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June 2015 "What Is Your Standard?"

Dear Friends,

Not long ago I watched a television special about events documented in scripture which took place after the crucifixion of Jesus. At first I found it very interesting as it blended historical life of that time with what is portrayed in the Bible. But the more I watched, the more I became discouraged. It would have been impossible for the producers to have created such a program unless they had read the book of Acts. However, instead of presenting the events as they are revealed in the Bible, they altered and revised God's Word for no apparent reason. In fact, they even went so far as to alter and rewrite secular history!

Many Christians who watched that special may have felt the same disappointment, wondering, "Why did they have to change things? Why not just leave scripture as it is written and present it that way?" But some of those same Christians may be doing the exact same thing. I'll explain.

In Matthew 4:4 Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Based on that verse alone, I would present the following questions:

- 1) Do you believe Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, when He spoke those words?
- 2) Do you believe Jesus ever lied?
- 3) Do you believe He meant what He said in Matthew 4:4?
- 4) Are you truly living by every word (the Bible) that has proceeded out of the mouth of God?

To live by every Word that has proceeded out of the mouth of God means that the foundation for all we believe, teach, accept as truth and use as the guideline for all our behavior and daily life is the Bible. Further, it means that the Bible is to be the starting point for how we analyze every situation, decision and non-scriptural information presented to us.

A few years ago many Christians were somewhat caught up in the "What Would Jesus Do?" fad. People wore bracelets, necklaces, T-Shirts and more emblazoned with "WWJD?" The problem is, if you don't know what God has said in His Word, you won't truly know what Jesus would do.

Do you honestly believe that everything in the Bible is true? The correct answer is "yes." But think **VERY HARD** before giving such an answer. If you say "yes," then you are binding yourself to governing your life according to what is written in the Bible. If you say "no," you are revealing that you honestly do not believe what God has said, in effect, calling God a liar. Dangerous ground, indeed.

Let's consider what is recorded in the Bible about the Bible:

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

(Matthew 24:35)

For I am the LORD, I change not... (Malachi 3:6) Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) If God doesn't change, then His Word doesn't change.

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48) If God's Word is the standard by which we will be eternally judged, then His word is an unchanging constant from generation to generation, society to society.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. (John 6:63)

For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. (Psalm 119:89)

The above verses are just a sampling of the critical nature of God's Word and how seriously we are to take what is written therein. The problem that causes me increasing concern is how so many Christians claim to love God and say they are doing their best to live for Him, yet they are "rewriting" scripture. Though they might adamantly deny such an accusation, the fruit of their lives bears great contradiction to their denial.

Over and over I have encountered Christians who establish much of their belief system on science (medical, archeological, mathematical, etc) instead of on the Word of God. For example, Christians who accept God's Word as their life's standard will not demand before-and-after x-rays to believe a divine healing has taken place. Likewise, they will not try to blend the severely flawed theory of evolution with the truth of creation as God has spoken it in Genesis.

In spite of this, numerous Christians have defended their compromise by saying something like, "Yes, but according to science..." They fail to acknowledge that the science we know is the result of a study of corrupt creation, not God's original revelation as recorded in Genesis. Additionally, science has repeatedly changed many things previously "confirmed" as fact. Cases in point: In years past, science "proved irrefutably" that (1) the world was flat, and (2) the Sun and other planets revolved around the Earth. We no longer believe either of those "scientific facts" because they have been proven wrong. But it gets worse.

We are living in what could well be described as the worst age in the history of God's Kingdom and His Church. The problem is not with His Kingdom, but how His Church is acknowledging His Kingdom. The standards for Christian living are recorded in the Bible, given to us by God. Yet, more and more Christians are openly refusing to live by every Word of God, choosing instead to create their own definition of Christianity and holiness. Consider some of the standards our Heavenly Father has established for His children:

- In Galatians 5:19-21, God condemns drunkenness and equates it with the sins of adultery and murder. Even so, an increasing number of Christians are defending

their lifestyle of "social drinking," even when it includes mild intoxication. Listen, when people begin feeling even the mildest "effects" of alcohol, that is "entry-level" drunkenness.

- Psalm 127:3 declares that children are a heritage of the Lord, not our heritage, and that the fruit of the womb is His reward, not our reward. Nevertheless, there are Christians who stoutly defend the murder of unborn children (abortion) as being the right of the mother, even campaigning and voting for politicians who approve of abortion.
- More and more Christians have openly engaged in and supported premarital sex, one-night stands and living together, declaring that there is nothing in the Bible prohibiting such activities. I don't know what Bible they are reading because the word "fornication" appears 32 times in the Bible, being condemned in both the Old and New Testaments (take another look at Galatians 5:19-21). Furthermore, in Romans 13:13, God condemns "chambering" in the same sentence with drunkenness (the word "chambering" comes from the Greek word "koite," a word used in that age referring both to unmarried people living together and one-night stands).
- In both the Old and New Testaments, God has strongly condemned and warned against homosexual behavior, whether it involves men or women. Regardless, more and more Christians - even entire denominations - are approving of and defending behavior that God has called an abomination (Leviticus 18, Romans 1-2, Galatians 5:19-21).
- ***¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? ¹⁵And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? ¹⁶And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ¹⁷Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, ¹⁸And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)*** In spite of this, Christians are increasingly dating and marrying people who have not accepted Jesus as Savior, including those who are members of religious organizations which totally deny the Deity of Jesus.

The list above could be far longer than it is. Some Christians would go so far as to say, "Well, yes Brother Jim, but those things are your opinion. The world has changed and you need to realize that things are different now than when you were younger."

They certainly are different! But what I am sharing is not an opinion; it is an identification of what God has said compared to what many Christians are choosing to believe. If the Bible says a behavior or activity is a sin, then it is a sin, **PERIOD**. The only reason a Christian would debate these things is if he or she is refusing to live by every Word that has proceeded from the mouth of God.

Just because a society passes a law that legalizes something God has condemned does not mean that law has nullified God's Word or that He no longer judges it as sin. Even so, the mantra, "but it's legal," crosses the lips of too many Christians as they defend their sin.

In our church not long ago I explained that if you study the historical pattern of social degeneration, whatever is accepted in society will eventually be accepted in churches among Christians. This has repeatedly proven true over the last 200+ years. The plain facts are these: we are living in an age of Church apostasy and blatant compromise to God's Word. Scripture has prophesied as much:

³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

¹Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, ²That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. ³Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; ⁴Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4)

One of the fables some Christians are living by is that they can circumvent scripture, live as they desire and face no consequences. God's grace does not facilitate or excuse sin; it empowers the Believer to say no to all sin. Why would God, in Ephesians 4:22-32, instruct Christians to stop living the way of the lost and start living each day exclusively by righteousness and holiness if He didn't mean it? When God said in 1 Peter 1:16, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy," He was not giving us something good to consider, He was giving us a command.

It is true that Christians are no longer under the dictates of the Law of Moses. However, it could correctly be said that we are to live according to the Law of God's Holiness and Righteousness.

As bad as things are now, it is going to get worse. Quite some time back I warned our congregation not to be surprised if they hear of churches holding services and preaching about Jesus where those in attendance are totally naked: I have now heard of two such churches. When the stigmata of gold dust, gem stones and blood or oil appearing on Christians hands during church services began happening, I publicly cautioned that Satan was testing the waters to see how gullible Christians would be prior to him moving forward with the introduction of doctrinal abominations in the Church. Look at what is now happening.

If I were to put a label on where we are presently in Church history, I would say we are in the elementary school stages of the itching ears and falling away spoken of in the verses mentioned above. Read again 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; things are going to get so bad in the Church that it actually paves the way for the son of perdition to rise to power.

That thought is absolutely staggering: the corruption and compromise of so many Christians literally facilitates the emergence of the anti-Christ!

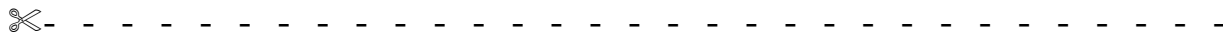
The Church has not gotten to this point over night; it has taken many years. The fault lies in two areas: (1) watered-down, compromising, out-of-context ministry on the part of those standing behind pulpits; (2) lukewarm, lazy Christians who prefer to be friends with the world and refuse to totally mortify the flesh (James 4:4 and Romans 8:13). We really shouldn't be surprised at all of this; the type and shadow is revealed in scripture when we study the history of Israel and what led to the downfall, judgment and captivity of the Jews.

Is there any hope? You'd better believe there is hope! If we want to endure to the end as Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, here - briefly - is what we need to do:

- 1) Take God at His Word and make the Bible the only foundation for all we believe, teach, accept as truth and use as the guideline for all our behavior and daily life.
- 2) Become part of a church that makes the Bible the only foundation for what is believed, taught, accepted as truth and used as the guideline for all our behavior and daily life.
- 3) Surround ourselves with other Christians who make the Bible the only foundation for all they believe, teach, accept as truth and use as the guideline for all their behavior and daily life.

Jesus wants us to be a glorious Church without spot, wrinkle or blemish as we await His return. If we fight the good fight of faith and refuse to compromise, we will be those for whom He returns and we will hear those glorious words, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!"

In His Grace,



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