

Q. How does Christ's ascension to heaven benefit us?

A. First, he is our advocate in heaven in the presence of his Father. Second, we have our own flesh in heaven as a sure pledge that Christ our head will also take us, his members, up to himself. Third, he sends his Spirit to us on earth as a corresponding pledge. By the Spirit's power we seek not earthly things but the things above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.

Q. Why the next words:

"and is seated at the right hand of God"?

A. Because Christ ascended to heaven to show there that he is head of his church, the one through whom the Father rules all things.

Q. How does this glory of Christ our head benefit us?

A. First, through his Holy Spirit he pours out gifts from heaven upon us his members.

Second, by his power he defends us and keeps us safe from all enemies.

Q. How does Christ's return "to judge the living and the dead" comfort you?

A. In all distress and persecution, with uplifted head, I confidently await the very judge who has already offered himself to the judgment of God in my place and removed the whole curse from me. Christ will cast all his enemies and mine into everlasting condemnation, but will take me and all his chosen ones to himself into the joy and glory of heaven.

In other words, "No Fear" is a slogan only properly used by the Christian. This is why David could march up to Goliath in complete confidence, you see. He knew the Lord.

As we grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord, we come to understand things like this:

"Christ is glorified when evil is exposed. Christ is glorified when we His people use the discernment that He has given us and act upon it with wisdom and sound understanding."
[ACFJ Facebook commenter in response to comments such as these] –

This is very sad.. the heart needs to be brought into God's presence to be cleaned and healed from all this. collateral damage to many hearts in the Christian community . How can we as Christians glorify Christ but by

example. Exhorting is important but please lift and focus on Christ.

Have you begun to be suspicious of these vague, “pious platitudes”? It is wisdom to do so. Just what, in the world, does it mean to “bring the heart into God’s presence to be cleaned and healed?” It is meaningless, and it is harmful. This person goes on to say “please lift and focus on Christ.” Again, what does that mean? I can tell you. These things mean “shut up, stop talking about evil and wicked wolves who have crept in among us and instead look at your own heart which is just as sinful as the wolf’s and confess your own sin to God.” Do you see the wickedness in telling the oppressed such things? We roundly rebuked this person and called her to repentance for harming the innocent.

Think of the Lord Jesus and how He dealt with the woman who was bleeding and a castaway and who had spent all her money trying to get well:

And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his garment, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made

you well." And instantly the woman was made well. (Mat 9:20-22)

Did Jesus tell her, “you must examine yourself. You must look to your own heart and ask My Father to heal the sin and bitterness that is in it. You must thank Him for allowing you to suffer.” No! He set her free. He called her in a parallel account, a daughter of Abraham and He rebuked the self-righteous Jews when they complained about what He had done. To tell the weak and hurting and oppressed to “look to their own heart and see their own sin and stop complaining” is pure cruelty and not at all of Christ.

As Pastor Sam Powell put it so well”

“Evil always perverts Scripture by stripping it of the Spirit and love.”

We must, as we grow in the wisdom of the Lord, beware of these phrases and platitudes that are so commonly used and carry an air of “spiritual saintliness” but in fact are lies. Here is Pastor Sam Powell again:

“If you repeat something over and over again, it becomes canon. My dad has a sign on his study wall, ‘If 50 million people say a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing....Keep saying it, and sound authoritative about it, and pretty soon it becomes canon law, inviolable truth.’”

And another:

“God loves your abuser as much as He loves you. You must repent of your sin of not loving your abuser and recognize that you are just a sinner too.”

My, how pious. How saintly. And how wicked! See it? Say something often enough and people will start accepting it as true. “God loves the wicked as much as He loves the righteous.” Oh, really:

The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence. Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. For the LORD is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face. (Psa 11:5-7)

See it? In most cases this “God loves your abuser too” means “the wicked man is really a Christian too. There is no difference between him and you.” Complete falsehood and a wicked, evil perversion of the Word of God.

Consider this today:

If we are not wise about evil, we necessarily will become its ally. Do you want to be a friend of the devil? I hope not. But you will be his helper if

you refuse to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord. We can be wise as serpents in regard to evil, yet innocent of it, OR we will be ignorant and naïve about evil and be guilty of it. Wise as a serpent = innocent as a dove. Ignorant of evil = guilty of evil. There is no middle ground.

We must be wise about evil because the world and even the local churches are filled with people who are hurting and suffering from it. Many, many verses in God’s Word tell us that we must help the oppressed and oppose the wicked or the plain fact is, we are not Christians at all.

Let’s talk then a bit about this matter of “increasing in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord” and how it relates to growing wise in regard to evil.

Notice these prayers of the Apostle Paul. Notice particularly that he consistently prays for believers to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord, and one of the results of that growth is that we will be *blameless* on the day we stand before Christ:

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph 1:15-23)

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Php 1:9-11)

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to

walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Col 1:9-10)

See it? To fail to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord is to fail to grow in the knowledge of righteousness, of His will, and necessarily to fail to grow then in respect to evil, to fail to increase in bearing good fruit, to lack the ability to approve what is excellent, what is His will, and therefore to incur impurity and blame.

I suppose this might be called “the other, neglected half of sanctification.” That is, becoming wise in the Lord about evil, about what does not please Him, about what is wicked.

Let me give you another real life example. Listen to this lady’s story she is living right now:

I’m currently struggling with my pastors to get them to see that there is no way that my abusive husband is a Christian, since they insist it is possible (and apparently they must take him at his “confession,” although WHY they should do so, I don’t know) and therefore approach him that way and are shocked at how he slithers around in conversation and slithers

out of full responsibility for his actions.

But it's so clear. In addition to the amazing articles here on that topic, we don't even need to go further than the plain simple reading of 1 John. No PhDs in Biblical interpretation necessary.

“Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's see abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is EVIDENT who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”

My pastors have also said that whether he is a Christian or not is something we should not focus on, but we take him at his confession on the surface in the dealings with him. But it is clear here AND ELSEWHERE that God WANTS us to be able to tell the difference between a Christian

and a non-Christian, and he instructs us in how to do so! If it wasn't important and useful to know if someone is a true Christian, why would God devote passages to it? With the phrase “little children, let no one deceive you...” beginning it! Clearly the fatherly and protective heart of God is the one who wants to make it known who is a Christian and who is not.

I think that some churches and pastors that may have good intentions and really love God but don't know anything about abuse [ie, evil] may have the same stumbling blocks for exposing the abuser that victims have. I know I personally stayed 3 years because of the “path of least resistance” principle... Although my marriage was painful and scary, leaving it was MORE painful and scary. Only when the scales tipped and it was finally more painful and scary to stay than leave was I able to contemplate leaving. And even then it wasn't enough. I also had to realize that I was telling a lie about God by staying, saying that it is ok in God's eyes. Only then, after truly seeing God's heart for justice for the oppressed, was I able to face the embarrassment, shame, difficulty, confusion, fear of the unknown, and fear of leaving, because I was doing it

for something bigger than me, for the sake of the Lord. Fear of God made me unable to continue telling that lie about God with my life.

In the same way, I'm sure pastors facing abuse in their midst would struggle with the feeling of it's just difficult, or it will be embarrassing/complicated, it's just easier to ignore it and do nothing, and fear of what will happen if you don't do it right 100% or what it will lead to in the end. Maybe they don't even understand what the Bible says about this subject, and they know it! It's easier to do nothing in the face of all that. But the fear of the Lord and zealously for his glory and for God's justice to be shown properly can overcome those other hindrances, for victims AND for churches who are struggling but truly love God and want to help his hurt sheep.

This is my hope, at least. My pastors don't in any way blame me and believe I have the right to divorce him, but it seems that they are struggling with how to handle HIM. I truly wish for him to be saved, regardless of the fate of the marriage, and so I want them to get a more realistic (and Biblical) view on his heart's condition and the Bible's commands for dealing with such a person. But it's not easy in

this day and age to follow the Bible's tough commands for excommunicating an unrepentant person claiming to be a Christian. Still, we have to strive to let the love of Christ compel us, not fear or embarrassment or the love of people or of money. Pastors are humans too, and I struggled with all of those fears as a victim, and it took time for me to get past that and to get courage to do the right thing.

She is kind to her pastors. But the fact is, as you can see, they have not grown in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord. They are not wise as serpents when it comes to evil and as a result *they have become its ally*. Wise as serpents = innocent as doves. Ignorant and unwise about evil = guilty of evil.