

They Say He Is a Liar

My friend had an "experience"--"better felt than told"--he "got" something. Some people tell my friend he has allowed his imagination to deceive him; that he had no feeling, no experience. Some even accuse him of faking the whole story. This makes my friend very unhappy. He doesn't like to be called a liar. He says, "I know what I feel."

Now I believe my friend. I know him to be an honest man. If he tells me he "felt something" I will not deny this.

But sometimes I try to check his unwarranted conclusions concerning the meaning of these feelings. My friend assumes that because he "had a feeling" his sins are forgiven. Why could not this just as well mean his sins were multiplied??

God alone can forgive sins; and His Word states the truth concerning such matters as these (John. 17:17). When my friend says he knows his sins are forgiven because he "felt something" I must remind him that the Bible allows no such evidence. It even warns us that feelings can be deceptive (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). And Christ teaches us to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THIS?

- by Robert Turner

How Men Act When They Repent

In Matthew 12:41, Jesus said, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." According to Jesus, the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah.

You remember the story, don't you? God had commanded Jonah, "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me" (Jonah 1:2). Now Nineveh was not only a city filled with wickedness, it was also the capital of the Assyrians, hated enemies of the Israelites. Jonah didn't want to go. He fled from God's presence. However, after being given some quality time in the belly of a fish to reflect and pray, Jonah decided to obey God. Jonah walked through the city proclaiming the judgment of the Lord upon these pagan people: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4).

The people of Nineveh repented. They "proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (Jonah 3:5). When word came to the king of Nineveh, "he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes." He decreed that "neither man nor beast, herd nor flock" were to eat or drink and that "every one" was to "turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hand" (Jonah 3:7-8).

The text says that, "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them" (Jonah 3:10). God can read men's hearts. He knows more about what is going on in our heads than we do ourselves. But He did not need to read the minds of the Ninevites to know that they had repented. He "saw their works, that they turned away from evil". When the men of Nineveh repented, nobody was left to wonder whether or not their repentance was genuine. Nobody was left guessing about their intention to stop committing evil. Nobody would have doubted they had actually repented of their sins.

We really need to learn this lesson from the men of Nineveh. We need to learn how to act when we repent. Repentance isn't just saying "excuse me," "my bad," or "forgive me," and then going on with our lives as if nothing happened. Repentance should produce real change in our actions. We are to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8). I am afraid that too many of us think that our repentance should go unnoticed. We are incognito repenters! And while God hardly asks us to don sackcloth and ashes today, He does ask us to "do works befitting repentance" (Acts 26:20).

Let's resolve to turn away from sin in our lives, and make sure that we behave in such a way that folks can tell that's what we've done!

- by Steve Klein

Concerning Social Drinking

- Can you say, "I drink alcoholic liquor because it makes me a stronger Christian."? "A better husband."? "A better wife."? "A better mother or father."?
- Can you say, "I drink because it helps me in deciding what's right and wrong."?
- Can you say, "I drink because it makes me a more effective teacher of God's Word and helps me to exert a strong influence for truth and right."?
- Can you say, "I drink because it helps me to have more interest in spiritual things, like the study of God's Word or His worship."?
- Can you say, "I drink because it makes my life richer, fuller and better in every way."?
- Can you say, "I drink because I know that no harm can possibly come from it"?
- Can you say, "I drink because I know that drinking is far better than total abstinence."?
- Can you say, "I drink because I know the Lord wants me to."?

- by Ernest A. Finley

Second Guessing the Apostle Paul

In a sermon I once preached there was a point made about Paul's dialogue with the Roman official Felix (Acts 24:24-27). I stressed that Paul taught Felix about God's law, urged him to obey it, and warned him about the consequences if he did not. In fact, Paul's warning about "judgment to come" was so forceful that "Felix trembled". I emphasized that (despite popular opinion to the contrary) Paul saw the advantage of fear motivation in his effort to prompt Felix's obedience. Other examples of such fear motivation can be found in a host of passages in both the Old and New Testaments.

A visitor to the services that day - a Christian - wrote the following response to the lesson: *"Fear tactics would be great if they worked - but what is the bottom line? Did Felix obey the gospel? What about the world today - fear runs away - love draws. Yes, truth should be preached, but I believe more will be converted and stay with the positive love of God and all the blessings in Christ."*

It's not hard to conclude that this lady did not like the sermon. She's not the first, nor will she be the last, to find something wanting in a particular lesson. But more careful analysis reveals that she was not just faulting this sermon - she was, in fact, criticizing the inspired apostle himself! Look again - do you see it? She clearly implies that Felix would have likely obeyed if Paul had only had enough sense to put more emphasis on "the positive love of God".

The truth remains - do not forget it - "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

- by Greg Gwin