

How Shall We Then Live?

Developing Christian Character

“If our transgressions and our sins be upon us,
and we pine away in them, how should we then live?”

[Ezekiel 33:10]



Introduction

Ezek 33:7 - “So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8 When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9 Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul. 10 Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?”

What are the two ways that a believer is guided away from sin and towards righteousness?

1. Correction by God through others
2. Correction by God directly to self (self-examination & conviction by reading the Word)
3. **Can we be rebuked without being corrected? Yes.**

Prov 17:10 - “A reproof entereth more into a wise man than an hundred stripes into a fool.”

Prov 27:22 - “Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him.”

Prov 13:19 - “The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul: but it is abomination to fools to depart from evil.”

When does correction take place?

Correction takes place when the Word of God is applied to our hearts/minds by the Holy Spirit.

God uses believers to rebuke and correct us

God uses unbelievers to rebuke and correct us

God uses His Word as we read it to rebuke and correct us (Psa 119:11)

Correction is an important part of developing Christian character:

James 5:20 - "Let him know, that **he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.**"

We must not forget that judgment should begin with ourselves:

Those who offer correction must be willing to accept correction from others and must accept it graciously, remembering that God gives grace to the humble and chastises those He loves!

1 Pet 4:17 - "For the time is come that **judgment must begin at the house of God**: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"

Psa 26:2 - "**Examine me, O LORD**, and prove me; try my reins and my heart."

We are commanded to avoid hypocrisy:

God commands us not to have double standards - an easy standard of righteousness for ourselves and a very strict standard of righteousness for others.

Matt 7:3 - "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

What God is saying is that if we condemn someone for some sin, we had better be sure that we are not excusing the sin in our own lives... because sin in our lives - like a huge log in our eye - can blind us or at the very least, warp our ability to see sin in others. God is not saying that we are to never speak out against sin. Just that we are not to be hypocritical about it.

If we don't want to be corrected ourselves, perhaps we are not saved:

John 3:19 – “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light**, because their deeds were evil. 20 For **every one that doeth evil hateth the light**, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

Professing Christians are commanded to examine themselves...

2 Cor – “13:5 **Examine yourselves**, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, **except ye be reprobates?**”

1 Cor – “11:28 But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”

If we don't examine ourselves we run the risk of going about thinking we are saved when we are lost.

If we don't see fruit in our lives, perhaps we are not saved.

Matt 7:17 – “Even so **every good tree bringeth forth good fruit**; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

The fruit of a Christian WILL be different than the fruit of the unsaved and will be increasingly different from his way old life as a former unbeliever...

Gal 5:18 – “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And **they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.**”

A true child of God wants to bear fruit, good fruit.

If we are not interested in dealing with our own sin, perhaps we are not saved.

If we really don't hate sin, if we really are not offended by sin in us and around us, we need to be concerned about whether or not we really belong to Christ. The Bible states that a true believer will hate sin and will want God to search out the sin in his own heart:

Psa 139:23 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Psa 119:104 - "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way."

Psa 119:128 - "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way."

If we are truly saved, we will have a desire to be sanctified, to deal with even the smallest, seemingly insignificant sins in our lives, like violating speeding limits or joking about things we should not joke about.

SOS 2:15 - "Take us the foxes, **the little foxes, that spoil the vines:** for our vines have tender grapes."

A true believer understands his personal need to be holy:

A Christian is commanded to be holy, not merely good...

Lev 20:7 - "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and **be ye holy:** for I am the LORD your God."

1 Pet 1:15 - "But as he which hath called you is holy, so **be ye holy in all manner of conversation;** 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

If we don't sharpen one another with the Word, we will run the risk of falling into sin:

Prov 27:17 - "Iron sharpeneth iron; **so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.**"

Heb 3:13 - "But **exhort one another daily**, while it is called To day; **lest any of you be hardened** through the deceitfulness of sin."

If we don't take the time to form close friendships with other believers we will be less likely to have true friends who are willing to tell us like it is. Anyone can find a friend who will tell us what we want to hear:

Prov 27:6 - "**Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.**"

2Tim 4:3 - "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

We are our brother's keeper:

No matter what Cain told God after he killed his brother Abel, we are our brother's keeper and we will not complain about a brother or sister who tries to bring some sin to our attention. We will recognize that they are only doing what God expects them to do...

Gen 4:9 - "And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?"

Gal 6:1 - "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

1Cor 8:9 - "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."
