

LIVING AS CHRISTIANS IN A SECULAR WORLD

Introduction:

Some unprecedented situations in the modern world, with the real advances in our knowledge of the physical world and our ability to use this information to change our lifestyles via technology.

Yet human nature has not changed; sin still involves ignoring God, taking advantage of those weaker than we are, being run over by those stronger than we.

God has not changed; He already knew the end from the beginning; He designed into the universe all the facts of science we are just now discovering, plus many more we have not discovered, and (doubtless) many that we will never discover before the end of the age.

Living as Christians:

Many passages we could use to focus our discussion; consider these two:

Micah 6:8: *He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.*

Jeremiah 9:23-24: *This is what the LORD says: Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on the earth, for in these I delight, declares the LORD.*

Examples of Joseph, Moses, Daniel

Doing Justly (Diligence):

Joseph rose to top in every situation he faced: as younger son in own family in Canaan, as slave in Potiphar's household, as inmate in Egyptian prison.

Little info re/ **Moses** growing up in Egypt under Pharaoh. Certainly labored diligently on behalf of Israelites in wilderness.

Similarly for **Daniel** and 3 friends in Babylon, who showed themselves ten times better than other civil servants.

Each was (no doubt) given unusual natural gifts from God, but each used them faithfully for

Him. They knew that this was the right thing to do and did it.

God wants us to use the gifts, opportunities, etc., He has given us vigorously, and then He will give us more.

Loving Mercy/Faithfulness (Priorities/Loyalty):

Joseph put God first even though it continually seemed to get him in trouble (family, Potiphar's house). He would not commit adultery with Potiphar's wife, because this would be a sin against God and against Potiphar's trust in him.

Moses could not restrain himself when he saw his people mistreated, though he certainly knew the dangers involved in his actions. He was willing to give up all the riches and honors that were his in Egypt in order to identify himself with His God and with God's despised, enslaved people.

Daniel as a young man was willing to risk his career to obey God's food laws; his companions risked death to avoid idolatry; Daniel as an old man risked his life rather than stop praying to God.

God may vindicate us in life as he did these, or in death as those in Heb 11:35-39. In either case, God wants us to keep in mind and live by the real priorities: (1) Love God with everything you have; (2) Love your neighbor as yourself.

Walking Humbly (Trusting God):

Joseph was willing to humble himself at each disaster in his life, rather than becoming bitter. In his success, he did not become proud and vengeful: nothing to suggest he got back at Potiphar or P's wife; used opportunity with brothers to bring them to repentance rather than to get back at them. He always gave God the credit for his abilities and for the events of his life.

Moses was doubtless disillusioned by the response he got from his people, both before and after his 40 years in Midian, and throughout the wilderness wanderings. Yet he continued to cling to God and to intercede for his people. In his leadership over the Israelites in the wilderness he showed himself the "humblest man on earth" (Num 12:3).

Daniel always gave God the credit for his successes, and even showed mercy to the pagan magicians. He, too, did not give up when things seemed to go disastrously for him, and the Lord mightily vindicated him through his patience.

May God help us to be humble before Him, to take both the success and disaster that come in our lives as from a loving hand, and as opportunities to serve the God who made everything and who has lovingly given us a chance to do things that will last forever.

Conclusions:

As Christians in a secular world dominated by science and technology, by greed and relativistic ethics, we need to follow the examples of Joseph, Moses and Daniel, and the commands of these two Scriptures.

We need to **do what is right**, recognizing that science is actually dealing with God's revelation in nature, and that this revelation will not contradict God's revelation in His word, the Bible. Sometimes scientific interpreters will be wrong, sometimes Bible interpreters will be wrong, but we can trust God and seek to deal fairly with His revelation in both nature and Scripture.

We need to **put God first, others second, self last**. Be loyal to God in all that we do. Treat others with fairness, and reach out to them in love. If our colleagues see that we honor God, care for them, and treat our work with the importance it deserves, they will be more likely to listen to our message.

We need to **trust God in every circumstance**. We don't know enough to take things into our own hands, thinking we can do better than God by ignoring his rules. We must humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and He will exalt us in due time (1 Pt 5:6).