

"Just As I Am"

The song Just As I Am is one of our most commonly used invitation songs. The idea in the song is that we cannot make ourselves right with God on our own; apart from Jesus' blood we have no hope. That is precisely the New Testament picture (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5; etc.).

I fear, however, that some folks have an erroneous idea about Jesus saving us "just as we are." They seem to think that He saves us without any change in our conduct. That is opposite to the New Testament picture.

Jesus' charge to the apostles was "that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations" (Lk. 24:47). Forgiveness is extended to those willing to abandon sinful conduct, not to those who insist on continuing in it.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians, "Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you..." (1 Cor. 6:9-10). He did not say such are some of you, but such were. They changed their conduct in connection with being washed, sanctified, and justified (v. 11).

"Just as I am," if referring to our own helplessness, is a comforting sentiment. But to suggest it means salvation without repentance is to hold out false hope.

- by Frank Himmel

Do We Lay It To Heart?

Every parent knows the difference in "Do I have to go?" and "Do I get to go?" "Do I have to go to bed?" means the child wants to stay up. "Do I get to go to the show?" means the child wouldn't miss it for anything.

Isn't it strange that some of us will wave those same clear signals with reference to the Lord's service, and not see that we are being just as transparent as our children? "Do we have to go to Bible study?" says the same thing about our desires as it does when voiced by our child. When one asks, "How much must I give?" he is saying clearly, "I do not want to give anything, and would like to know how little will pay the bill." Either that, or he has failed to grasp the most fundamental and essential element in the spirit of acceptable service unto God.

There can be no coming to Christ except we deny or give self (Matt 16:24). Translated into the context of "doing" this means we must first want to do all possible (100% committed) to serve the Lord. The proper spirit must motivate the doing, or it is shallow and empty --- may even be an abomination in His sight (Hos 6:6). God told the priests of Judaism, "If ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name...then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings; yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" (Mal. 2:2).

Lay it to heart! That means truly respect God; take Him seriously. The priests had offered polluted bread on the altar (1:7); offered blind and lame animals as sacrifice (1:8). They said of the worship, "What a weariness it is!" (1:13-14). To make this current, they said, "Do we have to go to worship?" "How much do we have to do, or give?" "Do it any old way, just get it over with; we want to go home to the TV." And to top it off, when rebuked, they acted so innocent and said, "When did we ever do that?"

"Oh that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain" (1:10). Better to close up shop - call it off - than to play at worship, and not "lay it to heart."

- by Robert F. Turner

Things Done Too Soon

Procrastination is a common problem. Often we wait too long to do things that need to be done. Frequently we lack a needed sense of urgency. In all spiritual matters we must guard against the temptation to postpone doing what is right.

However, there is 'another side to that coin.' Sometimes we are too quick to act. In certain areas we need to slow down, move more cautiously, and be careful that we don't do things too

soon. For instance:

- Many folks must fight the temptation to grow angry in an instant. They have the proverbial 'hair trigger' and it takes very little to 'set them off.' These people need to learn that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," and so they need to be "swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19,20).

- Some are prone to assume the worst about other people without sufficient evidence to support their suspicions. Too often brethren suffer long and bitter alienations that are sinful and unnecessary. We all should remember that real love "is not easily provoked" and "thinketh no evil" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

- There is an overly quick tendency to presuppose that certain individuals would not be open to the gospel message. We think that they wouldn't listen even if we tried to share the truth with them – so we do nothing. The parable of the sower surely teaches us to sow the seed everywhere, and let it find the true hearts that will receive it (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23).

- Many parents are rushing their children into premature interest in the opposite sex. They seek opportunities for their adolescent children to develop feelings should be reserved for a later, more mature time. This push to awaken their senses in this emotional 'tinderbox' has left many families 'burned' with the sad consequences.

In these and other significant areas it may be that we need to 'slow down' a little. Think!

- by Greg Gwin