



ISSUE

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Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

10:00 AM

11:00 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ryan Ferguson

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McNear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Kevin Wise

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

Reflecting the Nature of God

By Jim Deason

God's purpose for man is stated simply and concisely: **"You shall be holy, for I am holy"** (1 Pet. 1:16). This holiness—a behavior—is defined by God, personified in Jesus Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit, and recorded on the pages of the Bible. Every instruction given in the pages of the New Testament is designed to lead us to partake of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4), to help us **"become conformed to the image of His Son"** (Rom. 8:29).

It troubles me to hear some of late proclaim that Christianity is not about keeping rules. I beg to differ. Christianity is all about keeping His rules (John 14:15; Heb. 5:9), for it is in obedience to the precepts of the New Testament that we are made more and more into His image. Allow me to illustrate.

Like a city set upon a hill which cannot be hidden, those who are led by the Spirit of God are going to show it by producing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) in their lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This is by no means an exhaustive list of characteristics reflecting the nature of God, but it is a very good place to begin.

Love

Twice in 1 John 4 (vv. 8,15) the Bible tells us that **"God is love."** Why? Because love is from God (v. 7). His nature defines love. He is love's perfect illustration. What Jesus did on Calvary proves it:

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8, NASB). Jesus said, **“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13), and He did. This is unparalleled love and anyone who is led by the Spirit of God and who wants to reflect the nature of God must, therefore, be a person of love. **“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another”** (John 13:34).

Joy

I’ve never understood why someone claiming to be a Christian would walk about with such a sour disposition that he looked

like he was weaned on pickle juice. God intends that we be a people of joy. Paul said, **“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing”** (Rom. 15:13). Later, he instructed the Philippians to **“Rejoice in the Lord always”** (Phil. 4:8). Why such joy? Because joy is a part of God’s nature. Picture this: **“as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you”** (Isa. 62:5). The moment my wife said “I do” was exhilarating, one of the happiest moments of my life. In the same way, God finds great joy in those who serve Him and wants you to experience the same joy.

Peace

Peace is a state of tranquility, the absence of mental stress or anxiety. At least five times in Scripture God is referred to as the **“God of peace”** (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). Jesus is our source of peace (Eph. 2:14,17) and called the **“Prince of Peace”** (Isa. 9:6). Is it any wonder, then, why we are told that **“the one who desires life, to love and see good days. . . must seek peace and pursue it”** (1 Pet. 3:10-11). I understand there are times when we must go to war, spiritually speaking (2 Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:10-17). But the person who is disposed to choose war over peace does not yet possess the spirit of Christ.

Patience

Studying the Old Testament teaches us a lot about the nature and character of God, particularly His patience. Thirteen times the Lord is said to be **“slow to anger”** (cf. Num. 14:18) and that phrase is usually surrounded by other traits of God such as lov-



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ingkindness, forgiveness, mercy, and graciousness. One should never take lightly **“the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience”** (Rom 2:4). Quite literally, it is our salvation (2 Pet. 3:15). So, if you want God to be patient with you, reflect His nature and be patient with others (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Kindness

Kindness is the quality of being helpful, having a benevolent nature. God asks us nothing more than what He is Himself: **“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy”** (Titus 3:4-5). We are not surprised therefore, since God wants us to be like Him, that we are told to **“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you”** (Eph. 4:32).

Goodness

Goodness is a lot like kindness. Our English word *good* carries with it the idea of being virtuous or right. The Greek word seems to emphasize a special interest in the welfare of others. Paul commanded, **“you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth)”** (Eph. 5:8–9). God wants you to be good because He is good. I understand the sentiment of the psalmist when he wrote, **“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living”** (Psa. 27:13).

Faithfulness

You know the type. They are people that you trust. You can reveal your inner secrets to them because you know they will keep your confidence and you believe in the wisdom of their counsel. They never fail you. They’ve proven time and again that they will keep their word

and fulfill their obligations. They are *faithful*. Such also is the nature of God. Jeremiah proclaimed to God, **“Great is your faithfulness”** (Lam. 3:23). God promised, **“I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you”** (Heb. 13:5; cf. Deut. 31:6,8), and He hasn’t. To God, the psalmist proclaimed, **“Your faithfulness continues throughout all generations”** (Psa. 119:90). So, when you are faithful to your commitments, dependable and trustworthy in the hand of God, you’re demonstrating a characteristic of God—and that is no small thing!

Gentleness

Sometimes translated *mekeness* (KJV, ASV), this word describes a man who is not overly impressed by a sense of his own self-importance. He is strong, but that strength is not always on display. He is humble, courteous, and considerate. He is gentle, mild, and even-tempered. Moses was like this (Num. 12:3). So also was Jesus. He entreated, **“Come to Me. . . Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart”** (Matt. 11:28-29). If you want to be like Christ, and if



you are not already, you've got to learn to be a gentle, humble person.

Self-Control

Self-Control is the ability to restrain one's emotions, words, and actions by one's will. Aristotle said that it was "the ability to restrain desire by reason." It is the very opposite of acting without thinking. The self-controlled individual will think through something and let sound reason keep him from saying or doing something he might not otherwise say or do. When Aaron made the golden calf, God was angry and wanted

to destroy Israel and start all over with Moses (Exod. 32). Moses interceded for the people and **"the Lord changed His mind"** (Exod. 32:14). Some folks don't do that—restrain their anger. If something doesn't go their way there is fire in their eyes, venom on their lips, and revenge in their actions. For that reason, we are told, **"Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man"** (Prov. 22:24)

because **"an angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression"** (Prov. 29:22). The matter of temper is not the only area where self-control is needed but it serves to illustrate the point. Anyone who wants to be Christlike simply must possess the ability to control his heart and actions.

Conclusion

In the New Testament God reveals to us a standard of behavior, a code of conduct, by which He wants us to live. He expects you and me to **"be holy. . . in all your behavior"** (1 Pet. 1:15). But He also reveals Himself and His nature which tells us a lot about why He wants us to follow His instructions. In obeying Him, we become like Him! Christians, then, are to take on His nature and grow to be more and more like God Himself. Remember what He said: **"Be holy, for I am holy"** (1 Pet. 1:16).

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