

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSE



Tutor's Name: _____

Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

Ref No.: _____

LESSON 21 • Some Practical Problems

WEEKLY READINGS
READING FOR STUDY PAPER

Exodus 37-40, Revelation 20
Romans 12 and 13

Jesus said to His followers, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14, verse 15). You will remember how God, through Moses, gave the Jews a law which we call the "Law of Moses".

In the Law of Moses there were rules to tell the people what they must do, and what they must not do; and these laws were to guide them in every way in their daily life.

This law could not bring life to the people because, as you will remember, they were unable to keep it. So God gave them a "better way". He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to show us how to live.

Jesus did not give His followers a complete list of rules, to tell them what they must do in every circumstances of life.

He told them the most important thing which was to love God, and to show love to each other.

But both Jesus and the apostles gave some definite "do's" and "don'ts", which we must understand and obey.

We must obey our rulers

In Romans 13, we read, in verse 1, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers."

Whoever our ruler may be, he holds that position because God allows him to do so. (I Peter 2, verses 13-15). This is true, too, of the people who are over us at work.

So we must obey those who have authority over us, even when they are unkind and unreasonable. So Peter tells us, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." (I Peter 2, verse 18).

The only time this does not apply is when a ruler tells us to disobey God. Once, when the Jews forbade Peter and John to teach about Jesus and His resurrection, they answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (Acts 4, verses 19-20).

Jesus Himself prayed for those who put Him to death. If we remember His example, we shall find it easier to return good for evil. We must leave to God the task of punishing the wicked. So the apostle Paul says, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay', saith the Lord" (Romans 12, verse 19).

The disciple does not fight

We must obey our rulers in all things - except when their rules conflict with the law of God.

For example, in most countries in these days there are laws commanding all young men to serve for a period in the Army, Navy, or Air Force. But God has said that His children must not fight. Jesus said, "...all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matthew 26, verse 52).

He taught His followers to pray for their enemies, and so show them love, no matter what the provocation: "But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." (Matthew 5, verse 39).

So, although it may mean trouble, and even imprisonment, the Christian must always refuse to fight or to join the armed forces.

This is not because wars are always wrong; when God orders men to fight, then it is right to do so. But His commandment for us in this age is, that we "resist not evil"; knowing that the day will come, when God Himself will execute judgment on the wicked.

Voting

Like the children of God in all ages, the Christians of these days are, "...strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11, verse 13). They are waiting for God's Kingdom to come; praying that they may have a place in that Kingdom.

They know that present-day governments will all pass away when that Kingdom comes. They take no part in the politics of this world. They do not vote, because their views of life are such that no politician could act as their "representative".

"For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

(Philippians 3, verse 20).

Marriage - a partnership in Christ

There are two classes of people in the world - those "in Adam", and those "in Christ". The difference between these two classes is immense. Those in Adam are selfish and worldly; those in Christ are the servants of God.

Naturally, those in Christ will feel a great sense of unity, and will help each other to serve God faithfully. They will not mix with the people of the world, because their interests are so different.

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSE

Above all, they will show their separation from the world in their attitude to marriage. They will choose their marriage partners from the family of God, and not from the world. The apostle Paul emphasises the importance of this separation in II Corinthians 6, verses 14-16, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God; as God hath said, I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

We can never be truly happy if we break God's laws; and experience has shown that it is a tragic mistake to marry an unbeliever.

God hates "putting away"

Marriage is a union for life. When God created Eve as a "help" for Adam, the principle was laid down: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2, verse 24). The Lord Jesus confirmed that marriage is for a lifetime by saying: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." (Matthew 19, verse 6).

So the Lord Jesus forbids divorce. Even if a marriage is not going smoothly for the moment, a Christian must show patience and love. In Malachi 16, we read that: "...the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away." Remember, we can never be truly happy if we break God's laws.

But

We have talked about the importance of marrying only a believer. But it sometimes happens that a man or woman who becomes a disciple is already married. In this case, the believing partner is not called upon to leave the other. Of course, it would be difficult to stop the unbeliever from leaving, if he or she were intent on doing so. But the believer is expected to fulfil his or her part faithfully in trying to "make the marriage a success".

Many people have been won to Christ by the faithful example of their believing partners - just as Paul suggested they might be in I Corinthians 7, verse 16:

"For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"

A word about polygamy

In some countries a man is permitted to have two (or more) wives at the same time. Like marriage to an unbeliever, and like divorce, this is a great mistake. It creates unhappiness, and tends to encourage unfaithfulness; and it sets aside the great Christian ideal on one husband and one wife, united in love: "Therefore shall a man...cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." (Genesis 2, verse 24).

All one in Christ

The believers are all joined together as one body, with Christ as their Head. It is their duty to see that the truth revealed in the Bible is kept pure; and that none adds to it, or takes from it. It is their duty, too, to strive to keep the commandments of Christ.

If one of the members deliberately breaks these commandments, then the others must do all they can to help him to see his mistake, and return to the right way. If he still persists in acting wrongly, then his fellow-disciples have no choice but to separate themselves from him.

Fellowship in Christ

The disciples of Christ are scattered all over the world, but they serve the same Master, and share the same hope.

They are joined together in the bonds of love and fellowship - joined together in the work of preaching the gospel.

So Paul commands us, "Do all thing without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." (Philippians 2, verses 14-16).

Summary

1. We must obey our rulers, except when they tell us to disobey God.
2. We must not take an active part in politics or (worse still) in war.
3. A man must have only one wife, and stay with her for life.
4. It is a tragic mistake to marry an unbeliever.