

Which words of Jesus apply to us?

Dear Martin,

You say that our Lord's "in the flesh" ministry was to the lost sheep of Israel (Mt. 15:24). Does that mean that, until Paul, everything that came out of His mouth was for them, not us? If not, how do we know which of His words apply to us as well?

—A.P., Georgia



Dear A.P.,

Everything out of the mouth of our Lord during His earthly ministry was to Israel, and for them. None of it is to us, though much of it is for us in the sense that we learn of Christ's work and of God through it. But no, these are not our instructions or our commandments.

"I would rather be exhorted than commanded."

Paul is our apostle. I am not pitting Paul against Christ, because Paul received truth from the glorified Christ. Paul gives us exhortations rather than commandments. This is the nature of grace. *Ahhh*. I would much rather be exhorted than commanded.

Martin Zender's Clanging Gong News

"If I know all mysteries and all knowledge, but have no love, I am a clanging gong" --1 Cor. 13:1-2



Two out of three isn't bad.

Your questions; my answers!

Let's do something different this week and answer a few of your questions. Bombard me with them! (Oh, but you already have.) Here is just a small sampling of questions I've recently received—and my answers.

Are we responsible to obey?

Dear Martin,

As a lifelong Baptist, I am just discovering the freedom and joy of knowing Father and His amazing Son in love and grace (at the age of 62!) I just finished reading two of your books and am starting the third...incredible!

After finishing "Flawed by Design," I had a question which kept popping into my mind: What about obedience? As a child of the Father, do I not have the responsibility of obedience to His voice, whether within or from the Word? Is there choice in obedience, or does the sovereign grace need the backdrop of my disobedience, therefore I am not really held responsible for that disobedience?

I don't know if you have time for such individual questions, but perhaps someone else has raised something similar. I am continually amazed at what Father is doing and the lengths



He will go to in order to take me out of the fog of my evangelical upbringing, and into the Light. I love the journey! God bless you.

—J. S. New Jersey

Dear J.S.,

Thanks for the great e-mail. There is a call, even in the gospel of grace, to do the right thing and to behave ourselves in the world. Of course, we can only do this by the power of God (2 Cor. 1:12). And yet we are exhorted to do it. Have you ever heard of the absolute versus the relative perspective? Absolutely, we cannot behave ourselves unless God gives the power. Relatively, we are to try to do the right thing. I should quote 2 Corinthians 1:12—

(Continued on page 2)



How can I be righteous?

Q A

If there is none righteous, how can I be righteous? What can I do? Everyone has a different answer. No one is telling me straight. Can you help me? I can't sleep at night because of this. —C.D., Texas

Dear C.D., You don't need your own righteousness. That idea has been forced on you, and it is wrong. You already have the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:21-23). It has been reckoned to you through His death (Rom 5:8-9). Your old humanity is considered dead and buried (Rom. 6:6). His resurrection ensures yours (Rom. 6:5). God and Christ both see you as a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). I know you don't feel that way, but feelings have nothing to do with this. This is about believing certain scriptural facts. Please read Romans, chapter 6. Six times! —MZ

...are we responsible to obey?

“In the grace of God, we behaved ourselves in the world.”

RELATIVE VIEWPOINT: We behaved ourselves.

ABSOLUTE VIEWPOINT: The grace of God caused us to behave ourselves.

Paul uses an interesting term in Romans: “faith obedience” (Rom. 1:5). This is not the Law of Moses type of obedience that said, “Do this, or else.” This is the kind of obedience that depends on God to both inaugurate it and see it through. It is obedience, yes, but it is obedience that says, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10). It is obedience that recognizes God as the source of action.

Additionally, this is not “have to” obedience but “want to” obedience. In the Law of Moses, Israel *had* to obey. We *want* to obey because of the grace of God and the spirit of God making its home in us (1 Cor. 3:16).

God will not hold us responsible for our actions; He is responsible for us and to us; not vice-versa. However, we will all give an account of our lives (Rom. 14:12). There is a big difference between being responsible and accountable. The weathermen is accountable for the weather—but he is not responsible for it! ■



Accountable, but not responsible.

Sin and law

Dear Martin,

I know I've heard you state that we Gentiles were never under law to begin with, which I do understand and believe. So how do we explain that Gentiles are still guilty of sin, since sin is not reckoned when there is no law?

—*B.T., Nebraska*

Dear B.T.,

Glad you wrote.

“Law” is a generic word. We always assume that it has to do with the Law of Moses, but it doesn't always. There was law in the Garden of Eden. What was it? “Don't eat from that tree over there.”

Besides this, people are judged by the law of the conscience (Rom. 2:15) It is possible for a person, any person, to sin against his or her own conscience. The conscience is a law unto itself, either convicting or acquitting a person. Does obeying the conscience make a person right before God? It does if anyone can obey it perfectly. But no one can! We are justified in and through the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9). ■

What are we supposed to believe?

Dear Martin,

In order to be a believer, are you saying one has to believe that all will eventually be conciliated to God? Isn't it pretty decent to believe Jesus died for your sins?

—*C.C., Washington*

Dear C.C.,

You may be surprised to hear that one does not have to believe in the salvation of all to be a believer. But, yes, one does have to believe that Christ died for sins (1 Cor. 15:3). Simple truth, right? Yes, but Satan

(continued on page 3)

What a Revelation!

Clay, not puppets

Dear Martin,

Doesn't the teaching of the complete sovereignty of God mean that people can go and do evil and say God made them do it and have that be true? Isn't this using God as a scapegoat? I still don't understand how, if God is making us fulfill His perfect will, we will still be judged for our actions. I guess I am resisting the fact that I am a puppet.

—*J.S. Florida*

Dear J.S.,

Don't think of yourself as a puppet. Use the scriptural analogy: You are a lump of clay in the hands of the Potter (Romans 9).



We are to live in the relative world. Thus, we are *not* to do evil and say that God made us do it. Absolutely speaking, all is of God, but we are to live relatively and take responsibility for our actions. After something has happened, then fine, comfort yourself with the absolute viewpoint. Our belief is settled in the absolute (“God does everything”), but we live our lives in the relative (“I've got to do this.”)

God judges folks in accord with what is in their hearts. He does it for their own good. The issue at the great white throne judgment is not, “Who made you do this?” but, “What did you do?” It is in accord with a person's perception and motivation at the time of sin.

The fact that God judges vessels that He makes hard is proven in Romans, chapter 9. That you are questioning God on this would not please Paul, who said to the original objector: “Who are you, O man, to question God?” (9:20).

But I'm sure Paul would have gone out with you afterward for a beer.

Was Paul a false prophet?

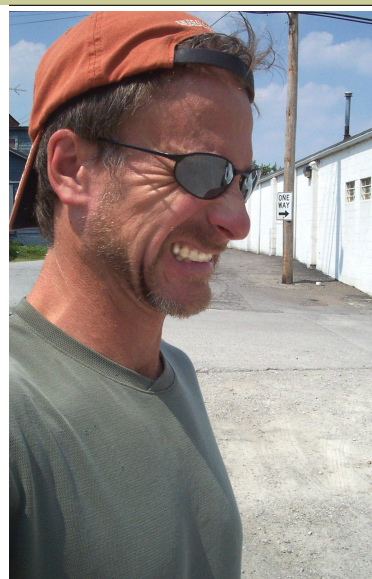
Dear Martin, I recently came across a few people on the web who teach that Paul was a false prophet. Have you ever researched this? —*J.L., Oregon*

Dear J.L., Don't believe any of it! Not only was Paul not a false prophet, he was the chosen instrument of God to bring us the message of grace and the full revelation of what Jesus Christ accomplished at the cross. People say such things because they cannot make Paul fit with other parts of scripture that teach law and works. Paul isn't meant to fit! He had a distinct revelation, apart from Peter and the 12 disciples. With Paul, it's all grace! —*MZ*



Rants & Stuff

The Apostle Paul says we should not murmur (Philippians 2:14). Therefore, I shall rant.



Oh, how she ran with me

The first game of our sixth grade football season was against an evil team in black uniforms called the Seneca Saints. It was a sunny Saturday, I remember that. I would like to record the details of the first three quarters of this now historic game and create drama, but I'd be making it all up because I don't remember any detail of that game except one—and it occurred late in the fourth quarter.

The game was still scoreless with only a minute to play. We were on our own five yard line. Coach King called for a "48 Sweep." This play had our tail-

I remember to this day people yelling and screaming, and—strangely—a woman running next to me.

back taking a pitch from our quarterback and running wide to the right. Roger Mitchell was the quarterback; yours truly was the tailback. Mitchell called the signals, then took the snap.

Mitchell turned right and pitched the ball. Sometimes, I can still

see that ball suspended in the air. I took the pitch and looked for an opening outside the tight end. I found that opening, and more. There was nothing but a beautiful, green stretch of field ahead of me, and a long white stripe of sideline. I remember to this day people yelling and screaming, and—strangely—a woman running next to me, running as fast as I was running, and waving a cigarette and screaming her head off.

I ran toward the opposite end of that field as if my life depended on it, stopping only when I heard a whistle. The man blowing the whistle also threw

both arms wildly into the air. Next came a dozen hands slapping my helmet. These were my jubilant teammates, for *this* is what had happened: In about fifteen seconds, I had scored six points on a ninety-five yard touchdown run to win the season opener for the St. Joan of Arc Dragons.

For years Mom would ask, "Do you remember when I ran that touchdown with you?" I'd laugh and say, "You, with those long strides, that cigarette, those arms waving all over the place, and me trying to keep up with you? *Do I remember that?* Are you kidding?"

And Mom would say, "Really, Martin? You really remember that?"

And I'd say, "Mom, oh, Mom! How could I ever forget?" ■

She died two years ago; I miss her. Today, for some reason, I especially thought of her. How I long to see her again—and run with her.

...what are we supposed to believe?

(Continued from page 2)

complicates it with the teachings of demons (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

The doctrine of free will, for instance, keeps people from believing in the death of Christ *for sins*. How? Free will says: "Your sins still stand against you and will send you to hell unless you make a righteous decision before you die." Another teaching of demons, the Trinity, keeps people from believing in the *death* of Christ.

How? If Jesus is God the Father, and God the Father can't die, then neither did Jesus die.

I am not saying that the belief in the death of Christ for sins is the thing that saves. We are saved by Jesus Christ's faith (Rom. 3:21), not our own. I am saying that anyone predetermined by God for salvation will be believing this essential truth, and will therefore *not* be believing these teachings of demons. ■

