

Confession And Consistency

Joe Slater

By confessing Jesus as Lord, we obligate ourselves to obey Him. “Lord” isn’t just a respectful title. It refers to a master, one who has the right to decide and control.

Jesus asked this piercing question: “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). Calling Jesus ‘Lord’ acknowledges that He has the right to decide what we ought to do and to control our behavior. He has done so through His inspired word, the Bible. Do we recognize our own inconsistency when we call Him Lord, yet neglect to do what the Scriptures teach?

An old cliché says, “Talk is cheap.” Truly, we can pay lip service to nearly anything. “You shouldn’t litter!” (Then I throw trash out of my car window.) “I love my family!” (Then I speak harshly, sarcastically, and rudely to them.)

Confessing Christ as Lord certainly is a good thing! In fact, it’s essential to salvation (Romans 10:9-10). But Jesus demands more than mere lip service. “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). Moreover, we don’t get to pick and choose what parts of His will to obey. Those converted to Christ are to “*obey all things that I have commanded you*” (28:20).

A servant who refuses to obey his master shouldn’t expect that master to be pleased with him. Do you expect Jesus to be pleased with you?

Change Your Thoughts; Change Your Feelings; Change Your Life

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything, worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Phil 4:8).

The grand epistle to the church at Philippi is a book about attitudes. Paul believed if one changed his attitude, he would change his behavior. Paul could have been deeply disturbed, being in prison, and learning that some preachers were trying to discredit him. Paul’s attitude was simple: regardless of their attitude towards him, if they preached the true gospel, he was thankful (chapter 1).

In chapter two Paul condemns self-centeredness. Self-centeredness is a sign of pride and arrogance. Self-centered people set the bar higher for others than for themselves. They loathe people who fail to live up to the standards they have set for them.

Paul offered a cure for such sins by pointing us to the “mind” or “attitude” of Christ who did not think of Himself, but emptied Himself of His divine prerogatives, and took on the likeness of sinful flesh, and then humbled Himself to die on a cruel cross (Phil. 2:8-9). Others who humbled themselves by thinking of others first were Timothy, and Epaphroditus (chapter 2).

Paul pointed out that two wonderful sisters at Philippi were at odds although they both were helpful in his work (chapter 4). Paul sought help from a brother there to serve as a liaison. He believed that these two ladies would be able, through reading his letter, and with the help of others, change the way they felt about each other by considering others first and by putting their differences behind them for benefit of the cause of Christ.

Paul shows us that we can change the way we think, and thereby change the way we feel about life in general, and about people in particular. Instead of knee jerk

responses to people who insult us, or who may disagree with us, or who don’t like us, we should change the way we think about people. “*Think of these things*” says Paul! Instead of changing others, we will be changed ourselves. As someone said, “A more beautiful world begins with me.”

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)

LOVING CHEEK

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also’” (Matthew 5:38)

Casual discussions of turning the other cheek hardly do justice to these important and challenging words of Jesus. Such discussions also tend to get it wrong. So, let’s spend a few moments together this morning listening afresh to Jesus.

First, “eye for eye,” or the law of retaliation, was not only an Israelite law but one throughout the ancient world, where a slap on the face could quickly escalate to a deadly blood-feud. This law, however, limited retribution to no more than the victim’s loss.

Jesus, however, seems far more concerned about the hearts of His disciples than governing laws. He is not giving a lecture on pacifism or non-violent civil disobedience, but upon how His disciples, you, and I, respond to the evil persons we may encounter.

Jesus speaks of the slap on the right cheek. In this example a right-handed person gives the back of his hand to you as an insult. Slapping with the back of the hand was considered twice as offensive as the palm of the hand. So, this is not a call to not defend yourself or your family against a serious assault, but a call to respond in love to an insult given in hate.

Is Jesus telling us to do nothing when confronted in this way. NO! Let me repeat, NO! Turning the other cheek is a positive response of love, appealing to the evildoer, to reconsider. The offer of the left cheek demonstrates that we will not compete in an angry exchange. We will not view relationships as win/lose competitions. We will not take the bait, either in person or on Facebook.

Disciples of Jesus seek, in returning love for hate, to give an opportunity for our “enemy” to repent and become our friend. They may not, but we have followed Jesus.

--Tim Kelley (Littleton, CO)