

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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Let Me Not Wander From Your Commandments

By Bryan Gibson

“With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments” (Psalms 119:10).

Impressive, yes, but even more impressive when you consider all that David had to go through, all the things that could have easily made him wander. So take a few minutes to compare your attitude to the one expressed here by David. Would any of the following cause you to wander from God’s commandments?

When brethren rebuke you.

David’s afflictions took many forms, including the rebuke he received from the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 12). Afflictions didn’t drive him away; they made him cling more closely to God’s

commandments. “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now I keep Your word... It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes” (Psalms 119:67, 71).

When worldly people make fun of you. And make fun of you they will, if you consistently do the right thing (1 Peter 4:4).

David faced that, too, and here’s what he said about it: “The proud have me in great derision, yet I do not turn aside from Your law” (Psalms 119:51).

When persecution gets even worse—when enemies lie about you, seek to destroy your name, or maybe even try to kill you.

Would any of these cause you to wander from keeping God’s commandments? David experienced all these things (Psalms 119:61, 78, 85-88, 95, 109-110, 157, 161), and yet it did not diminish his resolve. “But I have not forgotten your law...but I will meditate on your precepts...but I did not forsake your precepts...but my heart

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stands in awe of Your word...yet I have not strayed from your precepts”—David made all these statements in the midst of heavy persecution.

When filled with sorrow and grief—due to sickness, the death of a loved one, the unfaithfulness of a loved one, etc. Again, listen to David who experienced many occasions of sorrow. “My soul melts from heaviness, strengthen me according to Your word...trouble and anguish have overtaken me, yet Your commandments are my delights” (Psalms 119:28, 143).

When God seems so far away, when you get to the point that you ask, “When will you comfort me”? (Psalms 119:82). David certainly knew that feeling, because he was the very one who asked that question. But look at the very next verse: “For I have become like a wineskin in smoke, yet I do not forget Your statutes” (Psalms 119:83).

When the world seems so attractive, when it *appears* to offer more than Christ does. David was no stranger to the pull of the world, which explains why he made this plea to God: “Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in

it. Incline my heart to Your testimonies, and not to covetousness. Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, and revive me in Your way” (Psalms 119:35-37).

When “smart people” seem to have better answers, when their explanations *seem* to make more sense than the explanations found in God’s word. As for David, well, let’s just say that he was less than impressed. “You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies...I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your precepts” (Psalms 119:98-100). David was wiser than any of these men, because he knew God’s wisdom.

Bottom line; don’t let anything diminish your resolve to keep the commandments of God. Don’t let anything shake your confidence in God or in His word. “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven...The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (Psalms 119:89, 160).

Heavenly Power in Human Relations

by **W. Frank Walton**

"Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them."
(**Luke 6:31**)

Jesus' dictum of human relationships is the "golden rule" of all ethics. Imagine what a wonderful world it would be if this was actually practiced!

In the debate between the militant atheist Christopher Hitchens and the apologist Dr. William Lane Craig, Mr. Hitchens said that Christianity's ethics are no better than other world religions. He attempted to show that what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount (**Luke 6:31; Matthew 7:12**) about treating others is essentially no different than other major religious teachings.

Well, let's see...

Judaism: Jewish Rabbi Hillel, asked to teach the meaning of the Law standing on one foot, said: "What you hate yourself, do not to your neighbor. This is the whole Law. The rest is commentary." (Talmud, Shabbat 31a)

Confucius: "Do nothing to your neighbor which afterward you would not have your neighbor do to you." (Analets 15:23)

Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do nothing unto others which would cause you pain if done to you."
(Mahabharata 5.5157)

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." (Udana-Varqi 5:18)

Taoism: "Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss." (T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien)

Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." (Sunnah)

Notice something profoundly different in Jesus' teaching versus these other religious teachings? Other religions emphasized simply avoiding harming someone, or at best, wishing for them what you would like for yourself.

Beyond polite ethics, Jesus Christ taught us to actively treat others, in all interactions, as you would want to be treated yourself, if the situation was reversed. This is sacrificial goodwill. This is another way of saying, "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (**Mark 12:31**). Loving God, which empowers love for others, is the highest goal of the New Testament (**Mark 12:30**).

Love is active, outgoing goodwill to seek the highest good of another. Love is undefeatable benevolence of doing them only good and not harm. This selfless altruistic goodwill of love can only be learned and empowered from the God of perfect love and grace (**Eph. 5:1-2, 1 John 4:19**). We must be converted from selfish sinners to selfless saints of God. Jesus showed this love by dying on the cross for sinners (**1 John 3:16**).

Agape love was a new concept revealed by the New Testament of Jesus Christ, who taught us to love our neighbors and also our enemies (**Matt. 5:44**). This is not to overlook or empower bad behavior in others but it is always being guided by acting in what is in their ultimate best interest. This empowerment of love comes only from the gospel

of Christ. Christianity is truly a heavenly religion.

Our Next Gospel Meeting
March 3-8, 2013
David Lanius