

Prayer Transformation Ministries Email Newsletter – Teaching for 5/21/08

Living By the Plumb Line

We live in a culture where absolute standards are hardly known, at least in a moral sense. *If it feels good, do it* seems to be the accepted standard designed to accommodate personal pleasure and gain. Moral standards are defined by personal preference rather than even a remote connection to biblical standards.

This lack of moral and true biblical standards also filters into the thinking of Christians. We may believe repentance is important and biblical standards should be heeded, but we quickly lower that standard by comparing ourselves to others. If we look around at others (even within the church), we can easily determine that we are really not so bad in comparison.

If your standard of morality is your neighbor who is imperfect anyway, then repentance becomes less critical. Quickly this deceptive question overtakes our hearts: *What do I have to repent of given the standard set by others around me?*

There Is a Standard

There is a clear answer to this question if we understand that a plumb line has been set by the Most Holy One the Lord God Almighty! *He sets the standards*, not our neighbor or society. The plumb line of God does not leave the need for repentance in question.

A plumb line is a cord from which a metal weight is suspended, pointing directly to the earth's center of gravity. It is used to determine the vertical from a given point. It gives builders a standard that assures them that the building will be built correctly because it is aligned with the perfect vertical standard. If you fail to use that perfect vertical standard, you can be assured that your building will be crooked!

The Scriptures give us a plumb line by which to build our lives. That standard is the holiness and the character of God.

The Holiness of God

In Ezekiel 36, the Lord speaks a harsh word to Israel: *Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes" (vs. 22-23; NKJV).*

God tells them that the standard for His actions is his Holy name. God Himself sets His holiness as the standard for His own actions. Even before the nations, it was important for God to demonstrate that He was the holy One. The end of verse 23 is translated in the New International Version: *When I show myself holy through you before their eyes.*

In 2 Chronicles 20:21, when confronted with the enemies of Israel, King Jehoshaphat sent out singers so that they could *praise the beauty of holiness*. In his book *The Attributes of God*, Arthur W. Pink writes: This perfection as none other, is solemnly celebrated before the Throne of Heaven... (pg. 41). Quoting from Stephen Charnock, Pink writes: "Power is God's hand or arm, omniscience His eye, mercy His bowels,

eternity His duration, but holiness is His beauty...This is the greatest title of honor; in this latter doth the majesty and venerableness of His name appear” (pg. 41).

The Lord sets the standard for our lives based upon His own holiness. In Leviticus 11:44-45 God states: *For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy* (NKJV).

Peter then applies that truth as he instructs us as believers in Christ in our lifestyles in 1 Peter 1:16: *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy* (NKJV).

The holiness of God is the plumb line for our lives.

The Character of God

The character of God is also a plumb line for our lifestyles as believers. *Who God is* must be the measure of how we live our lives and how we pray. Throughout Scripture the character of God is seen as the standard and the background of Old and New Testament saints. David comes to God in brokenness and confession on the basis of the character of God: *Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies...* (Psalm 51:1, NKJV). David came to God based upon His love and mercy.

Job, after seeking to justify himself and seek an audience with God to plead his case, falls before God when confronted with God’s character and attributes (Job 42:1-6). Knowing who God is must be the plumb line for our actions and our prayers. Knowing who He is, what He loves and hates, and how He will react in the situations of life are the plumb line of our daily walk. God in His grace and love gave us His Son, God in the flesh, so that we can see what that looks like. Jesus’ invitation to follow Him is really an invitation to become like Him. How can we do that if we do not know His character? He is our plumb line.

So before we opt out of this call to repentance and brokenness because we are comparing ourselves to others, let’s take a close look at the true standard. How do we measure up to the plumb line of God’s holiness and His character? Are we tilted a little bit in some area of our lives? Is an attitude that we harbor in line with His holiness and character? Am I living my life to be like Jesus?

Daily we must ask ourselves those questions. Where we do not come into alignment with the plumb line, we must repent. In doing so, we will experience David’s same encounter with God—that God is loving and merciful to restore us.

Loving Lord, thank You for Your love for us that You would invite us to become like You. We confess the ways we have strayed away from the standard of Your holiness and character. We ask that You teach us to walk in alignment with the greatness of who You are in the power of Your Holy Spirit. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our example and our life. Amen.

The Attributes of God, Arthur W. Pink, Baker Book House Company, 1975.