

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Behold, I Thought”

By Wayne S. Walker

In 2 Kings Chapter 5, the Syrian general Naaman, a leper, was sent to the prophet Elisha of Israel for healing. The command of Elisha to the diseased Syrian general, as given through his messenger, was to **“go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean”** (vs. 10).

“But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage” (vss. 11-12).

Naaman thought that Elisha himself should come out. He thought that the man of God would put on a big show and use a lot of hocus-pocus. He thought that washing in the Jordan to cleanse leprosy was a ridiculous act. He thought that the rivers of Syria were better than those of Israel. He may even have thought that seven times were a few too many. His main problem is that **HE thought!**

Let’s make some applications. What must one do to be saved or have forgiveness of sins? “He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk. 16:16). **“Repent and be baptized, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”** (Acts 2:38, NIV). But someone says, “I thought that faith alone saves a person.” Yes, we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). But what about **“faith only”**? Listen to James 2:24, **“Ye see then that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”** Faith must work through love (Gal. 5:6).

“But,” someone else replies, “I thought that a sinner is saved by repentance and prayer. My preacher told me to go down to the altar (or mourner’s bench) and pray for salvation till I prayed through.” Is that how Saul of Tarsus was saved? The Lord told him on the road to Damascus, **“Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do”** (Acts 9:6). For three days he fasted and prayed (vss. 9-11). But he had still not been told what he must do. Then Jesus sent Ananias to tell him what to do. **“Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord”** (Acts 22:16). And he did it (Acts 9:18). This he had to do to wash away his sins even after three days of repentance and prayer. And what He did to be saved is a pattern for us (1 Tim. 1:15-16).

Again one responds, “I thought that salvation came by confessing the Lord and accepting Him as my personal Savior.” Yes, we must confess Jesus (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10). But note what Jesus Himself said in Matthew 7:21, **“Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”** How do we show our love for Christ and accept Him as Savior? By profession only? No. **“If you love me, keep my commandments”** (Jn. 14:15).

Another answers, “But I thought that the Holy Spirit comes into the sinner’s heart and saves him.” Certainly the Spirit has a role in salvation (Jn. 16:7-13). But did He save Cornelius directly and miraculously? In Acts 10 we learn that Cornelius was to send for Peter who would tell Him words by which he would be saved (vss. 1-6, 30-33; cf. 11:13-14). Peter came and began to preach to this Gentile and his family about Christ (vss. 34-43). Then the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard. But is this what saved them? Peter evidently didn’t think so, because he said, **“Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord...”** (vss. 47-48). These were the words by which Cornelius and his house were saved.

Naaman finally listened to his servants, decided to surrender his stubborn will, *and “went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child; and he was clean.”* When Naaman did exactly as he was told, his leprosy left him and he was cleansed. The water itself did not cleanse him, nor did he earn his cleansing by dipping, but he had to obey God’s will to be clean. When a person today has completely obeyed from the heart the word of God, the result is that he or she will be made free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18).

What Naaman *thought* did not matter with God; nor is He interested in what you and I think. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’”* (Isa. 55:8-9). – *Search for Truth*, April 16, 2017.

Legal but Not Moral

By Joe R. Price

Morality did not originate with humans, nor is morality determined by our laws. If everything legal is necessarily moral, then man defines morality rather than God. Maybe that is why we hear people reply, when challenged about some immorality, “There’s not a problem, after all, it’s legal!” They think man is the measure of all things.

It is nothing new for people to decide for themselves what is right and wrong instead of accepting God's standard of right and wrong. When there is no fear of God in the heart, people do what is right in their own eyes, often legalizing their sin to remove its sting (Judges 21:25).

Ending a marriage for causes other than fornication is legal, but still immoral. Jesus said the man who puts away his wife *“for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery”* (Matt. 5:32). Moral responsibility and accountability is placed on the person who ends a marriage for reasons other than the cause of fornication (see Matt. 19:6). Just because man’s court says such is legal does not make it moral.

Ditto, same-sex marriage. The Supreme Court has made its pronouncements that same-sex marriage is legal in America, but that does not change its immorality one iota. Homosexuality is fornication, even though it is legal. Marriage between two people of the same gender continues to defile the marriage bed of honor – the laws of men notwithstanding (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Consuming alcohol is legal, but still immoral. While the laws of men measure the legality of drinking alcohol in a number of ways (by age, public intoxication, DUI, etc.), the Scriptures do not. Whether a little or a lot, the consumption of alcohol is described as sin by the word of God (1 Pet. 4:3; Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; Gal. 5:21).

Public nudity is legal in some places, but still immoral. In Times Square naked women (called desnudas, Spanish for naked), covered with body paint, panhandle for tips from photo-taking tourists. It is evidently a thorny legal issue in NYC: “Civil rights lawyers argue the women are bare-breasted panhandlers, and so they are protected, first by two state high-court rulings that made it legal to go topless and to panhandle, and then by the free-speech clauses in the state and federal constitutions” (*Topless in Times Square: A Legal View*, NY Times, James C. McKinley, Jr., Aug. 20, 2015). “It’s their argument that they are artists, or street entertainers, and not just someone hanging around half-naked,” said Larry Bryne, the deputy police commissioner for legal matters. “As long as they are performers exercising their First Amendment rights in a lawful way, it’s not a criminal law-enforcement issue that we can address” (Ibid). Calling sin one’s “right” and “art” does not purify its moral filth (Eph. 5:11-12).

Sinners will always legalize and defend sin. Let us remain vigilant, lest we join the world in such worldly wisdom. Christians must abstain from immorality in all its forms (1 Thess. 5:21-22). – *The Spirit’s Sword*, August 30, 2015. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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