

## Keeping Christian Standards in a Godless world.

Society's standards are constantly being eroded. So much so that it becomes harder to know what *God's* standard is, and even harder to keep it!

But God *does* make it clear in His Word the standard that He expects of His children. Not a standard to be aimed at as "Best" and then to make do with "Second Best", but a standard He expects us to KEEP!\* Around us man's standards are falling in all areas: honesty, Sex, Caring for others, etc.

### What Is God's Standard?

In Honesty, God expects of us *total* honesty. Matthew 5 v 37 tells us to say just 'YES' or 'NO' and to mean what we say. We should *never* agree to do anything and then fail to do it. What we say should be crystal clear truth, not muddy half truths. We should be like lights - visible to all; not covering up our deeds or words or ways. This won't be easy - Jesus was killed because His Truth exposed those around Him.

Ephesians 5 v 8 onwards tells us that now we are the Lord's we are **IN THE LIGHT**. So you must live like people who belong to the Light, for it is the light which brings..... goodness, righteousness and truth (GNB).

It goes on to talk about our attitude to other standards of the world:

*Try to learn what pleases the Lord. Have NOTHING to do with the worthless things that people do, things that belong to the darkness*  
[v 10,11]

There is much in this chapter about God's attitude to sexual immorality, verses 3 to 5 particularly. Other passages on this subject underline the point that God does not want His people 'messing around' with sex. This is for *their own good* as casual, unmarried sex leads to a devaluation in the life of all concerned.

1 Corinthians 6 v 13 onwards tells us that the body was not created for food or sex, but for the Lord. Our bodies are given to Christ if we are Christians. They are Temples of the Holy Spirit. If we prostitute them (and that means giving them over to anything not of God, eg gluttony or sex outside marriage) then we are corrupting Christ's Body. The Church is Christ's Body on earth, and we are part of it. If we are corrupt then we are making the whole Church corrupt. Paul is particularly strong about telling us to avoid sexual immorality.

Galatians 5 v 16 - 26 shows us the desires of the flesh are opposed to what the Holy Spirit wants. Many types of flesh-inspired actions are mentioned here - particularly immoral actions and orgies (an orgy is a party where people have sex with others).

So God's Word is against all this. But that does not stop the temptation that comes from friends, society and culture. It is not easy to be different, but the following may help:

\*but don't get religious! There is forgiveness and grace. It is about our heart attitude - our intentions - what we are aiming at. We aim to live by God's Book, even though we will often fall short of it.

## What we believe

Firstly we need to be clear about what we believe as Christians; and as individuals. Honest answers to questions such as these will help you to see where you stand:

- a) Do I believe the Bible to be the Word of God?
- b) If so, do I believe it to be totally correct?
- c) Am I prepared to let it have authority in my life?
- d) Does it matter if I disobey it?

Once you have prayed through those questions you will be clearer about which side of the Flesh/Spirit fence you are on. If you discover that you are on the Flesh side, but want to be with the Spirit, then you need to pray that God will change your mind:

The Bible commands us to "not conform" ourselves to the standards of this world. If we find that difficult it tells us how we can do it: by letting "God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind" (see Romans 12 v 1,2)

So, if you are tempted to lie, cheat, steal, "sleep round", then ask God to change your mind! Speaking personally, on a number of issues I have had to come before God and say that my mind wanted to do things that I knew were against His will. I couldn't pray for Him to take away the desires, because in honesty I wanted them! (After all, it wouldn't be temptation if I didn't). So I prayed that He would change my mind - - and He has done every time so that my will becomes His will and I no longer wanted the wrong things (infact I usually end up hating the thought of them!)

## Avoid Temptation

Secondly we need to avoid temptation whenever possible. (It isn't always!) If you know that staying out late will make you lie to your parents about buses not coming, DON'T STAY OUT LATE! If you know that going to a certain party will make it difficult to avoid getting drunk, taking drugs, playing with sex, DON'T GO!

By this stage you should have chosen what you want. To follow God, and accept the Bible's authority in your life, or to please the flesh. If you haven't yet decided then your life is going to be one long miserable battle between the two. If you have decided for God then you will find it easier to avoid sin because you want to please God. Once you know that He is Who you want to please, then temptation is reduced.

You might be laughed at. You might lose friends, but read Romans 8 v 18:

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" !

And also 1 Corinthians 10 v 13:

"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it"

### Others to Help

Thirdly, remember you are not alone! Everyone else has similar difficulties. The battle between the Spirit of God and the World's way is raging in each of us. We need to put to death with Christ all of the flesh. All of Romans 8 is worth reading for this!

If a problem will not go away, ask someone you trust to help. Remember, the chances are they are tempted in the same way! Pray that God will guide you to someone who will understand. We always think that our sins are so terrible we dare not tell anyone, but that's the Devil's lie: the truth is we're all just as disgusting as each other!

And remember Noah. All around him the world's standards had collapsed. Evil abounded, people were in regular communion with demons. He was the only one left who followed God. He was laughed at, too. They called him names, but he stuck to God. Vandals probably tried to ruin hours of the work he did to the Ark. People probably jeered as he built, tempted him with all sorts of distractions. But he had chosen God. The world - and all who followed the flesh - perished. The man who chose God's way survived.

### Looking at Britain

Britain today needs Godly people. We have turned from a nation of prayer and the Bible to a land filled with materialism, idols and false religion. Throughout our history God has moved in this land; not because Britain is a special nation but because it was full of God's people. Many believe we have been saved time and again by miracles from conquest; most recently in the last World War. King George called several days of National Prayer, following which we had remarkable victories or were delivered from seeming destruction.

Yet that is not the Britain of today. Even many Christians today do not believe in prayer. In one Ealing Church recently, at a general meeting to discuss the repairs needed to the building and the amount of money that would be required someone said "Let's pray about it". The reply from one of the leaders was "Don't be silly, what good would that do?". As a nation we have slipped from God. No longer does the Government or Parliament uphold God's way as it should be compelled to do by constitution (The Sovereign promises to uphold God's laws at the coronation, and this legally binds the Government).

God wants young men and women who will honour Him, who will be visibly seen to be different, who will stand up and be counted for Him. How will they do this? By not living their lives for money and wealth, by not cheating, lying and stealing, by keeping God's standards in their sex lives, by living by The Book, by positively proclaiming with their lives as well as with their voices that God's Way works, by praying that God would raise up leaders (of church as well as nation) who will do the same.

Will you be such a person?