

## Citizens Charter

### Practical guidance for citizens of heaven living in an alien land.

#### **Shun sin** (Proverbs 1:10-19)

*If sinners entice you, do not consent (v10).*

Although the attitude of many is ‘taste it and see’ we should shun sin. It is often best simply to turn tail and run as Joseph did when enticed to sin by Potiphar’s wife. It can be costly to choose not to indulge in vulgar talk in the office, not to accept a back-hander and the like. It is costly not simply because others may think badly of us but because they may think we are passing judgment on them. But judgment is the Lords and his declaration is that sin *takes away the life of its owners* (v19).

#### **Choose fear** (Proverbs 1:29)

*I will not answer ... because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD.*

Much worldly Christianity today offers a message of a ‘salving’ God who soothes our hurts and smiles at our sin. True Christianity, by contrast, declares a God whom we should fear, an awesome and holy LORD who nevertheless has opened to us the way of life. Choose fear, live in reverence and awe and you *will dwell safely and will be secure without fear of evil* (Proverbs 1:33).

#### **Keep the Law** (Proverbs 3:1-2)

Solomon encouraged his son to keep the laws and commands he had passed on. It is reminiscent of Timothy who had been taught the scriptures from childhood, presumably by his godly mother and grandmother, and who was therefore not only *wise for salvation* but also *equipped for every good work*. There is much supposed wisdom in the world, many books have been written on every subject imaginable, but nothing can compare to the faith we have received. It should be our first goal to store up this treasure.

#### **Be Holy** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

The more we are occupied with being holy the less we will be prone to worldliness. Solomon here exhorts us to mercy and truth. Mercy without truth will offer people words of comfort, the appearance of love, but will most likely leave people to wallow in sin. Truth without mercy is cold and heartless, concerned only to condemn and rebuke.

Mercy and truth are qualities of the Lord, in our God we see them perfectly balanced. They should be deeply ingrained in us, written on the tablet of our heart (v3).

#### **Trust in the LORD** (Proverbs 3:5-6)

There are two sides to this piece of advice. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*

Self reliance is something the world admires, we are encouraged to stand on our own two feet. In contrast reliance on another is seen as a sign of weakness. It is because of this that for many the greatest barrier to Christian faith is having to accept that we can do nothing to effect our salvation, we must trust in the LORD with all our heart.

#### **Humility** (Proverbs 3:7-8)

Following on from the previous instruction Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, tells us not to look to our own wisdom. Whether it is old philosophers like Kant who believed we had truly ‘arrived’ or modern scientists like Stephen Hawkins who speak of discovering the mind of god the world is obsessed with its own

wisdom. But the truly wise will be humble, glorying not in our achievements but in learning more of God and His world. At the same time the truly wise will realise our limits and our weaknesses having a proper fear of the Lord and humble wisdom.

**Honour the Lord** (Proverbs 3:9-10)

For many life consists in the accumulation of riches and possessions. When someone becomes a Christian, such as Zacchaeus, this all changes. The person who is quick to give away the things of this world is far less likely to be ensnared by them. These words of Solomon are reminiscent of the parable of Jesus about the farmer who was not concerned to be rich towards God. Jesus declared him to be a fool, indeed a dead fool. Honour the Lord by giving, and give the first fruits not the dregs.

**The sensible son** (Proverbs 3:11-12)

*Do not despise the chastening of the LORD.*

Many of those around us today despise not only the idea of learning from chastisement but also the whole concept of discipline. If we put our hand on something hot pain tells us to remove it quick before we are disfigured. So too the discipline of the Lord is for our good and the wise child will welcome rebuke and chastening. Indeed, though it is often difficult to accept, the chastening of the Lord is actually a sign to us of His love (v12).

Christian living is not easy, yet in these and many other places in Proverbs the Lord gives to us practical, down to earth help in living in the world but not of it.

David Phillips