

The Old Paths

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“Childish Thinking”

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At one time or another, we have all been guilty of childish thinking. (Mostly children are guilty of this, but some adults have a hard time growing out of it!) Paul discussed this subject, and said, *“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature”* (I Cor. 13:11, 14:20). I Corinthians 13:11 in the American Bible Union translation reads: *“but now that I am become a man, I have done away the things of the child.”*

When it comes to our thinking or understanding, God expects Christians to *“be men,”* i.e., *“completeness:--of full age, perfect”* (Strong’s). Of course, perfection or completeness comes through learning God’s word (II Tim. 3:15-17; Eph. 3:4; II Tim. 2:15).

Consider those whom God considered children for a moment. Paul said that the Corinthians were babes in Christ, and he could not speak with them as he had wanted (I Cor. 3:1, 3). Also, read Ephesians 4, and note the contrast between those of verse 13 and verse 14. *“...until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may be*

no longer children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” Our goal should be to be a *“mature”* (complete, full age) man and to be *“no longer children”*!

Let us consider some examples of childish thinking and see if we are guilty, or if we are maturing spiritually as we ought (II Pet. 3:18). Some examples of childish thinking are seen in the following questions that are asked by people.

“Where Does The Bible Say Not To?”

This kind of thinking runs rampant in our society. In an effort to justify certain “pet” practices, people will ask, “Where does the Bible say not to?” when they lack positive authority. Similar to this, we know some who ask, “What is wrong with ____?” There are also other similar questions asked that point toward this same problem.

What is the problem? The problem is that some are trying to justify what they are doing based upon God’s silence. We cannot do this! Paul said, *“All scripture is breathed out by God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for teaching in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work”* (II Tim. 3:16-17). Based upon this passage, we know that if it has not been authorized by God in the Scriptures, then it is not a good work! Other Scriptures which make this point include: II Peter 1:3; I Peter 4:11; and Deuteronomy 29:29.

Seeing that we are expected to go by what has been revealed in the Bible, why “whittle on God’s end of the stick”? Why would we want to dabble in things **not** belonging to us when so many don’t have a grasp on what **does** belong to us (i.e. that which has been revealed)?

Friends and brethren, *children*, not mature people, reason based upon silence. We wouldn’t dare reason this way with our parents (more than once!) so, why would we try reasoning this way in spiritual matters? Our responsibility is to follow what God has **said**, not what He has not said!

“Where Is The Line?”

The Bible says that one’s dress is to be a reflection of our mind (I Pet. 3:4), showing *“modesty and self-control,”* allowing *“the hidden man of the heart”* to shine forth (I Tim. 2:9-10; I Pet. 3:1-5). If we are thinking upon the right things (Phil. 4:8), our actions (including our dress) will reflect this. Just as it is true that people under-dress, there is also a danger of “over-dressing” (I Pet. 3:3). Both are sin. Our dress tells people as much about us as any word we say (I Pet. 3:1, 4).

We must also remember that we are to show the right example to those in the world, including our children, family, co-workers, etc. (Matt. 5:14-16). The rules laid out by God for modest apparel applies to both men and women! There is not one set of rules for men and another for women. This must be understood if we are to be the kind of Christians and the kind of examples we need to be *“in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation”* (Phil. 2:15-16). We see that God, when clothing Adam and Eve, had them in clothing which covered their body (Gen. 3:21). This same general rule applies today.

Yet, childish thinking asks, “Where

is the line for modesty?" "Is it above the knee or below?" What is the measurement for low-cut? High cut? Too tight? Too loose? Too baggy? Too short? Childish thinking asks such questions as this because, as a child, some want to know where the line is so they can get right up against it! Those who are mature; those who think "as a man," want to get as far away from sin as possible. Therefore, it doesn't matter where the "edge" is to them! A mature Christian wants to dress in a way that is modest, expressing his faith and respect for God and his fellow-man! A mature Christian wants to do nothing to excite lust in another and cause someone to stumble and sin (Matt. 5:27-28). Read I Timothy 2:9-10 and I Peter 3:1-5 again and see if this is not so.

Similarly, childish thinking asks, "How much violence is too much on TV, movies, etc.?" Or, "How much cursing and bad language is too much? - Where is the line?" The mature Christian wishes to please God by finding out what God has to say, and living by His word!

"That's Your Interpretation!"

How many times have we heard this? When people don't like what is being taught, they will often respond in this way. Let's test this childish way of thinking. Is it *really* my interpretation when:

1. ... I read Mark 16:16 and say that Christ says baptism is essential for salvation?
2. ... I read Matthew 16:18 and Ephesians 4:4 and say that Christ established only one church?
3. ... I read I Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 and say that elders and deacons are to be in every church, and that they are to be men?
4. ... I read Matthew 19:4-6, 9

and say that God's law for marriage is one man and one woman for life with only one reason (fornication) for a Scriptural divorce?

5. ... I read Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 and say God demands singing without mechanical instruments in worship to Him?

When we take the Bible "as is," how is this an "interpretation"? The truth is that when the Bible is taught, and it does not match a person's own personal views, he will childishly cry, "That's your interpretation!"

"What Is Your (Or The Majority's) Opinion?"

Too many are satisfied to know merely what the majority's opinion is. They think that if they are doing what most other people are doing, then they must be right. If you think this is true:

1. Talk to Noah (Gen. 6-8; Heb. 11:7).
2. Talk to Paul (II Tim. 4:16-17).
3. Talk to Christ (Matt. 26:56).

God said: "*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*" (Ex. 23:2). Childish thinking wants to know what "everyone else" thinks before making a move! The mature mind asks "what does the Scripture say?" and based upon God's will, acts

accordingly. What the majority does or does not do has no bearing on our soul! Our obedience or disobedience to God *will* have an effect on our soul! (Rom. 14:12)

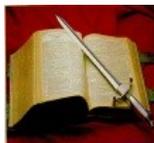
Let's not follow the "majority," the "accepted," the "norm" in our society, for as our society continues to sink lower and lower, the "norm" changes as well. Our responsibility as Christians is to press higher and higher, respecting the will of God (Col. 3:1-4; Matt. 6:19-21)!

Conclusion

Notice that as we consider these examples, childish thinking is carnal ("*pertaining to flesh, i.e. bodily, temporal, fleshly*" - Strong's, I Cor. 3:1-3). Childish thinking is not interested in the spiritual, but in the physical. It is not interested in the needs of others, but only with itself. In truth, all childish thinking is based on the attitude, "I want to do it" (selfishness). How sad it is that so much of our society is caught up in looking out only for self, and is not concerned for the welfare (spiritual or otherwise) of others.

God wants those who are men to stand with Him and follow Him all the days of their lives. One time, God searched for a man and found none (Ezek. 22:30). Would He find any today? I hope so! Let us not be children in understanding, but let us be men!

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