

They Shall Keep The Way Of The Lord

Before Isaac was born, Abraham was visited by three people – one of whom was probably the preincarnate Christ. These three people had come to see just how bad things really were in Sodom:

Genesis 18:20: “And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;
21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.”

The Lord decided that He wanted to check out Sodom and Gomorrah *in person*. Now, we know that God sees all things; there is nothing that is hidden from God and there is no place one can go to get away from God:

Psalms 139:7: “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.
11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.
12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

There are some people who think that Hell is separation from God – that it is the one place in the universe where one can finally get away from God altogether. As we see in verse 8, however, that is not the case. God is there as well, pouring out His endless wrath upon those who refused His mercy.

So, then, we know that God sees all things; nothing is hidden from Him. He did not *need* to leave Heaven and go to Sodom in person to know what was going on, but He chose to go anyway. This actually emphasizes the extreme depravity of Sodom. By way of an analogy, imagine hearing about something that is so horrifying that it wasn't enough to simply hear about it; you had to go in person and see it for yourself. The sin of Sodom was so great that God actually went there to deal with the situation *in person*. This is similar to the Second Coming, when the Lord will return with the armies of Heaven so that He can personally destroy the Antichrist.

As the Lord was on this mission to investigate Sodom, He asked Himself whether or not He should tell Abraham what He was about to do:

Genesis 18:17: “And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;
18 Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?
19 For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord

may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”

The Lord decided to tell Abraham everything, and the reason He made this decision was because Abraham and his descendents were going to keep the way of the Lord. They were going to walk in His ways and God was going to bless them for it and make them a great nation. Since God knew this would happen, He told Abraham what was going on. When He did this Abraham interceded on behalf of Sodom and asked God to spare it if there were just 10 righteous people there. God agreed to this, but since He did not find 10 righteous people in Sodom He destroyed the city with fire and brimstone:

Genesis 19:24: “Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven;
25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.”

What we see here is a sharp contrast between Abraham, who kept the ways of God, and between the men of Sodom, who were exceedingly wicked:

Genesis 13:13: “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly.”

God treated Abraham and Sodom in very different ways: He blessed Abraham and He utterly destroyed Sodom. The man who obeyed God was blessed, and the men who were exceedingly wicked were burned alive with fire and brimstone.

The reason I bring this up is because nothing has changed. Yes, those who follow Christ in this life will suffer persecution and go through many trials. Ultimately, however, they will be spared God's wrath and will go on to inherit everlasting life and joy. On the other hand, those who reject Christ will be cast into the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. They will be burned alive – just like the people of Sodom.

We know that we are not saved by our works. The apostle Paul makes this quite clear:

2 Timothy 1:9: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”

Our works do not save us; we are saved by grace and grace alone. I want to emphasize that our works play *no part in our salvation*. However, works are a *result* of salvation, and *all true faith will result in works*. This is the point that James made:

James 2:7: “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.”

Our works demonstrate that our faith is real; they are the certificate of authenticity. A faith that produces no works is a dead faith – one that is false, counterfeit, phony. Real faith *always* results in works.

The Bible is clear that Abraham was saved by his faith, not by his works:

Romans 4:2: “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

What saved Abraham was his belief in God. He believed God and that was counted to him for righteousness. It was his faith that saved him. We can tell that Abraham's faith was genuine because it was followed by works: when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, he obeyed. Abraham's works showed that his faith was real. The fact that he kept the way of the Lord demonstrated that he had genuine, saving faith.

The reason this is so important is because there is an epidemic of disobedience in the modern Church. There are many people who call themselves Christians but who utterly reject the authority of God over their lives. They do not believe that God has a right to tell them what to do. They do exactly what they please, when they please, and they laugh at the restrictions found in the Bible. There is this idea going around that you can be a Christian without ever submitting to the lordship of Christ – that you can say “God, forgive my sins, but don't you dare tell me what to do. Just stay out of my life and keep me from going to Hell. Thanks.” That is not a saving prayer – but it is exactly what a great many people believe.

It is easy to spot people who have rejected God's authority over their life. For example, just look at the way people treat the Bible. The Bible claims to be the inspired, infallible, and flawless words of God Himself. It is God speaking to us directly, communicating His laws, values, and decrees. The Bible contains God's will for our lives.

Today, however, people despise the Bible. This is not limited to nonbelievers, but includes Christians; in fact, many supposed Christians are often the very worst. It never ceases to astonish me when I try to teach a Christian something from the Word and am told “Well, I just don't care what the Bible says”. Other times I hear “Well, I know the Bible says that but I just believe differently.” Then there is the horrific “I know the Bible says that, but I will never, ever obey that. Ever. I completely reject that.”

There are many people who attack the authority of the Bible and claim that it is full of errors, or that the apostle Paul was wrong, or that you can't really believe what the Bible says. However, the people who make those claims have no ground on which to stand. They cannot prove that the Bible is in error; many people have tried but no one has ever succeeded. They cannot prove that the text of the Bible has been corrupted. They cannot prove that the apostle Paul was wrong. In fact, the majority of people who claim such things have never even *tried* to prove their point. The reality is that those claims are just excuses. The real issue is that *the Bible tells them things they don't want to hear and so they reject what the Bible has to say*. Their criticism of the Bible is just an attempt to hide their own rebellion.

God, however, is *not* amused. He is very clear about how He sees His word:

2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Notice what it says: *all* scripture is given by inspiration of God. It is not a mixture of the "words of God" and "words of men". It is not part truth, part corruption, part myth, and part lie. It is all given by the inspiration of God – every last word of it. Peter put it this way:

2 Peter 1:20: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

This really could not be any more clear! Scripture did not come by the will of man; instead, "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost". This is true not just of prophecy but of *all* Scripture. It is *all* the words of God. As the Psalms says, the Bible is true from the very first chapter:

Psalms 119:160: "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

Nor is the Bible full of lies and error. All of God's words are true, and there is no error or deceit among them:

Proverbs 30:5: "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him."

Not only is the Word of God true, but it is also filled with power:

Hebrews 4:12: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Many supposed Christians absolutely hate the things that Paul wrote and dismiss him entirely. They eagerly claim that Paul was wrong about a lot of issues. However, the apostle Paul made it very plain that the things that he wrote were nothing less than commands from the Lord Himself:

1 Corinthians 14:37: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

Lest you think that was just Paul trying to prop himself up, the other apostles agreed with him. Peter made it clear that the letters of Paul were just as much holy Scripture as the Old Testament itself:

1 Peter 3:15: "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some

things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

Peter said that many unlearned people deceitfully misinterpret both Paul's epistles and *the other scriptures*, thus putting Paul's letters on the same footing as the rest of the Bible. Paul's writings are not the scribblings of a deranged lunatic, even though that is what many supposed Christians believe today; instead they are the very commandments of God, and those who reject them are rejecting God Himself.

That is the real issue. The words in the Bible are the very words of God, and those who reject it are rejecting God. It is not any more complicated than that. As Christians we are called to *obey* God, not reject Him. This is what Jesus Himself had to say:

Matthew 4:4: “But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

Jesus said that we are to live by *every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*. We are to highly esteem the words of God; we are to know them and obey them. *Jesus expected His followers to live by every last word of God.*

But that's not how things are, is it? Instead we have churches full of people who are utterly ignorant about the Bible. The reason they are ignorant is because *the Bible doesn't matter to them*. I know this is the case because people aren't embarrassed to tell me that. These self-professed Christians are completely comfortable saying things like “I don't care what the Bible says” or “what the Bible has to say just doesn't matter” or “I don't care if the Bible says it; I will never, ever do that”. They don't study the Bible because *it doesn't matter to them*. They don't understand the Bible because *it doesn't matter to them*. They don't obey the Bible because *it doesn't matter to them*. They see the teachings of the Bible as being utterly unimportant – not worth their time or attention, and *certainly* not binding over their life.

The Bible has a very different viewpoint. The apostles taught that we ought to be *very* concerned about what the Bible has to say:

Hebrews 2:1: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?”

Where do we find “the things which we have heard”? In the Bible. The things that God has borne witness to – the signs and wonders and divers miracles – where do we find those? In the Bible. It contains the things that we ought to give “the more earnest heed” to.

But many modern Christians have utterly rejected the Bible, and they have also rejected its authority over their lives. If Christians actually cared about the Bible they would not approve of homosexuality. We would not have churches led by homosexual clergy. We would not have entire congregations gathering to ask God to forgive them for the “sin of condemning homosexuality”. We would not have rampant adultery and divorce in the church. The Church would be a radically different

place if Christians actually cared about what God had to say – but they don't.

Yes, I realize there are those who do, but they are the exceptions. So many churches are utterly and breathtakingly corrupt. Many congregations have made peace with the world and have accepted sin, and simply don't believe the Bible anymore. I am utterly, thoroughly sick of hearing Christians tell me to stop telling them about the Bible because – as they themselves explain – *they don't care what it has to say*. The fact that a Christian would actually dare to say “I don't care what the Bible says” should shock us, but these days it's normal.

One fact that we absolutely must realize is that if you have rejected God's authority over your life then *you are not a Christian*. I don't care if you are a deacon, a pastor, or a Sunday School teacher; I don't care if you've been a missionary for 50 years or have been a church member since the day you were born. If you are telling God “You have no say in my life; I'm going to do whatever I please” then you are not saved. Period. Your Christianity is a lie and your faith is false.

You see, in order to be saved, Jesus must be your Lord *and* Savior. One of the key parts of salvation – and one that many churches have tossed aside – is the element of *repentance*. The Bible says over and over that in order to be saved you must repent. In fact, that is the very message that Jesus Himself preached:

Matthew 4:17: “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 9:13: “But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinner to repentance.”

Why did Jesus come? To call sinners to repentance. Jesus condemned those who did not repent:

Matthew 11:20: “Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:”

Not only did He condemn them, but He made it clear that those who refused to repent would perish:

Luke 13:2: “And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things?
3 I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

When someone tells God “Please keep me out of Hell. Thanks.”, that is *not* repentance. Repentance is where you are sorry for your sins and you tell God that the things you have done are wrong; you are agreeing with Him that *you have sinned*, and – this is key – you are placing yourself under His authority. It means that you ask God to forgive you for the wrong things you have done, and to change you so that you can walk in God's ways. Repentance is a *change in allegiance*. It is putting an end to your rebellion against God. You are no longer living for yourself; you are now living for God. Jesus is now your master. We become what the Bible calls a living sacrifice:

Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

After we are saved we no longer live for ourselves. We no longer do what *we* think is right or what *we* think is best. Instead we are bound to follow God and God alone, doing what *God* says is right and what *God* says is best. We obey God at all times regardless of the cost. We do what God tells us to do, we believe what He has to say, and we humble ourselves and accept His rule over our lives. Being a Christian means that God is our king and our master. It means that we acknowledge and accept His authority over us.

Where do we find God's commands and decrees? In the Bible. Therefore, as Christians, we are bound by the Bible. We *must* obey what it says. We must believe what it teaches. We must treasure it and care about it because it is the very words of our master, Jesus Christ. It means that every last word in the Bible matters because *they are all God's words*. Those words are binding over us; they have absolute authority over us. Obeying them does *not* save us, but *we must obey them*.

Why? Because they are the words of our king – the words of the One Who purchased us with His own blood. There are many people who believe that they can reject the authority of God and still be saved. They think that they can laugh at God's commands and somehow everything will still all work out in the end. *This is a grave error*. You see, if you reject God's commands then you can no longer say that God is your master. At that point *you* are the master. You are doing what *you* want to do. You have replaced God *with yourself*. This is a fatal mistake, because if Jesus is not your Lord *then He will not be your Savior either*. It is a package deal. If you reject His authority over your life then He will not save you.

Jesus made this quite clear in one of His parables. In the parable that we find in Luke 19, when the master returned he rewarded those who were faithful to him. Those who rejected his reign, however, were executed:

Luke 19:27: “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.”

God is very clear about this: all of those who reject the authority of God and who refuse to allow God to reign over them *will be damned*. They will all be cast into the Lake of Fire, where they will be burned alive for all of eternity. Rejecting the authority of God has very serious consequences.

The men of Sodom utterly rejected God. They did not fear Him and they laughed at His commands. They were exceedingly wicked, so the Lord reigned down fire and brimstone from Heaven and killed them all. Abraham, however, was righteous. He believed God and he proved that his faith was genuine through his obedience. He was careful to keep the way of the Lord. The Lord blessed Abraham, and He will bless all those who chose to repent.

Abraham chose to keep the way of the Lord and the Lord rewarded him; the men of Sodom chose to reject that way and the Lord killed them all. Today the world is faced with the same choice. Those who repent and believe, submitting themselves to the lordship of Christ, will be saved and will go on to inherit everlasting life. Those who reject God's authority and mock His word will be tormented day and night in the Lake of Fire. There are no other options.

I am greatly afraid that many people who claim to be Christians have chosen the second option. They claim to have genuine faith but they reject the authority of God and despise His words. These people are not Christians at all but are utterly lost. When they stand before the God whose authority they have rejected they will find only wrath – a wrath that will last for all of eternity.

My plea to you is this: *do not join them*. There are many who will go down the road to destruction, but I urge you to not go down that path. Do not follow them to Hell. Accept the Lord and yield to Him, while there is still time. The day is rapidly approaching when it will be too late.