

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

"I CAN'T HEAR YOU!"

As a child, do you ever remember putting your fingers in your ears and saying "I can't hear you" to a playmate whose words you'd rather not hear? Stephen's murderers did this (Acts 7:57). Does God ever "put His fingers in His ears" and say "I can't hear you?" Sure He does. He's not childish, but He's not going to listen to some people. Here are eleven men who can't get God to hear their prayers.

GOD WON'T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO IS HARD OF HEARING.

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;...Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Proverbs 1:24,28). "Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law...therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 7:12-13). A man who is deaf to God's call (His Word), will find that God is deaf to his.

GOD WON'T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO IS HARD-HEARTED. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard (Proverbs 21:13).

GOD WON'T LISTEN TO A MAN WITH BLOODY HANDS. "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil" (Isaiah 1:15-16). While it is unlikely that we might have the literal blood of others on our hands, isn't it too common for a backstabber to try to petition God? Or one who is responsible, because of a bad example, for the spiritual death of a brother (cf. Matthew 18:6).

GOD WON'T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO WORSHIPS IDOLS. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and though they shall cry unto me, I will not hearken unto them...For according to the numbers of thy cities were thy gods" (Jeremiah 11:11,13; cf. 11:14). Americans are too civilized and enlightened to bow to an image of some bug or bull, but that does not mean that we have out-grown idols. We worship the gods of science, sex, and silver (cf. 1 Timothy 6:20; 1 Peter 2:11; 2 Peter 2:14; Colossians 3:5).

GOD WON'T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO WANDERS. "Thus saith the Lord unto this people, thus have they loved to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the Lord doth not accept them... When they fast, I will not hear their cry" (Jeremiah 14:10-12). The Psalmist prayed "O let me not wander from thy commandments" (Psalm 19:10). Paul condemned busybodies who learned to be idle, "wandering about from house to house...speaking things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13). Jude spoke of some who were as "wandering stars" (cf. Amos 4:8) who had reservations in the "blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 13).

GOD WON'T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO HATES THE GOOD AND LOVES THE EVIL. "And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob...Who hate the good, and love the evil...Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them" (Micah 3:1-4; cf., 1 Kings 21:20; 22:6-8; John 7:7; 2 Timothy 3:3). "Abhor that which is evil;

A NOTE FROM HEAVEN

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cleave to that which is good” (Romans 12:9b).

GOD WON’T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO WAVERS. “But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:6-8). “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22; cf., Mark 11:24). If a Christian does not believe God can, and will, answer his prayer, he might as well not pray.

GOD WON’T LISTEN TO A MAN IS SELFISH. “Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:2-3; cf., Luke 15:13,30).

GOD WON’T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO DOES NOT HONOR HIS WIFE. “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7). Can you imagine children who have been listening to their momma and daddy fussing, flaming, and fighting being called into the family room and daddy say, “Come on, kids its time for us to pray”? If one were so hardened as to try it, do you think that God would answer it?

GOD WON’T LISTEN TO A MAN WHO IS DISOBEDIENT. “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight” (1 John 3:22). “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalm 66:18; cf., Psalm 7:11).

A group of children was watching a man fill helium balloons at the fair. Occasionally, he would let one go just to hear the oohs of his audience. After watching all kinds of balloons go up, a little black boy asked, “Will a black balloon go as high as the others?” The wise man said, “Yes, son. It’s not the color on the outside, but what’s on the inside that counts.” And so it is with our prayers. It’s not the flowers of adjectives we may plant in our prayers, but the seeds of sincerity sown from a soft-tilled heart (Mark 7:6).

-Allen Webster

CHRISTIANITY IS THE SOLUTION

Problems exist and persist in this world. In fact, we are so plagued with them that they seem to have become commonplace in all areas of life. The news each day only confirms the reality we have had to face regarding our society's problems. And what is even more troubling about much of what we face is that these problems not only have physical and lifelong consequences, but many of them touch that which is spiritual and eternal. Thus we stand back, survey all that lies before us, and ask the question with trepidation and trembling—what can we do? How can we remedy and cure the issues that have plagued us since virtually the beginning of time? What hope is there for anybody amidst the trials and tribulations we regularly face? Where can we turn? The one and only answer to the problems that have dramatically shifted the world's cares is New Testament Christianity.

Yes, I know the subject is taboo. Hushed whispers quell the silence when religion is uttered in a public setting; but is that not one part of the larger problem? Voices of truth, righteousness, morality, and purity have been quieted for too long out of the desire of the masses to advance the “freedom” to live according to any preference one might have. The result has not been the oasis that some had perhaps envisioned, but has rather lead us down the road of degradation and to the depraved point at which we now reside. Perhaps after thousands of years of trying everything except religion, it is time to put aside the inner pride that many feel and embrace the only thing that has the hope of solving the disaster that has become society—New Testament Christianity. Still, though, three questions might remain that need to be answered:

Why is Christianity the solution? Christianity is the solution to the problems of the world because God designed it and established it for that very purpose. In reference to all subjects of Christianity, Peter wrote that we are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). Christianity was produced as a means of changing the countenance of the world from that of darkness to light, or from sin to righteousness. And it is the case that anywhere it has gone and anybody among whom it has been established, Christianity has drastically changed the landscape of that society. A great many of the first century Jews gathered on Pentecost in Acts 2 had been blood thirsty, vengeful, and hateful people. But when they heard, accepted, and obeyed the gospel of Christ and became Christians, that changed (Acts 2:41-47). Some would point to instances in history and locations where “Christianity” went and things got no better but actually worsened. There are false forms of Christianity that will do that. But when New Testament Christianity in its purity is accepted, it will solve many of man's problems.

How is Christianity the solution? Such a charge as that made in our title is one that must be proven and not merely accepted at word. However, I believe when the New Testament is examined in light of many of the world's problems then the answers are found. Poverty and homelessness is an issue with which most nations of the world must deal. How can Christianity solve it? One way is through the Christian principle of work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Another is through true Christian benevolence (Galatians 6:10). Corruption plagues virtually every land under heaven. What solution does Christianity offer? Christ originated the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12) that would drastically change how men would treat one another if only accepted. What about immorality in all its various forms? Man but needs to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). Most problems we face in life on a personal or mass level, Christianity and its principles can solve if only we will realize it and submit.

When is Christianity the solution? Many might say, “But Christianity has been around for centuries and the problems persist.” However, what they fail to realize is that Christianity only works when it is practiced. Christianity is much more than an inner belief, but it is an inner belief that must produce active fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23; James 2:14-26). Critics and skeptics are never willing to give an honest try to our claims, they merely want to question and attack. But our guarantee is that if only the world would accept true New Testament Christianity and seek to apply its principles to their life on a daily basis, that would be the day that the problems of the world in all their many forms would be solved and life would drastically improve for all.

The wisdom of God is so great. Man may question it and reject it, but “the foolishness of God is wiser than men” (1 Corinthians 1:25). Is it not time to accept the evidence and submit to that wisdom, and allow Christianity to be the solution?