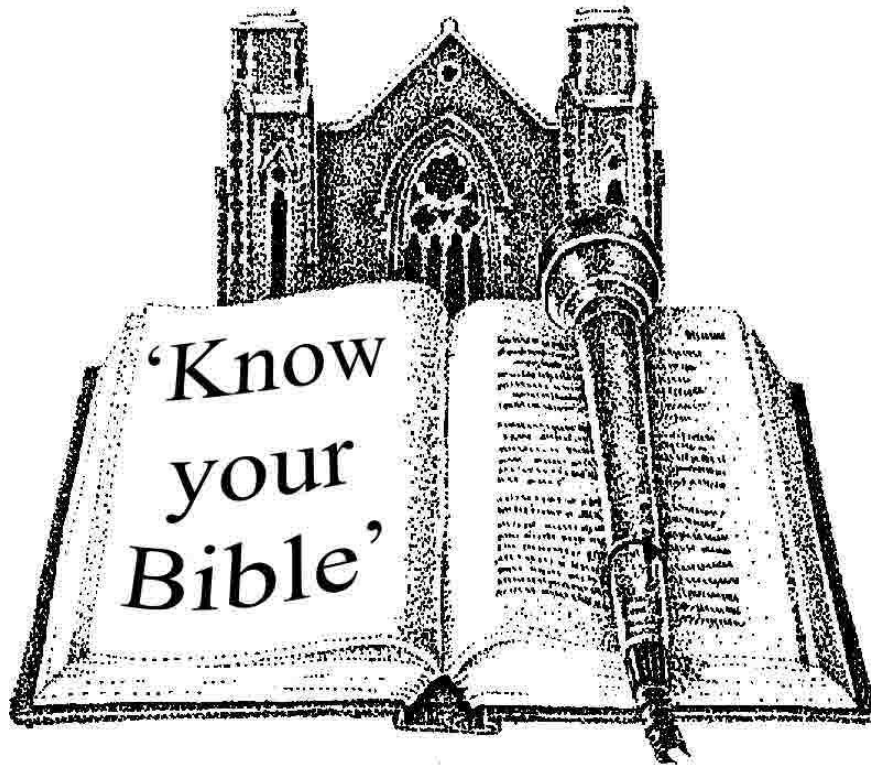


Problems

Faced by Christians

Study Notes by Stuart Olyott



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Problems

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The continual trouble that believers have, makes me feel like giving up.

Problem.1: When I see the continual troubles that believers have, and see that the lives of non-Christians are comparatively easy, I very often feel like giving up the Christian faith.

Cure: You will only be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). So expose your mind to the following truths from the Word of God:-

A Christian's troubles

= all the troubles of a Christian are to his advantage, and work out for his good.
Romans 8:28. Ephesians 1:11.

In particular - they wean him from his sin. Job 34:31,-32, 40:5.
- and make him more holy. Hebrews 12:10-11
- and more steadfast. 1 Peter 1:6-7.

And so by trouble he is kept from greater trouble - sin, evil, and damnation.

= the source of a Christian's troubles is the love of God.
Chastening is a sign of ownership and love - Hebrews 12:1-14, Revelation 3:19.
God's purpose is not to ruin you, but to test and improve you - Job 33:10, Deuteronomy 8:2.

= a Christian's troubles may be deep and heart breaking, but when viewed correctly are seen to be short and momentary. Psalm 30:5, John 16:16-22. Romans 8:18.

= so a Christian should not murmur against trouble, but submit to it, be humbled by it, remembering that it has come from the God of Grace, who will bring his child through it.
Psalms 39:4. Laminations 3:19-20. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.

A non-Christian's "ease".

= the supposedly 'easy-time' of the wicked has often caused people to turn their back on true religion. Jeremiah 44:16-18.

= although 'they are not troubled as other men are', remember that the wicked are under the wrath of God, and bound for eternal damnation.
Psalm 5:4-6, 7:11-17. Romans 1:18. Ephesians 2:12, 4:17-19. Revelation 20:11-15.

- the anger of God towards unconverted men is increased when their 'ease' leads them to take God's goodness and mercy for granted, so that they sin more and more.
Jeremiah 44:24-28. Romans 2:4-11.
 - They are having their time of 'ease' now - But it will not go on forever.
 - They are set up now - but God will put them down. Psalm 73:17-20, 92:7.
- the wicked appear to prosper. But in fact what they have is only very small when you compare it with what they lack.
- Compare the Christian's riches!! Ephesians 1:3-14.

So then...

- In trouble a Christian should not be looking over his shoulder at others and their 'ease'; but to the promise of Christ. John 16:33.
- Instead of being jealous, it should be a constant joy to the believer that he is no longer one of the "children of wrath, as others". The unconverted are not to be envied, but pitied.
- His own experience of the consolations of the Gospel, and the pitiful need of the unsaved, should make the believer more eager than ever before to obey Matthew 28:19-20.

Is it worth belonging to such a despised minority.

Problem.2: Most men and women don't care a straw about God and His ways. The Christians that exist are only few and far-between, and have almost no voice and influence. All this fills me with discouragement and despondency. is it worth belonging to a despised minority?

Cure: You will only be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2).
So expose your mind to lit following truths from the Word of God:-

The "majority".

= God sternly warns you not to be influenced by the opinions of the majority - for the majority is ignorant, and bent against God. You are to listen, not to who shouts loudest, but to THE - TRUTH. Exodus 23:2, Proverbs 4:14-19, 9:6. Acts 28:22-24. Ephesians 5:5-11. 4:17-20.

= walk with the majority, and you will perish with the majority. Proverbs 13:20. Matthew 7:13. Ephesians 2:2-3.

= Your soul is too valuable to lose - whatever the cost may be in this life. Mark 8:34-38.

The "minority".

= God's people have constantly been despised for their lack of voice and influence; though Christians in high places are not unknown. John 7:45-53. Acts 13:1. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29. Philippians 4:22.

= Do not listen to the world's estimate of Christ's church, but to God's estimate. Psalm 45:13, Luke 12:32, James 2:5, Revelation 2:9.

= In thinking of the apparent smallness of the Church, when compared ' with the world, do not lose sight of the immensity of the number; of the elect. Matthew 8:11, Hebrews 12:22, Revelation 7:9.

= Before very long the saints of God will be seen in a new light - when they enter into their heavenly inheritance.
Romans 8:18-21. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3. 15:42-58. 1 John 3:2.

= But even before then much of the reproach against Christ's church will be quelled - for it will extend and grow and flourish, more and more, as history progresses.
Psalm 2. 72:14-19. Isaiah 2:2-4. Daniel 2:36-45. Matthew 13:31-34. Revelation 5:9, 7:9.

+ Attempts to discourage Christians, such as this one, are from the Devil. Revelation 12:9, 1 Peter 5:8-9.

+ He cannot pierce the shield of faith. Belief in these 0- truths prevents him from making any advances. Ephesians 6:16.

+ Resistance, and attacking with the Word and prayer, will cause him to flee.
Ephesians 6:17-20. James 4:7.

+ Rather than moaning about being a minority we should spend our time Christ's kingdom. The truths we have learned should fill us with holy optimism as we do this work.

I often fear that I am a counterfeit Christians.

Problem.3: I have heard a lot about people who appear to be Christians, and who consider themselves to be Christians, but are not. I often fear that I am such a counterfeit Christian.

Cure: God's Word teaches that there are marked differences between even counterfeit believers, and those who are truly born-again. Test yourself - and find out which you are!

Counterfeits and true believers may have much in common (knowledge, prayer etc). But ONLY true believers have experienced a radical inward change, which means that they are forever outwardly different. Psalms 45:13, 2 Corinthians 5:17. 2 Peter 1:4. This change is called regeneration - the new birth of John 3:3-8.

Some marks of regeneration:-

- = Regenerate people are characterised by their spiritual fruit.
ALL regenerate people display this.
NO unregenerate people display it.
Matthew 7:15-20. Galatians 5:22-23.

- = Regenerate people obey Christ's commands constantly.
Numbers 14:24, Matthew 7:21-29, Luke 1:5-6, Revelation 14:4.

- = Regenerate people take unspeakable delight in God's Word and ways. Psalms 1:2, Psalm 119:6,119,127,167. Proverbs 3:17, 21:15, Romans 7:22, 1 John 5:3.

- = Regenerate people are afraid of the deceit of their own hearts.
Psalms 51:10-12, 86:11, 119:36, 80. 139:23.

- = Regenerate people find themselves unable to walk out on God, even in trouble.
Psalm 18:21-23, 44:17-19, Matthew 13:18-23. John 6:60-616.

- = Regenerate people prefer Christ's cross to worldly honour and riches. Luke 14:25-33.
Hebrews 11:24-27. (see Matthew 19:16-22. 2 Timothy 4:10).

- = Regenerate people consider Christ to be All-in-all. John 6:68; Corinthians 1:30-31, 2 Corinthians 6:10. Philippians 3:8-9. Colossians 3:11. 1 Peter 2:7. Revelation 5:12-13.

THESE, not feelings or experiences or anything, are the proof of regeneration.

= the regenerate echo James 1:17-18, and praise the God of Grace.

= the unregenerate must realise that regeneration is God's work alone - and cast themselves on His mercy, as in Luke 18:13. They will not be disappointed.

I am not sure that I would recognise a false teacher if I heard one.

Problem.4: I am aware that there are many people around who are distorting the Christian Faith. But unless he was an obvious heretic, I am not very sure that I would recognise a false teacher if I heard one.

Cure: = You have faced up to the Scriptural fact that we will for ever be plagued by false teachers. Acts 20:28-30. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Ephesians 4:14. 1 Corinthians 11:19.

= You must also face up to the fact that God expects you to be able to recognise such false teachers, so that you may have nothing to do with them. Mark 4:24. 1 Corinthians 14:29, Galatians 1:8-9. 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22, 1 John 4:1.

- the Holy Spirit has given us a 'sixth sense' which is aware when error is around. 1 John 2:18-20.
- there are certain tests which we can use to measure false teachers. 1 John 2:22-23, 4:1-6. Isaiah 8:20. Galatians 1:8-9.
- and as we grow in grace, our power to discern good and evil increases. Hebrews 5:13-14, 2 Peter 3:17-18.

Those are the most important things to say on this subject.
The ultimate cure to this problem is spiritual maturity.

But the following should help those who new to the faith, or who have not grown as they should:-

The chief marks of false teachers:-

1. = False teachers are man-pleasers. True teachers never are.

Jeremiah 5:30-31, 23:17. Jeremiah 20:8. Galatians 1:10. 1 Thessalonians 2:4.

ALL easy religion is false religion.

The centre of the Gospel is the Cross.

Matthew 7:13-14. Luke 14:27. Galatians 6:14. (the whole verse!)

2. = False teachers do not speak good things of Christ's most faithful servants.

Numbers 16:3. 1 Kings 22:10-26. Matthew 27:63. 2 Corinthians 10:10.

3. = False teachers make up their own messages.

Jeremiah 14:14. 23:16-18. Titus 1:10, 2 Peter 2:3a.

4. = False teachers gloss over the great and enormous doctrines of God's Word, and make a great deal of small and relatively unimportant things.

Matthew 23:2-3. 1 Timothy 1:4-7. 6:3-5.

5. = False teachers cover their poison with good words, fair speeches, bewitching oratory; and thus deceive the hearts of the simple. Matthew 7:15. Romans 16:17-18. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.
(Contrast 1 Corinthians 2:3-5. 2 Corinthians 10:10).

6. = False teachers are more concerned to get something out of their hearers, than they are to do them good (to edify them). Matthew 23:15. Romans 16:18. Titus 1:11. 2 Peter 2:3, 14-15. (Contrast Ephesians 4:11-13).

The CHURCH (of ordinary people) is the pillar and ground of the truth. Unless the ordinary believer in the pew becomes well able to recognise false teaching - TRUTH will fall to the ground!!

I am overcome by temptations and I wonder if it can be any different.

Problem.5: I am so easily overcome by Satan's temptations. It happens so often that I wonder if things can ever be any different.

Cure: You will only be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2). So expose your mind to the following truths from the Word of God:-

Defeat.

1. Remember that although some of your falls are directly due to Satan's temptation (as in Genesis 3), not ALL of them are. Matthew 15:19. Jude 1:15.
You must learn what to do about inward corruption, and master the principles of Romans 6 - 8.
2. Nonetheless, Satan does have the chief hand in most of our sins. 1 Chronicles 21:1. Matthew 16:22-23. John 13:2. Acts 5:3.
3. We must not underestimate this Satan, who is a strong adversary and destroyer. 1 Peter 5:8. Revelation 5:11.
4. But we we must still call to mind that he is a mere creature, who can do nothing at all without specific permission from God. Job 1:11-12. Job 2:3-5. Luke 8:32.
5. Not only so, but God has decreed that spiritual weapons alone will put Satan to flight. Matthew 4:1-11. 2 Corinthians 10:4. Ephesians 6:10-20.
6. And before long God will tread him down under our feet. Romans 16:20. His doom is written, and certain. Revelation 20:10.

= all this shows us that it is inexcusable to be so easily overcome by Satanic temptation.

= things can and should be different; and we can enter into spiritual battle with him with confidence.

Victory.

Here is some useful Biblical advice to remember, when seeking practical help in living the Christian life in the face of the enemy.

1. Let your daily life be ruled by the Word. Walk by RULE. Galatians 6:16, Philippians 3:16, Revelation 3:10.
In the Word is soul-saving heavenly wisdom. Proverbs 15:24.

This is the way to be filled with the Spirit.

See Galatians 5:16 - then Ephesians 5:18-20 and Colossians 3:16-17.

2. Pray!! Matthew 26:41, Psalm 140:5-6.
Separated from Christ you can do nothing. John 15:5.
Prayer keeps the soul alert (Colossians 4:2. 1 Peter 4:7),
renews strength (Isaiah 40:28-31), and secures victories (Exodus 17:8...).
3. In such spiritual alertness, live humbly, watch out for the Devil, and resist his first advances. James 4:6. 1 Peter 5:6. 1 Corinthians 16:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:6. 1 Peter 5:8. James 4:7. 1 Peter 5:9.

„As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which bath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy..... 1 Peter 1:14-16.

The Christian life is so difficult to live it overwhelms me.

Problem.6: When I think of what it means to live the Christian life, all I seem to be able to think about are the difficulties.

- + This problem keeps many out of the Christian life. John 12:42.
- + And many Christians are less than what they ought to be, because the thought of the difficulties involved in living the Christian life overwhelms them.

Cure: You will only be transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Romans 12:2).
So expose your mind to the following truths from the Word of God:-

Some consolations.

1. No trouble or difficulty, however great, can rob you of the riches that God has given to you. Romans 8:35-39.
2. Heaven is full of saints who have been through countless difficulties. But they did not fail to arrive there. Hebrews 11:37. 12:23. Revelation 7:14-17.
3. Indeed, earthly difficulties do not seem very important to the redeemed in glory, for such difficulties are only temporary and passing. Romans 8:18. 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.
4. Your heavenly reward will more than compensate for the difficulties of this mortal life. 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Hebrews 11:10, 16, 26, 35. Revelation 21:1-4.
5. Godliness with trouble is greater gain than ungodliness without trouble, in this life now. Psalm 63:1-4, Mark 10:28-31, 1Timothy 6:6-16.

Some things to do.

1. Spend less time pondering the difficulties of the Christian life. Instead, consider what requires of you, and DO IT exactly.
 - God will meet with you. Isaiah 64:5a.
 - Christ will manifest Himself to you. John 14:21-23.Enriched in this way, you will be well able to face difficulty.
2. Constantly reflect on Christ's love to you. He did not consider the difficulty, but endured the cross. Love Him in return, and take up your cross daily. Philippians 2:5-11. Hebrews 12:1-3. Luke 9:23-26 (!!).