

THE BIBLE & PSYCHOLOGY



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Today as never before, people are interested in psychology and what it has to say to mankind. The study of psychology deals with the mind, its senses and human behavior. Since our mind controls our behavior and our behavior influences and is influenced in many ways, it becomes a challenging study. Along with this are the ever-increasing problems of the mind, social relations in a complex world today, mental and moral breakdowns, the increase of the occult (e.g. astrology, etc), and the desire to know the future and the things of the non-physical world. Satanic influence is increasing as never before as I Timothy 4:1 and II Timothy 3:2 state: "Now the spirit speaketh plainly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" and "evil men and deceivers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

Since man is constantly trying to explore the mind in human behavior, it seems logical to the Christian that his source of knowledge can best come through an understanding of the One who created the mind of mankind, as well as looking at the textbook He has written on the mind and human behavior. The most authoritative textbook on the subject of human behavior is the Bible. Not only is it authoritative, it is objective, and is the final word on the subject. And whether people accept the principles of God's Word and agree with them or not, all are subject to the principles found in the Bible. Therefore, it behooves us to consider seriously what God has to say on this matter of Biblical psychology. The Bible is not a textbook on psychology; rather it is a text on God and His relationship to mankind, whom He has created. However, in the context there is much stated in the Bible on human behavior, and where the Bible speaks on the subject of psychology it speaks with final authority.

EMOTIONS

Mankind lives in a day and age that is fraught with many fears and problems, and to a certain degree, as Christians, we have become insulated from these fears and problems. Yes, it is true, we watch the news on television, we read the newspapers, we understand in a measure what is going on in the world, we hear much about the problems that the youth of today experience, the drugs, and all that goes with it. But by and large, as Christians, we are isolated from the realities of the world. Yet in a paradoxical way, because we are human beings, we are caught up many times with the very same problems that the world faces. To a degree the world may be different, and the problems to us may not be as great or dramatic, and not have as much of a traumatic effect upon us as they do on various people in the world—but basically, we all have the same common nature, and all have the same common problems.

God, who is our creator, has an answer for all these problems. There are four sets of emotion common to all—whether we accept by faith the principles in God’s Word or reject them—that plague us, and unless we get relief from them they will ultimately destroy us.

The first is that the fear-anxiety-apprehension syndrome. The world is caught up in this to a great degree because it says, “There is no help for mankind—this is a meaningless universe.” The world cares nothing for the individual who is only a number, and though each individual is a unique person there is really no help for that person. Each individual is just one of billions of other people. We live in an amoral world that is hostile to the individual. Therefore, because of this we have fears, anxieties, and apprehensions as to what is coming.

The second set of emotions that bothers us is the anger-hostility-hatred syndrome, since basically we are afraid. This is a cover up, and thus we exhibit our fears, which come out through anger, hostility, and hatred. And hostility is the direct action to powerlessness in one’s life because of what he hears. This bothers the Christian as well as the non-Christian.

The third set of emotions that we are plagued with is that of the depression-guilt-psychic pain syndrome. It is interesting to note that the majority of people that occupy hospital beds are there not because of physical illness, but because of emotional, mental, and psychological problems. If as human beings we could be rid of these, there would be plenty of beds in all hospitals today. It is an abiding sorrow that bothers every individual. For the non-Christian, it is an unconscious sense of guilt, though that person may not acknowledge or recognize it. For the Christian it may be un-confessed sin, which therefore leads to depression and guilt feelings.

The fourth set of emotions that bothers us is what may be termed as destructive egotism. This is another form of fear; “I am myself, I have an ego, and I have a desire to have it built up to a certain degree. And yet in my desires to have my ego built up, there is also a certain amount of fear, so I am trying to balance my fears with my ego as an individual,” and that gives everyone problems.

These four emotions are basic to every individual, and in order to overcome the emotions that constantly plague us, as well as to counter balance that, in having the emotions fulfilled that one needs, God has provided the answer in the book of Philippians.

The first emotional need that we have to be fulfilled is that of affection—to love and to be loved. Every baby born into the world desires this. Sometime ago, an experiment was made in Colorado, in which a doctor took a group of unwanted babies who had been abandoned. He found that within a year the majority of them died. Yes they were

well cared for and they were fed, and the nurses looked after them, but they died because they lacked affection and love, because every human being needs this. This is why God gave to us mothers, to breast-feed babies, not only for the benefit of the mother's milk that the baby receives, but for that sense of security that the baby gets as it is held in it's mother's arms. That is something that no bottle will ever accomplish, and every human being needs this affection not only as babies, but for the rest of one's life.

The second emotion that needs to be fulfilled is that of acceptance—of who one is, and each individual's unique character. We need to feel accepted by other people. This is part of our community of being together.

The third emotion is that of appreciation—to have a favorable critical estimate made of one's self: A certain kind of approbation, a slap on the back for a good job well done. We give medals, letters of commendation, watches, appreciation banquets—we pass out awards and rewards, and various sorts of things. Why? Because we all need it. We need to be appreciated.

The fourth emotion that all need is that of achievement—not only a sense of satisfaction or accomplishment, but also that which is praiseworthy, so when we achieve a certain goal there comes a certain amount of appreciation for that achievement, and it makes us feel good, so we desire it.

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THE CHRISTIAN AND PSYCHOLOGY

For the Christian, problems arise in the area of faith and belief. When the supposed, "fact of science" conflicts with a person's belief, trouble may develop. The conflict in a person stems from how much one believes heredity and environment shape his thinking. If behavior is completely determined by these factors, as some think, then freedom is an illusion. In today's existential and pragmatic world, man is conditioned to become absolutely "free" of all restraints or bonds, that heredity and/or environment may inhibit him. For the Christian who lives in the world today, his problem is heightened by the idea of some, that religious beliefs become unrealistic bondage to his "super-ego" (which is thought of as someone similar to one's "moral conscience"). To free himself of this control it is often suggested that he should go about and "live it up." To release himself from this so-called bondage, the idea is to suggest that this will loosen (or maybe harden) his conscience so that he will not

be anxious in that which he does. This assumes that the "super-ego" is determined by environment (parents, church, other Christians' super-imposed external standards, etc.) and that he must become "free" to act as he will. The ego then becomes more insensitive and the individual less anxious.

What actually occurs more often than not, is that the individual becomes more guilt ridden and therefore these anxieties are heightened. What is really needed is a treatment of the real problem of freedom in Christ, through an understanding of the world of God and a pattern of life consistent with the Bible. Much of the problem in today's Christian society is a super-imposition of do's and don'ts on Christian individuals that may or may not have a foundation on the Word of God. It is not the "black" area of life that bothers us (i.e. the don'ts of the Ten Commandments) or the "white" area of life (i.e. the do's of the Ten Commandments) that impose problems, but the great "gray area wherein the Bible does not specifically state exactly what we are to do or not do. The reason the Bible is not specific in the "gray" area is twofold: 1) certain actions are not always right or wrong, but must be considered in a contextual light of times, manners, customs, culture, and; 2) God wishes His children to become spiritually mature and able to make mature judgments based on the principles of His Word, as the person allows the Holy Spirit to guide him into all the truth (John 16:13). This gives the Christian confidence, just as a growing child gains confidence in judgment as his parents increase his allowance to make the judgments. This also presupposes for the Christian a continuous growth in the "grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).

Today, we live in a world dominated by the philosophies of philosophical existentialism (i.e. man exists as an individual in a purposeless world, and that he must oppose the hostile environment by the exercise of his free will) and pragmatism (i.e. the system of philosophy which tests the validity of concepts and actions by their practical results; if it works, it is all right). The resultant emphasis of these two philosophies shows up in the effects of the depersonalization of society, the break-down of the eternal and traditional elements of faith, and the loss of meaning to present life. Man is essentially free; he is conscious of himself as a being, and he can think and question his own existence. This encourages one to break away from tradition and old patterns in order to find a better and more fulfilling experience in life. Again, for the Christian this poses a real problem in that this philosophy accepts no authority other than experience. God is eliminated as well as are all moral laws. (In once sense, existentialism does have meaning for the Christian when one is faced with the experience of real meaning in life. By the principles of God's Word there is

renewed vitality through emphasizing the meaning of a person's relationship with God, which deepens that experience. A note of caution should be sounded at this point and that is, that experience and meaning are beneficial when based on Biblical truth and not experience alone. This differs materially from philosophical existentialism, which is anti-God and posits a hopeless future).

One of the problems of human experience is what should be done with the unconscious element. Should it be sublimated or ignored hoping that it will go away and not become a problem? "Shock" therapy, many times, drives the problems deeper into the unconscious and keeps them there. Evidence seems to point in the direction that unresolved conflicts of the conscience that are pushed into the unconscious do not remain dormant. They rather create greater tensions harder to cope with, because the origins are hidden and forgotten. The more this happens the greater the potential for increased tension and eventually a blow up of some sort. For the Christian there should be a day-by-day problem dealing, in confession of sin, eliminating the conflict, and allowing the Holy Spirit to resolve the problems by guiding the individual in the truth of God's Word. Hence, the need for day-by-day Bible study and prayer, committal of that day into God's hand, and asking for God's grace for each day, that one may walk in the path of God's righteousness. This comes through submission to the direction of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

Traits or characteristic patterns of behavior are basic on the development of every individual's unique personality. As our interrelations between these traits are formed, conflicts are created because of difference in interests and goals. This results because of an attempt to create an order in one's life. A Christian desires to avoid inconsistencies and disorder, to be creative and useful, and hopefully reduce tension caused by inner conflicts. Thus, the attempt to organize one's life may take one of two forms: 1) by consciously or unconsciously isolating the traits that are causing his conflicts into logic-tight compartments that do not allow for any problem solving or communication. In this way one may lose control over part of his personality and the solution is worse than the problem itself; or 2) another way to solve the problem is to make on trait an organizing principle and then subordinating all other traits to it. A good example of this is seen in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This shows the simple trust of the Christian in Christ as an organizing principle in life. This answers the problem of identification with the resultant proper organization. This reduces tension, and if the trait chosen is not a selfish one, as seen in the illustration in Philippians, then the solution is a good one.

Sometimes the trait of altruism (the unselfish concern for the welfare of others) becomes the center and the

results seem better. But the problem here is this tends to be an end in itself, and the individual's ultimate fulfillment is limited by human nature. Sometimes people will spend their lives pursuing a goal and then find in the end that it was not worthwhile. This is somewhat like the man who climbed the ladder of success, only to find that when he got to the top that he had the ladder leaning against the wrong wall. When this happens disillusionment may set in at a time when the personality is least able to cope with it.

This problem of organization resolves itself into finding a proper center for the personalities into which all human traits may be channeled, and which are at the same time beyond the human element. In this thought, one would have a center for personality growth that would be unlimited and allow for growth and expansion. This then is the message of Philippians, which gives to us what God considers the normal Christian life. This is also what Paul was talking about in Galatians 2:20, the "ego" or "I..." is crucified in Christ, nevertheless I live, but it is not 'I', but Christ who lives in and through me, and the life 'I' now live in the flesh, is by the grace of God who loves me and gave His Son for me."

To develop maturity in the normal Christian life is to form stronger bonds from each trait and relate it all to the center, Christ. The "old nature" interferes with this desire as seen in Ephesians 4:22-24. When this reorganization of the self-life is begun, the power that formally had been expended in solving inner conflicts becomes available for constructive purposes. When every aspect of one's personality is truly centered in Christ, these inner conflicts can be eliminated and thus the Christian can become a mentally healthy individual.

The most serious problem that plagues Christians is that of the "old" and "new natures. The two are diametrically opposed to each other, and every Christian has the two within himself. Paul certainly set forth the conflict quite clearly in Romans 7:11-25 wherein he noted, "the good which I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do." It then calls for a constant and consistent application to daily living of the integration of the traits of life to the center, which is Christ. Only when this takes place can the latent power of the personality be combined with the power of God to produce a productive usefulness in the Christian life.

THE BIBLE AND PSYCHOLOGY

There are three reasons for which the Bible was written. God gave it first to show the entrance and problem of Sin; second, to show mankind the need for the provision of Salvation; and third to provide for the Christian the right way to Sanctification of life. The word "Sanctify" in the Greek is the same as the word translated "holy." And the words "holy" and "sanctify" are synonymous terms in Scrip-

ture, which mean “to set apart from evil and to be set apart unto God.”

When one looks at the Word of God, these three ideas: sin, salvation, sanctification, qualitatively are provided to the individual in this order; for first of all a person needs to know that one is a sinner and needs a Savior; secondly, that God has provided salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ for that person’s sins and that once a person becomes a child of God, it is anticipated that thirdly one leads a sanctified life. These are of ultimate importance and are in this order in God’s Word. But, when one looks at these three aspects quantitatively, in the Bible, the first two ways—that is of sin and salvation—take up very little of the Bible. It doesn’t take God a great amount of space to show human beings the entrance of sin, and the problems that go along with it, and that all of mankind are sinners, nor does it take Him long to show to us what Christ has done for us. But when it comes to the matter of sanctification that becomes an entire lifetime of living. The biographical sketches that one sees in God’s Word in the Old Testament, as well as in the New Testament, are given to show out of the lives of men, women, boys, and girls, who have had similar problems as ours, who have had their heights and depth, their “cloud-nines” and their “Monday mornings,” how God’s children ought to live today. This is why Christ stated in John 10:10, “I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly.”

The abundant life includes a mature mental health, but it includes much more. Generally speaking, mental health is related to the norms of society, but the Christian may not always go along with the current norm, and in order to be faithful to Christ may at times go against it. If an individual’s faith in Christ does not result in a more satisfying personal life, regardless of the problems or obstacles, there is either something wrong in one’s life, or with the application of Biblical Principles to the person’s daily living. The Bible is given to mold or fashion us after Christ’s likeness, and this is sanctification or holy living.

God, who is our Creator, has created our psyche or our senses, and by and large we are conditioned by those senses. Whether we like it or whether we don’t, we are sensitive people, and there are certain emotions and affections that we have that need to be satisfied in one direction or another. The world is constantly searching for this and constantly failing, and this is why the psychologists get rich, because people go to a psychologist to have a cathartic expression—that is to get off their mind what bothers them, and the psychologist does very little, but after one has “unloaded,” he feels better. Then the psychologist tells him, “I’ll see you next week” and the person thinks the psychologist has done a lot for him. We have these burdens that one constantly needs to “unroll” or to “get off his chest.”

Since God created us with “psyche” or a “sense,” He certainly ought to know best how a person should operate in life. Because of this, God has given to mankind these understandings in His Word, and though throughout the Bible there are expressions that minister to one’s senses, there is one book, that of Philippians, that has as its objective to combine spiritual health with mental health for the Christian.

In concluding this section, it may be suggested there are five ways by which each Christian may have a more satisfying personal life, as well as be a better steward of the grace of God. A by-product of this is mature mental health coupled with a joyful disposition.

(1) Integration—In this, Christ becomes the center for all of one’s diverse traits of personality. After the initial step of regeneration, the integrating of one’s personality becomes a matter of listening to the Holy Spirit’s leading. To develop an experiential knowledge of Christ’s teaching from His Word provides the key (see Philippians 3:10).

(2) Purpose—An important factor in helping a person live a useful life is the knowledge that there is purpose in life. Life is meaningless unless there is purpose to it. In Philippians 1:21, Paul states, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Here is the thought of personal identification with Christ. The ultimate for the Christian is one’s seeking to achieve the will of God in and through his own life. With this in mind a person seeks to translate God’s plan for his life into understandable terms for himself, as well as for others. A sense of values in the Christian experience is imperative, for if there are no standards or values, life loses its relevance. On the other hand, when one is clear as to standards and values, these serve to direct rather than repress a person.

(3) Contemplation—A Person who is mentally healthy and spiritually acute is one who is contemplative. Periodically he pauses to take stock of his spiritual life, and seeks to relate himself to the important concerns of faith and life. Paul clearly taught this in Philippians 2:5. “Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.” As the Christian reflects on himself, studies the Word of God, and speaks to Him in prayer, the result brings relaxation, positive Christian conduct, insight into life’s problems and in making decisions, and indefinable strength in power resulting from the working of the Holy Spirit in his life. This cares for the problem of personal disposition of life.

(4) Perspective—When one personally applies the principles of the Christian faith to everyday life and living and these are integrated, the result is an understanding of the ultimate future of life. Paul says in I Corinthians 6:20 that, “Ye are bought with a price therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God’s.” This perspective, the realization that things happening today have relevance

for the present as well as for eternity, can bring meaning and significance to every incident in life. The expectation of the Christian helps him in this life as I John 3:3 points out, "and every man that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure." Then as Paul notes in Philippians 3:20, "For our manner of life is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." To the Christian, this gives hope and answers the problem of personal priority in life.

(5) Outgoing—In Matthew 16:24-26, Christ said, "He that findeth his life shall lose it and he that loseth his life for My sake will find it." Because the Christian's ideal concern is not immediate and selfish goals, his life can become an outflowing of help for others. There is probably a tendency, to a greater or lesser degree in all of us, to be inhibited from being outgoing. To be outgoing is something that each person, more or less, has to work on in his own life. A characteristic of a mentally healthy person is an outgoing personality. When we accept Christ's commission in Matthew 28:19, it helps us to become outgoing. When we rely on Paul's thought in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," it shows the help we can and do have in Christ. This gives to the Christian a sense of personal security to trust the Lord for every aspect in one's life.

The study of psychology as a scientific field poses problems for the Christian, yet when integrated with the psychological principles as demonstrated in God's word, it offers the opportunity of opening new insights regarding Christian experiences and understanding of the Biblical truths. An illustration may serve to help underscore this principle. The sulfa drug does not kill the germ. It dissolves the hard protective coating around the germ so that the white corpuscles are able to kill the germ. In a similar fashion, psychology can provide the tools used by God to penetrate more efficiently, and dissolve the defensive shell that people use to insulate themselves from Biblical truths, and from their fellow men. When this shell is broken, the Spirit of God is able to perform His work in their lives. Each problem raised by life and psychology has its answer in the Word of God. These answers should be sought and founded, and when they are, along with personal application, the normal spiritual life that God has for each of us will become evident.

PHILIPPIANS AND PSYCHOLOGY

In order to overcome the emotions that plague a person and fulfill the emotions that one needs, God has provided the answer in the book of Philippians. In chapter 1, the Apostle Paul answers the problem of Personal Identification. This has to do with Affection. The key

to this problem of identification is in Philippians 1:21, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Paul was identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in every aspect of his life. He was affected by what Christ had done for him; it affected his whole life. It changed him from being an employee of the Roman government, on the Damascus Turnpike committing people to prison under the name of Saul, and it transformed him so that now he was the Apostle Paul, preaching the claims of Christ. Just as he was at one time all out as an employee of the Roman government, now he was all out—his whole life was dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ. What Paul was plainly saying in this verse was that for him to live was Christ, and he was identified in this fashion. This gives to the Christian the Principle of what one might term the normal Christian life. One may ask from a psychological point of view: what is normal? The answer is, no one knows what is normal. Not even the psychologists who are searching for normalcy know, because none of them are normal. Just because the majority of people do a certain thing in one way or the other does not constitute that which is normal. Only God knows what is normal, and there has been only one normal person that ever appeared on the face of the earth, and that was the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the incarnation of God Himself in human manifestation. This is why Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ.”

However, God has revealed that which is normal for His children, and the understanding of that normalcy is found in His word. God created us and thereby He knows what is normal. This is the principle of life which constitutes that which is normal for the child of God. The Bible is to the Christian what the automobile manufacturer’s handbook is to the car. Only as the Christian follows the truth of God in His Word is he able to live a normal Christian life.

Chapter 2 answers the second emotional need to be fulfilled and that is Acceptance. This answers the problem of Personal Disposition—how one’s life is accepted. What does Paul say as to this? —the key is found in verse 5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” In the disposition of life, the Christian is accepted in the beloved—a child and heir. We have been accepted by Almighty God. This answers the problem of the personal disposition of a person’s life, which gives to the Christian the Pattern for the normal Christian life. The Apostle Paul never tells us what to do—which is found in chapter 1—but he follows it very quickly with how to do it in chapter 2.

When a lady desires to sew a dress, she goes to the store and purchases what is known as a pattern. A pattern is a series of tissue papers that are cut in certain ways to give dimensions. The pattern is placed on the cloth and then the cloth is cut according to the pattern, then the cloth is sewn together, which becomes the dress. In this analogy, Christ is our pattern, and as Christians we are to

cut our life as it were, after that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because we have been accepted by God into his family, and our lives are molded by His Word and the Holy Spirit who indwells us, it helps us with the problem of the disposition of life; how one disposes of the time and talent that he has in life.

The third emotion that needs to be fulfilled is that of Appreciation. This is considered in chapter 3 and the key is found in verses 13, 14, and 20, which answers the problem of Personal Priorities in life. In the world in which we live today, every person is caught in a myriad of many things, with many avenues of opportunity to control us and spend our time. Because of the multiplicity of involvements, and the choices that constantly need to be made in relation to the one's priorities is that which causes much frustration in the lives of people. For example, if a person chooses a certain place to go and is not appreciated by the group of people with whom he associates, or does not appreciate what he has anticipated he would, so that he does not receive a good feeling out of it, he may then become frustrated. Frustration is the game that is played today, for people seem to be out of sorts or frustrated with many things, places, and people. This causes depression, anxieties, and fears which may result in guilt feelings, and there are many negative reactions and reinforcers that constantly pick up speed, so that the person gets caught up in the frustrations of the worked from which there seemingly is no escape. For this the Apostle Paul has a satisfying answer in chapter 3, as to how God appreciates His children, and how this helps answer the problem of personal priorities. In 3:13, he says, "Brethren I don't believe I've arrived—I'm not perfect—but there is this one thing I've learned to do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching for those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Then in verse 20 he notes, "For our manner of life is in heaven from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." This helps the Christian in his priorities, so that he does not become confused and frustrated in life, and is able to formulate proper priorities and thereby feels a sense of appreciation from God. Chapter 3 helps us in the Passions of the Christian life.

Reflect upon what Paul said for a moment. He noted that he had been able to forget those things which were behind, and to keep his eye single before the Lord and to look to those things which were ahead. Think upon this for a moment; at one time the Apostle Paul was an employee of the Roman government hailing Christians into prison on the Damascus Turnpike. God turned him around and Saul became converted, and because of this became the Apostle Paul, now ministering the word of God in behalf of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom he loved and whom he served. One can easily visualize that as the Apostle Paul went to

preach to the Christians at various places, that there were probably people in his congregation to whom he was ministering who may have been, many years before, in prison under his hand, when he was Saul, or had friends, relatives, or neighbors who had been in prison. Now the Apostle Paul was ministering the Word of God to them. It is easy to see how he could have had a great amount of guilt feelings, or a sense of depression or sadness at what he had done. Or, maybe those people had a certain sense of hostility, anger, or fear when it came to receiving the Apostle Paul himself, as well as his ministry. Yet he could say he was able to forget “those things which are behind.”

One of the greatest psychological hang-ups that Christians have today is that they allow Satan to conjure up the failures of the past in their lives, and hang those things over them like a “cement cloud.” Thus it shifts the Christian into neutral and one is unable to “use today for doing good” (Hebrews 3:13), because of depression and guilt feelings along with all kinds of fears and frustrations due to past failure, and sometimes these go back for many years.

God has a good catharsis for the Christian in this regard. For this, one doesn't need to go to the psychologist—it's found very simply in I John 1:9, “If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In the world, people many times are able to forgive but so many times they are unable to forget. However, when God forgives He also forgets, and one doesn't have to worry about the failures of yesterday when he has confessed them before God. God wants us to keep a clean slate before Him day by day, and this is why He constantly impresses upon us the fact that every day we need to pray, to read His Word, and to fellowship with Him. We should start every day by saying, “Father, give me the grace to live for You today and lead me in the way of righteousness.” It is no wonder that God says, “don't worry about tomorrow, tomorrow will take care of itself, and don't be concerned about yesterday, you can't recall it, it is past.” Live for today, God will take care of your needs for tomorrow, and if you have confessed your sins He's faithful and just to forgive you of your sins, and don't worry about what's past; live for today. We are to use today for doing good as Paul tells it in Hebrews 3:13. This is the way that God wants us to live. Why should we live like the people of the world? God appreciates His children when they respond to Him in this fashion.

In chapter 4 Paul answers the fourth need that every individual has and that is the need of Achievement. It also answers the problem of Personal Security. Achievement gives to a person a certain sense of Security, and this feeling of well being is what every individual needs. How does Paul apply this? In verse 13 he states, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Paul did not mean by this that he could do anything. No, all people have limitations, but all have certain talents, gifts, and abilities. God does not measure these abilities on a vertical plain as the world does, like a person who achieves a certain plateau or status in life as he climbs the ladder of success. No, God does not evaluate His children in that fashion, for He evaluates us on the horizontal plain. Every individual has certain responsibilities before God, and God has given every individual the talents and abilities to carry out the responsibilities that he has entrusted to him. As far as God is concerned, it makes no differences whether one is the president of the corporation or the janitor in the factory. Wherever God has placed His child, that is his responsibility. In Philippians 2:12 and 13, the Apostle Paul admonishes the child of God to work out the salvation that he has with awe and respect for God, and then he notes, "For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." God both shows us His will through His Spirit, and at the same time gives to us the enablement to carry out His will through the talents that He has entrusted to us. In I Corinthians 4:1, 2, the same Apostle Paul tells us that as Christians we are stewards of the grace of God, and then he notes, "That is it required in Stewards that one be found faithful." Faithfulness to that responsibility, which God has entrusted to us, is that which will count in the day of reckoning.

This is why the Apostle Paul was able to say, "I can do all things"—that is, all responsibilities and the area of influences that I have and which God has given to me. I can do all to the glory of God as God gives me the strength to accomplish them. That's achievement. When we know that God looks at it this way, that gives to one a sense of security or assurance of well being, and this is the Power of the normal Christian life.

Four things provide for God's children the standard for the normal Christian life: 1) that we live worthy of the gospel, 2) that we stand fast in the faith, 3) that we be not terrified by what is coming, and 4) that we might be willing to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ—"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Our forebearers of the truth stood fast in the midst of persecution so that we might have the gospel, and the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Should it be any less that we stand fast in the faith, so that if God tarries, our progeny and the generations that shall come will have the same opportunity for salvation that has been provided for us, by those of our loved ones who have gone before, and who have stood fast in the faith? When we cast all of our cares upon Him, He does care for us (I Peter 5:7).

ASK, Inc. is a group of Christian business people who have joined together to form a ministry “to offer people a relationship with Christ, and assist them in their Christian growth.”

Goals of our Ministry . . .

- To offer people a Biblical approach to life, as a practical solution to life’s problems (Col. 2:8-10; Rom. 10:13-15; II Cor. 5:17-19).
- To assist Christians in their spiritual growth (II Pet. 3:18).
- To carry on a Bible teaching ministry (Col. 1:28).
- To provide counseling for individuals, groups and businesses, in the area of personal psychotherapy and marriage / family counseling, and to conduct counseling seminars (Gal. 6:10; II Cor. 1:3-4).

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ASK and it will be given you;
SEEK and you will find;
KNOCK and it will be opened to you
(Matthew 7:7).

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