

Introducing the subject

Necessary attitudes

There is one purpose in life: ‘to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever’.¹ The aim of this book, therefore, is to encourage us to please God by submitting our wills to his.

The Son of God says, ‘If you love me, keep my commandments.’² If Jesus is to be our Saviour, he must also be our Master. This involves actions as well as words: ‘Why do you call me “Lord, Lord”, and not do the things which I say?’³ It is impossible to love God while continuing to ignore his instructions: ‘He who says, “I know him,” and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in him. He who says he abides in him ought himself to walk just as he walked.’⁴

There are four things that are necessary if this book is to help us:

1. We have to want to please God

If you are interested *primarily* in having a happy life, having fun, justifying your behaviour or even being a good person, then this isn’t for you. You really need to go and read the Gospels, to repent of your sins and to entrust your life to Jesus Christ. Then, it would be good to go and find a true Christian and explain to him or her what you have just done. Pray together with that person. Then perhaps come back and read this book! First things first—and the first thing for each of us

is to get right with God. ‘Without faith it is impossible to please [God].’⁵

2. We have to believe that the Bible is God’s perfect and sufficient Word

This means that we must understand that the Bible is a book that stands *over* us. We do not stand in judgement on the Bible, but as Jesus says, ‘He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.’⁶ If we have a pick ’n’ mix attitude to the Bible, accepting the bits we like and passing over the bits we don’t like, we reject God’s Holy Spirit who took the time to inspire ‘all Scripture [which] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction [and] for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.’⁷ Notice the words ‘all’, ‘thoroughly’ and ‘every’. The Bible is *sufficient*. We don’t need any additional teaching to the Bible, we just need to discover what is written there and apply it to our lives with the help of God’s Spirit. What I write here I seek to draw from the Bible. I ask you to ‘test everything’ I say,⁸ not by your own emotions or experiences, but by the Bible. Please have a Bible with you at all times while reading this, so you can check that I am not making it up out of my own imagination! If I say something truly biblical, please do it. God will surely bless you. If I say something unbiblical, please let me know by contacting the publisher. Then I can change it in conformity to God’s Word. Thank you in advance!

3. We have to believe that God has our best interests at heart

One of my favourite verses is Psalm 84:11 which says, ‘For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly.’ Do you believe this? Can you grasp that God cares more about your well-being and

Chapter 1

eternal happiness than you do? Does it not make perfect sense, then, to obey God in every particular and let him give us what he thinks is best for us? How can we possibly know what is best for us? How can God not know? Do you want more evidence that God wants the best for us? Look at Jesus. ‘Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.’⁹ ‘He who did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all—how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?’¹⁰ God himself was prepared to humble himself and come to this earth as a poor baby, and be crucified by those whom he created, to die for *us* and our sins. Don’t you think God must care enough about *you* to give you everything else you need? If he gave you the best possible thing he could ever give—his Son’s life—don’t you think he will give you every other good thing as well? Jesus promises, ‘I have come that [you] may have life, and ... have it more abundantly.’¹¹

4. We have to pray

I hope and pray that these words will be God’s words, as well as mine. I ask you with all sincerity to put this book down before you read any further and pray to God. I confess that I often neglect to do this when I take up my Bible, and then I find it really heavy-going or impenetrable. This is unwise! I need God’s Spirit to open up my mind and heart to receive the good news in his Word. Even David needed this: ‘Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from your law.’¹² So stop right now and pray. With an undivided and sincere heart, ask God to show you the truth, and he will: ‘When he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth.’¹³

STOP AND PRAY!

Why this is so important

Thank you for getting your Bible, praying and reading on. I’d like to fill