

Proving The Will of God

by Hendrik Joubert

Because Christianity is the principal religion in the United States, America is considered a Christian nation. Yet the average person avoids talking about his or her faith in more than a superficial way. Many seem to feel threatened by a serious discussion of religion, perhaps because they anticipate a disruption of their lives as they are intent on living it. They may hope to plead ignorance in the day of judgment, and therefore choose to know as little as possible?

Respect for the Scriptures is limited to a general attitude, and does not apply to everything recorded. The Bible occupies a special place on the bookshelf, in reality being a little more than a *lucky charm*. It effectively wards off *evil spirits* (and *vampires*) for some. It seems that some display it as a sign that they acknowledge the existence of God and His Son.

Knowledge of the Scriptures is limited to a few *handy* passages such as: "**Judge not, that ye be not judged.**" with many not able to tell you where to find these words. (**Matthew 7:1**) Jesus' condemnation of frivolous judgment by human standards are used to avoid being *reproved* or *corrected* using the righteous standard supplied by God, so that He is the judge. (**2 Timothy 3:16-4:3; John 7:24; John 12:48**)

John 3:16 says *it all* is another famous slogan, with many failing to demonstrate their faith in Christ by obeying His words. "**Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?** (**Luke 6:46**) In **John 12:42-43** we learn of those who believe but are still lost because they would not confess Jesus for fear of being excommunicated. They have *faith only*. The devils also have *faith alone*. (**James 2:19**) James explains what it means to believe in Jesus when he uses the following conversation to illustrate the folly of faith without the actions to demonstrate it: **But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."** James 2:18.

Faith is visible only through actions as it becomes obvious when people implement the words of Jesus in their lives. Faith in Christ is illustrated by actually doing what He says, and not reasoning it away in the name of *grace*. Consider again the following question: "**Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?** (**Luke 6:46**)

The study of the Scriptures is left in the hands of those who *specialize* in the field. This conveniently supplies us with someone to blame in an effort to escape guilt. However, the attitude demonstrated in the Scriptures is that personal knowledge of God's will is vitally important. The individual is under obligation to verify that what is said comes from the Scriptures. (**Matthew 15:9; Acts 17:11; 1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-5**) Ignorance of the Scriptures causes us to be blind followers of the blind, falling into the ditch with those who lead us. (**Matthew 15:14**)

Consider the feelings invoked in you by the following words: ...**present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God...** (**Romans 12:1**) Consider also the level of commitment suggested by the these words: "**If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.**" (**Mark 8:34**) Then there are these words: "**No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.**" (**Luke 9:62**)

There are many more passages which demonstrate that in order to be saved one must make a serious commitment. The fact that we are graciously granted an opportunity to escape the consequences of our sins is abused to mean that we may be saved *in* our sins, and not *from* our sins. Grace does not mean *anything goes*. Grace is being given the opportunity to overcome our weaknesses as we demonstrate a desire to spend eternity with God.

Now consider the level of commitment demanded, but also the challenge presented by the following exhortation: **Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.** (**Romans 12:1-2**)

The sacrifice is no longer external, as under the Old Covenant. Jesus shed His blood in order that sinners may be cleansed, and in the gospel (**the power of God for salvation**) we find the conditions for forgiveness outlined. Paul declares the purpose of preaching this gospel as **to bring about the obedience of faith.** (**Romans 1:5**) The challenge is to accept God's way of life and establish for yourself that it is the only way to live in peace with self and others, but most importantly with God.