, Arabia, Abyssinia and, according to some authorities, in a considerable part of Asia, as far as the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf. No one has the slightest warrant for asserting that the negro has not a soul. Christian converts from Cyrene in Upper Libya were among those who were identified with the formation of the first Gentile church in Antioch. Mark the evangelist labored during a large part of his missionary career in Africa. Simon, who bore our Saviour's cross (#Mt 27:32*), was a Cyrenian and a native of Libya. The Copts, who were active in the early days of Christianity, were a mixed race, chiefly negro. The Coptic Christian Church is one of the oldest in existence and possesses some of the most valuable early Christian manuscripts.

39. Do the Pauline Epistles Contain All that Is Essential to Salvation?

Answer:

It is quite proper to lay special emphasis upon the writings of Paul, because he was especially chosen of God to interpret the life and death of the Saviour to the hearts and minds of men, particularly of those who were not Jews. Furthermore, Paul was authorized to show that the requirements of the ceremonial law, as recorded by Moses, were done away with by the sacrifice of Christ. In this way it is easy to see that the explanation of the salvation wrought by the atonement is of more spiritual value than the precepts of the old law of sacrifices and ceremonies, which are no longer in force. The tremendous value of Paul's

writings lies in the fact that he shows men the practical, immediate way of receiving salvation, not by the keeping of commandments, but by faith in the crucified Saviour. Granting all this, however, it is great folly to say that the other parts of the Bible are unimportant. The Pentateuch is full of flashes of God's presence and God's will, containing holy principles which are eternal, and recording the experiences of men who knew God; the historical books show God working in the life of a nation; the poetical and wisdom books give us inspiration and instruction for daily living; the prophetic books give us glimpses of the coming Saviour and are pulsating with direct, personal messages from God to the human soul; the Gospels help us to get acquainted with the Redeemer and to understand the kind of life he wants us to live and his hope for the world; the Acts give us clear pictures of men who were impelled by the power of the Holy Ghost and challenge us to let the risen Christ work through us as he worked through them; the other epistles are full of spiritual help, and the book of Revelation gives us visions of the life to come. All are important; all help us to know Christ better; all lead us to God. We must not slight these other books, even while agreeing that Paul is the direct messenger to us Gentiles to show us the way of salvation by faith.

40. Why Was Polygamy Allowed to the Patriarchs and Why Is It Wrong Now?

Answer:

Jesus, in speaking of certain provisions of the Mosaic law on the marriage question, said: "From the beginning it was not so." #Mt 19:8*. He referred to the original creation of one man and one woman as fixing the moral law that a man should have but one wife. The fact that Abraham and the other patriarchs had more than one wife does not make polygamy right any more than the fact that they owned slaves makes slavery right. The Bible is a truthful record of the lives of the people of whom it tells. They did many things that were wrong; God dealt gently and patiently with his people, leading them by a long process of teaching and development toward the full understanding of his perfect will. There was no particular time at which polygamy became wrong, but it was the teaching of Jesus, more than any other influence, that showed mankind that it is wrong. In the New Testament the love of husband and wife is presented as the highest form of love; it is inconceivable that any outsider, or third person, can enter into this sacred fellowship. Polygamy means injustice to women; the plural wives are outsiders, deprived, from the Christian point of view, of real wifeness.

41. Does God Answer Prayers?

Answer:

Most assuredly he does, but his ways are not as our ways. We are at best but children in spiritual things. Yet there is nothing in this world so clear and so well attested by Christian evidence, as that if we pray with believing hearts and in the right spirit, he will hear us and do what is best for us. No such prayer goes unanswered. The answer may not be as we expected, nevertheless it will be for the best and to the purpose. Says Professor Denney: "When we pray in Jesus' name there is nothing which we may not ask. Whatever limitations there may be, they are covered by the name of Jesus itself. We must not ask what is outside of that name, not included in its promise. We must not ask a life exempt from labor, from self-denial, from misunderstanding, from the Cross; how could we ask such things in His Name? But ignoring this self-evident restriction, Jesus expressly, emphatically and repeatedly removes every other limit. There is nothing which the name of Jesus puts into our hearts which we may not, with all assurance, put into our prayers." In his name, we can ask with assurance for pardon from God; we can ask to be strengthened in temptation and to be kept from falling, and restored when through human weakness we do fall, for we have the assurance that he will not let us be utterly cast down; we can ask for the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We can ask that our material wants as well as our spiritual needs may be fully supplied. But, in asking, we must have the faith to lay hold, and when we pray with this faith, we shall never pray amiss.

42. Do Prayers for the Unconverted Help?

Answer:

The most definite Bible passage on this subject is #1Jo 5:16*: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life." The words of Paul in #Ac 16:31*, "Thou shalt be saved, and thy house," probably mean simply that if all the members of the household believed they would be saved. But we have positive Scripture warrant for praying for our unconverted friends, and countless incidents from present day life and earlier times prove that many hearts have been won to Christ through prayer. The assurance may not always come that those for whom we pray will yield to God, but sometimes the assurance does come very definitely. Prayer for others should be personal, definite, earnest. S. D. Gordon in his Quiet Talks on Prayer takes

the position that prayer for others, offered in the name of Jesus, has the effect of driving off evil influences from the persons for whom the prayer is being made. It projects the personal influence of the one who is praying to the one prayed for, and clears the spiritual atmosphere so that the voice of God can be heard and the power of God felt. Just as by talking to a person one may be able to persuade him to listen and yield to God, so by prayer one may influence another to submit himself to God. Most important of all is love. We must love ardently, steadily, those for whom we pray. Love will prevent us from doing things that would mar our influence over them or spoil their conception of the religious life. If our friends know that we love them deeply and constantly our words and prayers will have an almost irresistible power.

43. Should We Pray for One from Whom the Holy Ghost Has Departed?

Answer:

Who are you, to assume to judge that such a one has been forsaken by the Holy Spirit? It would be a fearful responsibility to act on such a conclusion. Of one thing you may rest assured: if the person is at all concerned about his spiritual condition, no matter how deeply he has offended, that very fact is conclusive evidence that the Holy Spirit has not abandoned him, but is still striving with him. When the Holy Spirit leaves a man, that man becomes careless and indifferent and has no desire to pray. It is difficult — almost impossible — for us to understand the operations of the Spirit, but you may be assured that the love and compassion and long-suffering of God are infinite. Christ said that he would cast out none who came to him. With such an assurance, no man need wait to try to solve the mysteries of the Holy Spirit's work. The practical duty of closing with Christ's offer of salvation is the first thing for him to do.

44. Should We Persistently Ask for Blessings?

Answer:

Who are you, to assume to judge that such a one has been forsaken by the Holy Spirit? It would be a fearful responsibility to act on such a conclusion. Of one thing you may rest assured: if the person is at all concerned about his spiritual condition, no matter how deeply he has offended, that very fact is conclusive evidence that the Holy Spirit has not abandoned him, but is still striving with him. When the Holy Spirit leaves a man, that man becomes careless and indifferent and has no desire to pray. It is difficult — almost impossible — for us to understand the operations of the Spirit, but you may be assured that the love and compassion and long-suffering of God are infinite. Christ said that he

would cast out none who came to him. With such an assurance, no man need wait to try to solve the mysteries of the Holy Spirit's work. The practical duty of closing with Christ's offer of salvation is the first thing for him to do.

45. Is It Right to Ask for Definite Blessings?

Answer:

There are many passages, such as #Joh 16:23*, which warrant definiteness in prayer. Indeed, if a man needs something very badly, and is sure that it would be a blessing to him, he would show a lack of faith if he did not pray for it. There are many, however, who shrink from praying for definite blessings, after a painful experience. They have prayed for some blessing, and God has heard them, and granted their request, and it has proved to be a curse. Emerson said, in a passage which we cannot find, but the gist of which we quote from memory, that all prayers are answered, therefore we ought to be very careful for what we pray. A celebrated divine wrote: "There are millions of Christians day by day imploring God for the salvation of the whole world, and the supplication has never been answered. Does God, then, keep his promise? Is prayer a dead failure? Does God mock the Christian Church? Are we told to bring all our gifts into the storehouse and prove him, only to find out that he breaks his promise? The answer to prayer is only a question of time. So far from there ever having been a million prayers lost, there has never been one prayer lost. God not only keeps one promise, but he keeps all the promises, and never since the moment we first breathed the Christian life, have we ever offered an unavailing prayer."

46. Why Should We Agree with Our Adversary Quickly?

Answer:

The passage is a part of the Sermon on the Mount in Matt., 5th chapter. Jesus had been speaking about quarrels between brothers, and urging reconciliation of such differences in the spirit of love, before coming to the throne of grace. Then (verse 25) he diverges to the question of lawsuits, which were common then as now, and advises his hearers to keep out of the hands of the law and to escape its penalties by settling their disputes between themselves. But he went further than this, for his language pointed to a higher tribunal, to which all must come for judgment and where condemnation awaits them which can only be escaped by their repentance and acceptance of divine mercy.

47. Will God Give Us Anything We Ask?

Answer:

In #Joh 14:14* (which should be read in connection with its surroundings), Jesus was speaking (in the discourse at table after the Supper) of the way, the truth, and the life, and of how his disciples might render acceptable service for the advancement of God's kingdom on earth. He was about to leave them and he gave them the assurance that they would be endowed with power, after his departure, to do the works that he had done. Verse #Joh 14:14* gave them the assurance of his continuous intercession and that their prayers would be heard and answered. He had already told them that they should seek first the kingdom and all things would be added unto them. This verse also shows his divine equality, in the words "I will do it." Our own prayers should be, as far as we are able to make them so, in line with God's will. There are many of us who may ask for things that would be for our own harm; but if we "seek first the kingdom," we have then the assurance that he will care for all our other needs, supply our wants, comfort our sorrows, relieve our hardships and take us safely through the difficult places of life. We have a right to ask for these, if we have acquired this right by belief on the Son of God and by acting in accordance with the divine will. See #Joh 14:12*.

48. Does God Regard Our "Little Things" in Prayer?

Answer:

Christ assumes toward all his followers the attitude of a friend. He said to his disciples: "Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends." We "work together" with him as friend with friend; our interests are identical with his and his with ours. On this basis it is perfectly rational to believe that he will give us all the help we need in the work we are trying to do for him. Christ certainly knows all about all the "little things" that come into our lives; also he will allow nothing to happen which will spoil or seriously hinder our work. Paul believed that Satan was trying to hamper him; in one place he says definitely that Satan hindered him, really prevented him from getting where he wanted to go (#1Th 2:18*). The right attitude is to ask God to further our tasks and then heroically and patiently keep at them. We must remember, too, that a certain amount of hardship and suffering is really necessary to develop the most stalwart Christian character. (See #Heb 12:1-11*; #2Ti 2:3*; #Heb 11*, etc.) The Christian must beware of praying selfishly. A brave soldier would hardly pray for fair weather, except as it would aid the battle. We may certainly pray for strength; and the joy will come as we forget self in loving and serving the Master. But we should not forget that when God in his wisdom gave us eyes to

see, a tongue to speak, a brain to think and reason to discriminate and guide us in our judgment, he meant these faculties to be of service. He gives us the fertile soil, but we must do the plowing and the planting. Faith in God does not imply that we should look to him to do for us what he has made us capable of doing for ourselves. When we do our part, then we can reach out the hand of faith and grasp his leading hand, which will carry us through in all we cannot do for ourselves.

49. Does God Hear the Prayer of the Wicked?

Answer:

We have precedent for such a belief. A striking example is that of Manasseh (#2Ch 33:18*). A greater sinner than he it would be difficult to imagine. We can understand prayers of sinners for temporal blessings being unheard; "their sacrifice" and perhaps their prayers, too, "are an abomination" (#Pr 15:8*); but when the sinner cries to God for pardon and for; help to quit his sins, he is surely heard. God does not mock the wicked man when he bids him "seek the Lord." Let the wicked forsake his way and return, for he will abundantly pardon (#Isa 55:6,7*). God heard the prayers of the people of Nineveh (#Jon 3:7-10*). The way of approach to God is by repentance and that God gives (#Ac 5:31*). When the wicked man prays for that, he gets it; then God forgives him and he is in a position to ask for and receive all other blessings.

50. Was the Prohibition against Eating Pork Ever Revoked?

Answer:

At what is known as the "first church council," described in #Ac 15*, the decision was definitely made that Gentile Christians were not to be compelled to keep the Jewish ceremonial law. The council sent a letter to the new converts setting them free from all these ceremonial requirements. This was the great burden of Paul's preaching, namely, that we are saved not by keeping the law of Moses but by faith in Christ. Circumcision was the sign of submission to the Mosaic law, and Paul, greatly to the displeasure of the Jews, taught that this was not necessary. The vision of Peter (#Ac 10:9-16*) while given for the purpose of making him willing to associate intimately with Gentiles, seems also to teach definitely that the Old Testament distinction between clean and unclean meats is no longer in force.

51. When and Why Was the Sabbath Changed to the First Day of the Week?

Answer:

There is no command recorded, and probably none was given to change, but the change was made in celebration of Christ's rising from the dead. At the first great council of the Church, when the question was discussed whether the Gentile converts should be required to obey the Jewish law, it was decided that only four observances should be required of them. (See #Ac 15*.) The observance of the Jewish Sabbath was not one of the four, and the Gentile Christians do not appear to have ever kept it. The Rabbis had made it ridiculous by a host of absurd regulations about what a man might, or might not, do on that day. Christ was frequently accused of breaking the Sabbath. The Jewish observance was most vexatious and onerous, and the Apostles very wisely did not attempt to bring the Gentiles under the bondage. The writings of the early Fathers show that very early in the Christian era, if not in Apostolic times, the first day of the week was uniformly the day of religious meeting and abstinence from secular labor, thus celebrating the new Creation as the Jewish Sabbath celebrated the old. Several incidental allusions in the Acts show that even in Apostolic times, the custom was prevalent. But we do not observe Sunday as the Sabbath. It is seldom a day of rest to the earnest Christian, but of holy activity in his Master's service.

52. Is Suicide Wrong?

Answer:

Life is a precious gift from God and should be so valued. Pain and suffering are to be regarded as discipline. There is no Scriptural authority to justify the view that we have a right to shorten or terminate our existence. Suicide is a crime under human law, and in the early Church it was condemned by repudiation and the denial of Christian burial. See Paul's advice to the Philippian jailer. (#Ac 16:28*; also #Job 14:14*.)

53. Is Being Tempted a Sin?

Answer:

The sin does not consist in the temptation itself, but in inviting it, or yielding to it. Jesus himself was tempted "in all things as we are; yet without sin." Doubtless Satan, in the passage to which you refer, knew that Jesus had been fasting and so tried to tempt him to turn stones into bread. Again, believing that the desire for worldly power might influence him, he tried to tempt him by offering him

the dominion of the whole earth, but again failed. It is not strictly correct to say that one cannot be tempted unless he has wrong desires. The tempter is always ready with his lures; but, if we rebuke our own desires and repel the temptation, asking divine strength to do this, the danger will pass. After conversion comes regeneration, and we are enabled to overcome sin. We may still be conscious of a struggle within, but we get strength to stand firm against it. The truly converted man is no longer the slave or bondman of sin, but is kept day by day from its power ever again having dominion over him.

54. What Is the Trinity; How Is It Possible; and What Proof Is There of It?

Answer:

Are questions that have bothered thousands of earnest believers. No one should feel discouraged if the doctrine of the Trinity seems difficult, because as must be remembered, the facts about God are so much bigger than the brain of man that we cannot be expected in our present human state to comprehend them. The orthodox faith is that God is Triune in person. Christians feel by experience that God is their Father, that Christ is their divine Saviour, that the Holy Spirit is their Comforter, Sanctifier and Strengthener. The Father is a person; the Son is a person; the Holy Spirit is a person; three distinct persons in one eternal undivided and indivisible essence. How this is possible is not beyond comprehension to him that has learned to believe and know that to God all is possible and all doubts may be banished by the beautiful thought that to all others there is here one more glorious mystery into the depths and wherefores of which we are to be introduced in the happy beyond. And the proof? What more convincing proof can be asked than the words of him whom no one doubts, the Son of God and of Man. He tells us "I and my Father are one," "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me." In his farewell address to his disciples he speaks of the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name. At his baptism, the Father's voice is heard from heaven and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove and lights upon him. Yes, at the very beginning of things God speaks of himself in the plural, "Let us make man after our image," while all the while "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Truly proof sufficient for all who would believe.

55. Is Trouble Sent As a Punishment?

Answer:

The Bible does not teach that all trouble comes from God as a punishment. It

recognizes the fact that trouble is in the world, and, while it has some very definite things to say about it, it does not attempt to give a complete solution of the whole problem. #Heb 12:5-11* declares that God does in some instances, discipline or "chasten," those whom he loves, but this could hardly be called punishment. (See also #De 8:5*; #Ps 94:12*; #Joh 15:2*.) Sometimes, however, calamity is a definite punishment, as in many cases during the history of Israel, and particularly in their exile. The book of Job is a beautiful explanation of a form of suffering which has the double purpose of disciplining the soul and glorifying God. Nothing can bring such credit to God as the demonstration made by a soul that trusts and praises him in the midst of misfortune. Paul and the other apostles glorified in their opportunities to suffer for Jesus' sake. They rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame in his name" (#Ac 5:41*). They felt that he had borne so much for them that they wanted to bear something for him. The Bible nowhere encourages people to dodge suffering; it exhorts them to bear it, while at the same time it exhorts them to lessen the sufferings of others, and help them bear their woes. See #Jas 1:2-5*; #1Pe 4:12-19*; #Gal 6:2*.

56. Why Does Not God Save All the Human Race?

Answer:

It is contrary to the Divine method of dealing with the human race, as we understand it, for him to use compulsion with men. Apparently, his desire is to have a people who, being left free to choose, voluntarily choose righteousness. He draws them, he yearns over them, applies discipline, offers them his help, but beyond this he will not go in this life. A man who is good only because he is compelled to be good, is of a much lower type than he who, being free to become evil, seeks of his own accord to become good. It is this higher type that, as we believe, God is trying to produce.

57. Can an Honest, Moral, Upright Life Save Any One?

Answer:

People are constantly being misled in this matter because they fail to understand what salvation really is. Salvation is personal friendship and companionship with God. It is hard to see how a man who is not a friend of God at death will become one immediately after death. Being honest and upright does not really get us acquainted with God. Paul was intensely moral before his conversion, but he found out later that he had been an enemy of God all the time. Then, too,

salvation means humility and meekness. The man who believes he can save himself puts himself out of the kingdom of heaven by that very attitude of mind. For the kingdom of heaven is made up of people with childlike hearts, who have given up their pride and self-will. Nor will the mere naming of the name of Christ and making a public confession make the necessary change. Jesus said very distinctly: "Ye must be born again." It is extremely unwise and unsafe to quarrel or argue with Jesus. He knows all about the human heart and all about the kingdom of heaven. The only thing to do is to accept his plan of salvation and let him give us the new heart, the heart that is humble and obedient, that is not self-confident but trustful, the heart that loves God and so will feel at home in God's heaven. Scripture and experience alike teach that it is possible for one to have all the outward marks of religion, yet fail of possessing the real and vital thing. Saul of Tarsus was a most zealous man, trying to do the will of God, but after his conversion he felt that his former life had been very sinful, because he had not submitted himself to the will of God and accepted Christ's righteousness as his own. John Wesley's experience was similar, and countless others of this and earlier days. It must be remembered that it is not outward conduct that makes the real Christian; it is the inner life, the humility, the glad surrender to God's will, the warm love felt for God and for the souls for whom Christ died. It is not our good works that save us, but a simple, self-forgetful trust in Jesus. This faith brings the life and love which constitute religion. A simple trust in the death of Jesus as the remedy for our sin. A simple acceptance of Christ to be our righteousness and our salvation will bring the joy and power of a new life of real sonship of God and fellowship with Christ. See #Ro 10:1-4*; #Php 3:3-9*.

58. Is It Possible for One to Be Saved without Knowing; It?

Answer:

Among the children of Christian homes or among conscientious heathen (see #Ro 2:14,15*; #Ac 10:34,35*), there may be cases in which a soul has salvation and is not definitely conscious of it. In the vast majority of cases, however, since the turning toward sin has been definite and voluntary, so the turning from sin and the receiving of forgiveness and a new nature are so definite as to be matters of plain knowledge. The New Testament clearly teaches that those who become converted may receive the witness of the Spirit, assuring them that they have been born again (see #Ro 8:16*; #1Jo 5:10*). Any one who wants to be a Christian or hopes he is a Christian may receive this assurance if he persists in trusting Christ. Our salvation depends, not upon our feeling, but upon the

unchangeable fact of the atonement and upon the plain promises of God's Word. When we definitely trust we become conscious of certain definite changes in our experience. Fear of God changes to love of God; we love God's people and his work. If we continue faithful the witness of the Spirit will be added to these signs and we shall know that we are children of God.

59. What Is Meant by Transfiguration?

Answer:

"Transfiguration" signifies a change of form or appearance. The forms of Moses and Elijah, when they appeared on the Mount, were spiritualized. #Lu 9:31* speaks of the subject of their converse. Some commentators hold that both Moses and Elijah were honored with an anticipatory resurrection, which would seem to be borne out by the fact of their presence at the transfiguration.

60. What Is Transubstantiation?

Answer:

Transubstantiation (the term applied to the change of the substance of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ at the Sacrament) is a doctrine held by some, but not all, of the Christian churches. The Church of England and a large number of Protestant bodies hold that the bread and wine are sanctified symbols. Chrysostom wrote that after divine grace had sanctified the bread, "it is no longer called bread, but dignified with the name of the body of the Lord, although the nature of bread remains in it." Theodoret declared that the bread and wine remain still in their own nature, after consecration. Augustine taught that what they saw upon the altar was bread and the cup, as their own eyes could testify; but that their faith required to be instructed that the bread is the body of Christ; and he added, "These things are therefore called sacraments, because in them one thing is seen and another is understood. That which is seen has a bodily appearance; that which is understood has a spiritual fruit." Isidore of Seville said: "These two things are visible, but being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, they become the sacrament of the Lord's body." Luther held the doctrine of the true presence of the body and blood of Christ, saying, "The bread is the body, the wine is the blood of the Lord," according to a sacramental union, but not in the manner of transubstantiation, adhering literally to the language of the Scriptures. The Catholic Church has always held the doctrine of the real, corporeal presence. With a few exceptions, the Protestants interpret the Saviour's language figuratively, and hold that Jesus intended to convey to men

the lesson that unless they voluntarily appropriated to themselves his death and sacrifice, so that they become their very life and nourishment, they can have no spiritual and eternal life at all.

61. Can a Wealthy Business Man Be a Practical Christian?

Answer:

Jesus said it was a hard thing for a rich man to enter into the kingdom; but he also showed, in the parable of the talents and other parables, that riches, properly regarded, and not held as a personal possession to be used for selfish and worldly purposes, but as a trust to be applied conscientiously, may be made a source of blessing. There are many men of large wealth who are useful members of society and who administer their means wisely and conscientiously. Besides, we are not to be the judges of the hearts of men. It has become a habit with many to condemn wealth and its possessors indiscriminately; and it is true that there is much in the present conditions of society that is open to legitimate criticism, but honest men of strict integrity can be found in every honorable line of business, and an active life is as much respected today as when #Pr 22:29* was written. A man who directs his efforts mainly to the acquisition of wealth, without regard to its responsibilities, incurs great spiritual danger. For the use we make of our talents and opportunities we shall be held strictly accountable.

62. Is Wealth an Evil or a Blessing?

Answer:

There are many passages in the Bible relative to riches and its opposite, poverty. Nowhere is poverty spoken of as a blessing, but rather as a trial and discipline; yet wealth is to be regarded either as a blessing or the reverse, according to circumstances. Riches that are gotten and not by right can never bring happiness or satisfaction, and therefore result in sorrow or disappointment (#Jer 17:11*). Christ taught his followers not to lay up for themselves "treasures on earth." He repeatedly warned them against the allurements of wealth. He declared wealth to be a great barrier to many — a hindrance to their eternal welfare. He taught his followers to set their minds on things above, and to take no thought of amassing riches or goods. Usurers, brokers, exchangers, and mere money-getters — those who set their hearts on wealth and made gold their god — he specially denounced. Yet he never spoke, even by implication, a word against the reward of honest industry, but on the contrary commended it. Voluntary poverty was assumed by the earliest disciples and fathers in the Christian

Church. There is no duty of this character specifically enjoined, and we are told to "seek first the kingdom" and all needful things will be added. "Neither riches nor poverty" is the ideal meant for a contented Christian, life. This is finely set forth in the beautiful prayer in #Pr 30:8*, Agur, the supplicant, being, as is supposed, a symbolical name for Solomon.

63. How Do I Know That I Am Saved?

Answer:

There are two kinds of "assurance," as taught by the creeds, and both of them are matters of ordinary, everyday experience by many Christians. There are certain clear statements in the Bible as to the kind of person a Christian is. He must bear certain signs and marks and do certain things. He must love God and his neighbor; he must love the Church; he must be earnest and patient and bear the various "fruits of the Spirit." Now, a person can tell whether he is doing those things, whether his soul has these marks or not. Added to this test, however, is the direct "witness of the Spirit," the Spirit himself "bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (#Ro 8:16*; #2Co 1:22*; #Eph 1:13*). This is the voice of God, assuring us that we are his. It is important to remember that we should not wait for assurance, but must persistently and with determination believe God's word. Any one who is in doubt whether he is a child of God or not should insist immediately upon beginning: to trust him. We become Christians by believing that Christ really does forgive our sins and receive us, remembering that he said: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out" (#Joh 6:37*). As we continue to trust him we shall find ourselves manifesting the fruits of the Spirit, and God will whisper to us that we are his.

64. Why Is It Wrong to Harbor Angry Feelings?

Answer:

God forbids it (#Ec 7:9*; #Mt 5:22*; #Ro 12:19*); it is a characteristic of fools and a work of the flesh (#Gal 5:20*; #Pr 12:16*; #Pr 14:29*; #Pr 27:3*; #Ec 7:9*). Anger is connected with pride, cruelty, clamorous and evil speaking, malice and blasphemy, strife and contention (#Pr 21:24*; #Ge 49:7*; #Eph 4:31*; #Col 3:8*; #Pr 21:19*; #Pr 29:22*), and brings its own punishment (#Job 5:2*; #Pr 19:19*). Scripture teaches us that grievous words stir up anger, that it may be averted by wisdom and that meekness pacifies (#Jud 12:4*; #Pr 29:8; 15:1*). We are enjoined to be slow to anger, to avoid those given to it, to

be free from it in prayer and not to provoke children to it (#Pr 15:18; 16:32*;
#Ti 1:7*; #Jas 1:19*; #1Ti 2:8*; #Eph 6:4*).

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