

emotional sensations can there be certainty of God. This, however, makes the knowledge of God subjective. Emotion affects different people different ways. People also react different emotionally to the same event. One may be happy over the victory of a sports team, while another is sad and another is totally indifferent.

Likewise, with physical sensations, some like onions, some do not. Some like classical music, some like Hip Hop. If we knew of God through experience, God would be different from one person to the other. The concepts of God would be as broad and diverse as the people who think of Him. What's wrong with this? Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD" (see also Mark 12:29 where Jesus Himself quotes this same line). So, if we knew of God through experience God would cease to be one God and this is not possible.

Mystical trances, emotional hypes, visions, dreams -- every major heresy and cult in history has relied on these experiences for their vitality, whether it is the prophet Mohammed, Joseph Smith, or Jim Jones causing his followers to drink koolaid. People want to believe they have "experienced" God. But the only way to know God (and to truly experience God) is through God's revelation of Himself -- the Bible (Hebrews 1:1,2; Isaiah 8:19; 2 Peter 1:19; 2 Timothy 3:15-17).



The Bible Is Strictly Personal

Though the Bible is still the most widely read book in the world, it is also the most widely hated. Sure, you may peaceably read your Bible in the privacy of your home or in your church (only the most bitter against Christianity oppose this), but you're crazy if you think the Bible ought to be applied in every area of life -- to the family, business, economics and controversial of all, to the civil government. It is preferred that Christians may keep their religion to themselves, and the church in our day has to a large degree consented to this preference. Thus, the myth "the Bible is strictly personal" is believed not only by the atheist, but by many evangelical pastors as well.

"Religion and Politics? Isn't it the best to keep these separate?" one may ask. As quaint as this notion may be,

it is an impossibility. The contention is never religion vs. no religion (as it often seems to be), but whose religion? Is it man-made religion, or true religion? A religion is simply a set of beliefs that one relies on, or holds to, for their way of life. So the atheist is as religious as a devout Muslim, only the belief of the atheist is in what he determines for himself as "good" or "right", while the belief Muslim is in what Allah determines to be "good" or "right". (This also dispenses with the myth that says, "Christianity is a relationship, not a religion," because the Christian believes in what the Bible says as the sole revelation of God to determine what is "good" and "right". While the fact that Christians have a relationship with God as join-heirs with Christ is not be diminished)

2Timothy 3:16-17 says, All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, the correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

If there is a good work, whether it is raising your children, working, your job, balancing your budget, school, or maintaining a just society, the Bible, because it is God Word, thoroughly equips us for every work in every area of life, perfectly. Where are the answers found that deal with our current economic crisis, the state of our educational system, healthcare, ethics, foreign policy, and all the rest? They are found in the Bible, and the Bible alone. This makes the Bible a public document, not simply "personal."

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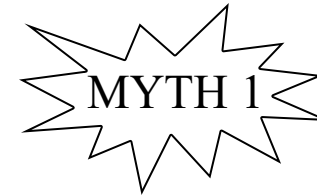
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You Should Avoid



Mankind is Basically Good

It is common to make observations of men's morality and virtue. We frequently hear sayings like, "Mr. Jones is a good man," and "Mrs. Smith is a good woman," and even more general phrase, "People are basically good at heart." Some may say, "We may make mistakes, but these mistakes are nothing if we are sincere." However, the Bible depicts a scene of a man that is not so full of grandeur, greatness, or virtue. Consider this vivid description of man's nature in Romans 3: As it is written: "None is righteous, no not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their path are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Man is not good at all according to God; rather, man's motivations, desires and actions are thoroughly depraved. When we compare ourselves to others we may look good to ourselves, but, because God judges according to His standard and not ours, we are despicable in His sight.



Man Can Save Himself

The fundamental idea that supports the notion of salvation

by works is that man naturally competent to do almost anything if he puts his mind to it and doesn't give up. Extreme and presumptuous governmental promises, man-made legislation, slogans like "power of pride," "Yes we can!" and "pull yourself up by your own boot straps" all rely upon this idea. According to this ideology, autonomous man (a man who is a law unto himself) has done really well in political and social spheres, so why not the spiritual arena? The Bible provides the answer. Humanity is depicted in Ephesians 2 as spiritually dead in their sins and depraved in every faculty: mind, will and emotions. Dead people are not able to make themselves alive, nor are they competent to save themselves. It is impossible. Isaiah 64:6 says the following of the works we offer to God in hopes of being saved: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" We would do well to consider that if our righteousness is to God as filthy rags then the things in our life which blatantly sin against God are heinous and abominable to Him. We may also consider that if a man individually is in a spiritual crisis, no government or institution which assumes humanity's basic goodness will rule justice.



God Will Overlook My Sins Because God is Love

Another prevailing notion in our culture is that God will simply overlook our sins. After all, isn't God love? Isn't the God of the Old Testament shown as hateful and angry and the God of the New Testament as more than willing to overlook our mistakes? Didn't Christ preach acceptance? Wasn't it Jesus who said, "You shall not judge"? These and many more ideas are rooted in the thought that wrath and judgment are opinions of a past unenlightened era. However, despite many claims to the contrary, the New Testament actually strengthens this doctrine of God's judgment: Hebrews 10:28-31 states: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance

belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the LORD. And again, The LORD shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (See also Revelation 21:7-8; Galatians 6:7-8) God is a most holy God and Righteous Judge. As such, He cannot and will not overlook our sin. Thus, we cannot assume that unless Christ bore the wrath of God on our behalf, we are still under that dreadful wrath. If we are saved from that wrath, we cannot say, "I may live as I want and still be a Christian." Christ is Savior and He is also Lord. As, Lord, He has given laws and stipulations that all people are obligated to obey. Christ is the great Law-giver (Deuteronomy 18:17-19 with John 1:45). One cannot receive Christ without receiving His Word which is everything written in the 66 books of the Bible. As Christ Himself said "If you love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)



Praying a Prayer to Receive Christ Saves Me

Walking an aisle and praying a prayer have been a part of the "how to get saved" process in American culture since the mid- 9th century, yet in Scripture you will find no such practice. Yes, prayer is a legitimate and necessary part of repentance and belief, but the idea of "say these words after me, silently or aloud," and once you say them "You're in! Welcome to the family of God." is a form salvation by works, which is opposed to the biblical description of salvation by grace alone. Nothing you can do can ever earn you salvation, whether it's prayer, raising your hand at the preacher's cue, or falling prostrate before the altar. Salvation is by grace, "and if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Romans 11:6) In Luke 18:10-14 Christ gives an account of the prayers of a tax collector and a Pharisee. While the Pharisee did all his good works including his self-righteous prayer to justify himself, the tax collector, struck by the depth of his sinfulness before God, beat upon his chest begging for mercy. The tax collector did not pray his prayer in an attempt to learn God's favor; he knew his sin and God's judgment and by God's grace he made the only plea he could make: that of mercy. And Christ says of him: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one

exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbeleth himself shall be exalted." Any attempt with any work for salvation is nothing less than self-exaltation.



Faith is a Blind Leap, Not a Creed

It is often supposed that faith is void of reason or logic. Faith is portrayed in our books, movies, and music as a hope in what is improbable. "I have faith that such and such good will happen despite the odds." Yet when the Bible requires faith it is not asking for hope in what is improbable. "I have faith that such and such good will happen despite the odds."

Yet when the Bible requires faith is not asking for hope against reason, but demanding full mental assent to everything it teaches. It demands your reasoning faculties to believe what is sure, not what is doubtful. Saving faith is belief in the Bible's doctrines, which results in obedience to them. Some may say: "I have faith in Jesus, that he died for my sins and rose again. That is enough. An emphasis on doctrine and theology just brings contention." Yes, oftentimes theological matters bring contention. Yet the importance of digging deep into the Bible and learning it's meaning on every issue is most important. The man who claims to believe in Jesus must know which Jesus he is believing in. Is He the Mormon Jesus who is not God or is He the Christian Jesus who is God? To know who Jesus is you must know how the Bible describes Him. Does that mean you have to know every detail about Jesus to be saved? No. But, if you love Jesus, wouldn't you want to know as much as you can about Him?



I Can Know God Through Experience

How can I know God? This is the most profound question one can ask. How it is answered will shape an individual worldview. Many believe that the way we know God is through some "feeling" or experience. It is thought that only when God is felt through physical or