

Sunday, October 23, 2022 am

## CLOSER TO GOD (31)

### Pursuing Holiness – 9

### Respecting God’s Word (1)

As we continue our 2022 theme and our examination of holiness, we now want to focus our attention on the word of God. IF we are pursuing holiness, we MUST properly approach God’s word. In this lesson, I want to remind us of what God’s word is and what our attitude toward His word needs to be. In our next lesson we want to make practical application concerning the Bible as I pursue holiness.

#### I. Viewing the Bible with Reverence

##### a. The Bible IS the Word of God –

- i. While this seems like an obvious point, it is something we need to remind ourselves of from time to time. And we need to contemplate what that really means.
- ii. The Bible is HOW God communicates to us today. Cf. Ephesians 3:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:15-17 – note the scriptures are holy.
- iii. Understand, when God speaks, His will happens.

1. We see that in creation (Genesis 1:3, Hebrews 11:3 – the heavens were framed by the word of God, Psalm 33:6-9, *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*)

2. True throughout scripture. Consider Isaiah 55:11, *So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.*

- iv. Psalm 138:2, *I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.* That is a powerful statement – His word is above His name. Consider that when you understand what God’s word does for us. Yes Creation, resurrecting Jesus, speaking powerfully from Mt. Sinai, and so many other impressive feats were great miracles. BUT how would we know about them UNLESS He told us. How do we know His name? Because His word has revealed it to us. It is in that sense His word is ABOVE even His name. 1 Corinthians 2:10-11. 2 Peter 1:19 – “we have the prophetic word confirmed” – actions verify His message!

- b. We are also reminded of the power of God’s word - Hebrews 4:12, Romans 1:16-17, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, 1 Thessalonians 2:14 – they received it as “the word of God which also effectively works in you who believe.”, etc.

##### c. Consider examples of how people revered God’s word

- i. Exodus 19-20 – be reminded of how the people trembled at the thundering voice of God from Mt. Sinai.
- ii. **Josiah** – 2 Kings 22 was a very righteous king who at an early age began to seek the Lord. In his purity he determined to restore the temple. As they were doing the work, they found the book of the Law of the LORD (VS. 8). It is read to Josiah who tears his clothes and immediately inquires of the LORD (VS. 11-13). The doom was declared, but the timing was extended by the LORD because of Josiah’s righteousness. Then in 23:1-3, he has the law read in the presence of the people and then made a covenant with the LORD. 23:21-23 – they keep the Passover “as it is written in the book of the Covenant”, to the degree it had

not been so since the days of the judges (going back about 900 years). There was GREAT respect for God and His word. Notice what is said about Josiah in 2 Kings 23:23-25.

- iii. **Restoring true worship** - Nehemiah 8:1-9 – After Judah returns from Babylonian captivity (~536 BC), they finally restore the temple, and about 80-100 years after the return, the walls of the city. BUT, with the walls completed, their job was not done. They still needed to restore true worship. When all the people gathered, Ezra opened the book, the people stood up, lifting their hands, bowing their heads and worshipping the LORD...
  - iv. Cornelius – Acts 10 - a righteous Gentile who feared God with all his household and worshipped Him with prayer and generosity (vs. 1-2). An angel appears to him in a vision and tells him to send for Peter. He acts immediately, and when Peter comes we find his attitude - Acts 10:33 He is present before God, to hear all things commanded you by God. As Peter preaches, we know the outcome. Cornelius and his household obey the gospel.
  - v. The Bereans – Acts 17:11 – leaving Thessalonica on his 2<sup>nd</sup> preaching journey, he comes to Berea where they are openminded and respectfully consider the message of Paul. They searched the scriptures to verify the truthfulness of what Paul had taught them.
  - vi. Among the Thessalonians there were those who did reverence God’s word – 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- d. Consequences for those who failed to follow His word
- i. Adam and Eve – Genesis 3. They did not reverence or believe what God told them.
  - ii. Nadab and Abihu – Leviticus 10 – somehow they had not revered God, nor His instructions to them.
  - iii. Numbers 20:12 – Moses’ error at Kadesh. He did not believe the LORD and was forbidden to enter the Promised Land. He failed to follow God’s instructions in one thing.
- e. 2 Peter 1:19 – the prophetic word which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place.
- f. Psalm 119 - The longest psalm is about God’s word. Virtually every verse mentions God’s word in 1 way or another. I want to consider parts of this psalm in these 2 lessons. Today, I notice how the psalmist, acknowledges the greatness of God (Next week some verses about applying His word).
- i. Psalm 119:1-2, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!*
  - ii. Psalm 119:49, *Remember the word to Your servant, Upon which You have caused me to hope.*
  - iii. Psalm 119:86, *All Your commandments are faithful...*
  - iv. 89-91, *Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, For all are Your servants.*
  - v. 96, *I have seen the consummation of all perfection, But Your commandment is exceedingly broad.*
  - vi. 120, *My flesh trembles for fear of You, And I am afraid of Your judgments.*
  - vii. 130, *The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.*
  - viii. 137-138 - *Righteous are You, O Lord, And upright are Your judgments. Your testimonies, which You have commanded, Are righteous and very faithful.*
  - ix. WE CAN SEE in this sampling, how we ought to approach God’s word with reverence AND why.

g. **Add to this Psalm 19:7-11, The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...**

## II. It is the key to our salvation

- a. The Bible unlocks what I need to do to be saved and overcome sin.
  - i. Again - Romans 1:16-17.
  - ii. 2 Timothy 3:15 - from childhood Timothy had known the holy scriptures leading him to salvation.

- iii. Ephesians 1:13 - *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,*
- iv. Hebrews 2:1-4 – we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard... how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation...
- b. It is key to understanding what holiness is and HOW I can be holy!
  - i. 1 Peter 1:15-16 calls for us to be holy, even as God is holy. To do this, we need to know how God is holy and how to achieve that holiness. The answer lies in His holy word.
  - ii. 2 Peter 1:3-4 – we find that within its pages, God has given us *“all things that pertain to life and godliness.”*

If the Bible is the word of God (and it is), I must realize that I need it. And that realization will begin with a full appreciation of what He reveals to us. It is my hope that in this lesson we have seen the holiness of God's word and that we resolve to treat it as such. In my next lesson, I would like to address HOW I need to use God's word in my pursuit of holiness.

### III. The Bible as I pursue holiness

- a. I must believe that it is the word of God. We have just established this. Furthermore, I must believe that His word is infallible and that He has seen to it that we have what we need (cf. 2 Peter 1:3 – we have “all things that pertain to life and godliness.”) I ought to accept the Bible as God’s COMPLETE revelation.
- b. I have to reverence it – as noted, it is the word of God.
  - i. Psalm 119:38 - *Establish Your word to Your servant, Who is devoted to fearing You.*
  - ii.
  - iii. I should not treat it like a novel or some practical “how to guide” with suggestions. It is HOW God communicates with us.
  - iv. His word deserves my respect. That means I will not malign it in any way – by either distorting its teachings or speaking disrespectfully of it. I will NOT treat it as common.
  - v. What does that say about our physical Bibles?
    1. In many cultures, copies of sacred texts are treated with the highest respect. They are viewed as holy relics – special care is taken when they are handled, and they are placed in positions of prominence. This is true of other world religions (e.g. Islam, Judaism) and in some denominations. The history of the English Bible shows that some of the first Bibles were designed for display in churches. While many of these are practicing error, they have high respect for what they view as the word of God.
    2. Understand, we must be careful not to turn our Bible into a sacred relic (cf. 2 Kings 18:4 – the bronze serpent) and worship it. However, while the paper and binding are certainly not sacred (much in the same way a church building is not sacred), there is something to be said about how you treat your copy of the word of God.
    3. And while there might be different approaches to what we do with our personal Bibles (both book form and electronic) (e.g. some write extensively in the margins and continually underline texts, while others prefer to NOT write in a particular Bible of theirs), when we see it or pick it up, do we see it as the word of God?
    4. Do you toss it in the trunk after services and not to retrieve it again until next Sunday? Does it get buried in all your other common papers or books?
    5. Remember, the Bible is God speaking to us through written word (which is JUST AS MUCH the word of God as if He spoke directly to us or through inspired prophets/apostles/teachers). 1 Peter 4:11 – we speak, “as the oracles of God”; 1 Corinthians 14:37 notes that what Paul wrote was “the commandments of the Lord.”
    6. NOTE: These are my thoughts about our personal Bibles. Everyone has to decide for themselves what that book means to you. But, in terms of casualness, often times the way we treat an object indicates what our true attitude toward it is, much in the same way casual conduct (conversation, clothing, etc.) often reflects casual attitude. This is just something to think about!
- c. I must study it regularly – Psalm 1:1-2, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 2:15, 2 Peter 3:18, etc. Joshua 1:8,
- d. I need a proper attitude as I study it –
  - i. Believing it can be understood - Ephesians 5:17
  - ii. Believing that it is authoritative – God says what He means and means what He says.
  - iii. I need to be honest and sincere as I study
  - iv. I ought to delight in His word – it needs to be pleasurable, not a chore or checklist Psalm 119:47 - *And I will delight myself in Your commandments, Which I love.*
  - v. I need to be open-minded
  - vi. I need to be disciplined as I study – willing to work at understanding

- e. I need to handle it accurately – 2 Timothy 2:15-17. I need to respect its boundaries – Deuteronomy 12:32, Revelation 22:8-9, etc.
- f. I need to believe that it can change me for good - 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it is able to make us complete. Acts 20:32, Paul commended the Ephesian elders “to the word of His grace which is able to build you up...” Psalm 119:9, How can a man keep his way pure?
- i. I must intend to obey it! 1 John 5:1-2, 2:3-6. Psalm 119:1-2, *Blessed are the undefiled in the way, Who walk in the law of the Lord! Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!* Matthew 7:21-23 –