



General Topics :: Of what are we certain?

Of what are we certain? - posted by ccchhrrriiiss (), on: 2009/1/17 4:33

Greetings brethren!

Over the past 5+ years on SermonIndex, I have been blessed by the discussions in these forums. For me, these forums have provided an opportunity to encourage...and be encouraged. This genuine form of encouragement is something that I feel to be the very essence of the Hebrews 10:24-25 call to "assemble ourselves together." It is also something that seems to be sorely lacking in many modern churches (large or small) where people come and go without truly proving one another toward acts of love and faith.

It is a great thing to fellowship with other believers who are aware of the lack of importance placed upon Christ in this present world (and sadly, much of the modern "Church"). There is a family...brothers and sisters in the faith...who understand the seriousness of the day and age. It is with this in mind that we should encourage one another to continue seeking...continue longing...and continue in honest fellowship with Christ.

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Yet these same wonderful forums can also be a source of great discouragement too. Not only can words spoken (or, in this case, written) in anger or frustration cause great hurt, the heartfelt measure by which we speak can convey life or death. We never know who is watching (or reading). I am almost certain that there are times in which people who do not know our Lord visit this website. What do they think when they read our words? What about believers? What happens when a young or hurting believer visits and makes a comment with which we might disagree? How do we react? Are we producing life or death with our words?

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Of course, we are all convinced of certain things after prayer and study. Yet I can't help but wonder if we should even BE so convinced! Aren't we at all aware of our own flawed humanity...flawed intellect...flawed ability to reason...and personal weaknesses? It seems like the most godly men in the Word...were also the most prone to failure. I am so grateful that the Lord provided examples of the failures of the "heroes" of the Bible. It makes me realize just what great company I am in! The more aware that I become of my own flaws, the less eager I become to preach my views with a "my way or the highway" type of attitude.

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Do you see what I am getting at? There are so many doctrines that we might feel are "obvious" to us. Perhaps this is the problem! Are we so easily convinced about such matters that we close the door for discussion...and only speak about our views as if we are presenting them upon the authority of God? This sometimes seems to be the case!

I will be the first to admit to this. Yet I have tried to voice something over the last year or so. I have tried to question the principles behind what we are "teaching" as a fact. I truly believe that our forum would be a much more amiable place if we could realize that many of the positions that we hold are, in fact, persuasions about doctrines (rather than undeniable truths). I can respect those who feel the need to wear a covering on their heads...even if I disagree with them in the matter. They are not lesser believers...less respectable...or even poor elders... in my eyes. I would pray that the same would be true the other way around. I am keenly aware of my ever-changing status as I mature in Christ. There are things that I believed when I first met the Lord that I no longer believe now. There are also things that I believed when I first met the Lord, changed my views, but somehow turned full circle back to those things. I try to keep this in mind when I consider the feelings of those around me.

It is my prayer that we can truly encourage one another in the faith. This website is like a treasure hidden in a field. Not only are we blessed by the immense amount of resources available here (particularly, the vast amount of audio sermons), but we have the ability to share with one another...encouraging one another...as we see that day approaching. Sometimes, I fear that we don't take advantage of this opportunity. This opportunity has never been afforded to those believers who came before us! In the early days of the Church, believers met secretly in caves and catacombs. Today, we (those of us on SermonIndex) meet openly in a public forum. I just can't help but wonder if our conversations merit the same standing as those who met secretly with Paul in Rome. Are we making the most of this opportunity?

May God make us acutely aware of this responsibility to one another! There are believers who visit this forum...who are hurting. Life and death, of course, is in the power of the tongue (or keyboard, I suppose). What a great duty! We have the potential to produce life...or to produce death. I pray that God will help us not squander what no other believers have ever been able to do before.

He is the tie that binds.

:-)

Re: Of what are we certain?, on: 2009/1/17 9:18

Thank you for your post, Chris. It was good.

Quote:

-----It is my prayer that we can truly encourage one another in the faith.

Amen. I join you in praying this.

Ro 14:19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

1Th 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Re: Of what are we certain? - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2009/1/17 9:48

Quote:
-----I am almost certain that there are times in which people who do not know our Lord visit this website. What do they think when they read our words? What about believers? What happens when a young or hurting believer visits and makes a comment with which we might disagree? How do we react? Are we producing life or death with our words?

This is a grand point. It is true. I think about this scenario often. This is why politics and Cal/Arm feuds are so discouraged here. People just can't seem to show any self-restraint when these topics arise, and they begin firing back at one another like Spanish buccaneers at sea...intent on gaining the precious bounty of winning the conversation.

It's just not worth it, even if you do win. Trust me, there's always a price to pay for entering into carnality. I would rather lose all the debates and be deemed a heretical fool than be guilty of offending one of these "little ones" with my cannonballs as they innocently come into the forum looking for Christian fellowship. Brethren, do not think God will not hold us profoundly responsible for turning these "little ones" away by our carnal antics.

This is why I have long ago decided to have nothing to do with politics in here, nothing to do with Cal/Arm (though I am reformed doctrinally, I especially love Wesley, Finney and Booth and can avidly and gladly fellowship with all their followers). We need to remember that we are Greg's guests here. Using this forum is a privilege granted to us by God through brother Greg. It is not a right, and from the very beginning, the purpose of these forums was not be a proselytizing camp for the Arminian or the Calvinist. This is a place where Whitefield can fellowship with Wesley, where Nettleton can fellowship with Finney, where Spurgeon can fellowship with Booth, and where Washer can fellowship with Ravenhill. I absolutely loathe any spirit that will come in here to usurp this freedom and unity and taint this place with the noxious odors that plague other Christian forums on the internet. The clean fragrance was what drew me to SI to begin with. It was the "mixed" scents of frankincense and myrrh that accompanied the gold to the Savior.

Re: - posted by rbanks, on: 2009/1/17 9:56

Very good brother Chris,

I have always enjoyed your writings and the spirit that you always convey.

You have a heart for God that is obvious.

Blessings to you!

Amen dear brother! - posted by Dountoothers (), on: 2009/1/17 11:28

Thank you so much brother Chris for your very true and much needed words. I know I have often been guilty myself and so regret what I've spoken...but then it's too late, the damage has been done.

While reading your post a lovely hymn by Joseph Swain came immediately to my mind. The spirit of this hymn is so tender, so loving:

"How sweet, how heavenly is the sight,
When those who love the Lord,
In one another's peace delight,
and so fulfil His word.

When each can feel his brother's sigh
And with him bear a part;
When sorrow flows from eye to eye,
And joy from heart to heart;

When free from envy, scorn and pride,
Our spirit all above-
Each can his brother's failings hide

And show a brother's love;

When love in one delightful stream,
Through every soul now flows,
When union sweet and warm esteem
In every action glows.

Love is the perfect heart of God
In us through heaven's Dove;
And in the Spirit and the Word,
Our souls now glow with love."

Gwen

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Re: Of what are we certain?, on: 2009/1/17 11:30

Brother Chris,
What a truly wonderful post! It covers so much and you've spoken truth in such grace and with a heart of encouragement. May God bless you!
Joy

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2009/1/17 11:44

Good post Chris.

The way I see it, is that when many of us set ourselves on a biblical vector to separate from the world, we just don't know when to put on the brakes. We just keep separating from one another, atomizing until we're left in a room with the two other people on the planet who think just like us.

Recently we held a meeting at church where we were trying to resolve some long standing differences. The objective was not to agree or build consensus on issues, but to try and restore unity to our fellowship.

After a crescendo moment of honest frustrations being vented at one another, a lady in the back of the room spoke up in exasperation. "If unity is going to cause this much division, then maybe it's not worth it." She wasn't meaning to be ironic ;-)

MC

Brother Chris., on: 2009/1/17 12:00

well spoke brother....swept along by the Spirit.

a few years back, Jesus gifted me with a compilation, this is for you with love, I pray it edifies you, (and makes you smile)

In Jesus love, neil (<http://www.fireonthealtar.com/compilations/neil%20g/As%20We%20Are%20One.mp3>) "As We Are One"

Re: Of what are we certain? - posted by tjservant (), on: 2009/1/17 12:18

Thank you Chris

It seems many of us go through some sort of doctrinal refinement process during our spiritual journey as Christians. It is often painful; not only for ourselves, but for others as well. When all the dross is seemingly removed, we often declare our own precious metal to be the only one of worth, or at least of greater value. Perhaps we should concentrate on simply becoming the jewels God intends us to be and let Him be our standard of value.

Thanks again Chris, He has used you to get my attention.

Re: Of what are we certain? - posted by Questor, on: 2009/1/17 20:55

Quote:

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I greatly fear that until we too are meeting in such fear of death that all that we say to one another is supportive, and not denigrating.

Where are OUR great jolts of terror that we will be overheard, much less a sincere fear of God that we will say something wrong?

Chris...good thread, good points.

Q

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2009/1/18 17:36

We were reading through 1 Corinthians 9: 19-23 this morning. The passage demonstrates Paul's patience with people of various backgrounds even as he maintained only one gospel. I believe every sentence could be a revelation for those who seriously wrestle over the oft perceived tension between grace and truth.

"...though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law.

To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

If the early Church was merely an exclusive form of Judaism, or inclusive syncretism, we can safely conclude it wouldn't have made a difference. Afterall, the world already had Judaism and pagan syncretism.(edit: cultural polytheism) By the Holy Spirit, Christians were more then a bunch organized according to a particular line of reason or rules, but a society organized by revelation.

This revelation of the Gospel penetrated the darkness of all existing pagan and religious world views as a narrow beam of light from the singularity of Jesus Christ. Yet this single ray was broad enough to shine upon Jews and Barbarians, gentiles, slaves, and women; all of different cultures. In Christ, the Church grew in numbers without resorting to syncretism or liberalism, or feeling compelled to stamp out every little spark of difference they detected in other people. I believe it continues to be our calling today to understand more fully what it means to be "in Christ", and along the way we will learn more fully the sufficiency of Christ, and consequently the difference between grace and legalism.

Of what are we certain? I am becoming certain of nothing in this life except Christ. Through all of God's wise disappointments in my life, I am a carving, and God is the carver. If I have even one fine sounding theological branch of knowledge that erodes certainty in Christ, then it is because I have not been whittled down enough.

Blessings,

MC