

Sunday, October 30, 2022 am

CLOSER TO GOD (32)

Pursuing Holiness – 10

Respecting God's Word (2)

As we continue our study of pursuing holiness, last week we addressed our need to understand that the Bible is the word of God. It is how He communicates with us, including our pursuit of holiness. God gets to set the standard, and if we reverence Him as we ought to, we will His word with equal respect. Today, I want to make some practical application concerning His word by asking, HOW should I view the Bible? So let's get started.

I. The Bible as I pursue holiness

a. I must believe that it is the word of God.

- i. In our last lesson we showed how the Bible is the word of God and what that means.
- ii. IF I believe this, I must believe that His word is INFALLIBLE. That means that the Bible is without error. It teaches what God intended for it to teach. He guided its writers, both prophets and apostles to say what He intended to say, WORD FOR WORD (cf. Galatians 1:11-12, John 16:13, 2 Peter 1:19-21, etc.)
 1. Hence, inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
 2. Psalm 19:7, *"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."*
 3. Romans 12:2, speaks of proving the "perfect will of God"
 4. Proverbs 30:5 notes, *Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.*
 5. Psalm 119:128, *Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things I consider to be right; I hate every false way.*
- iii. I ought to accept the Bible as God's COMPLETE revelation.
 1. Jude 3 – we have "the faith once for all delivered..."
 2. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – with His word, we can be complete
 3. God 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."
- iv. But do I REALLY believe that?
 1. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 as noted, they welcomed it as the word of God, not as the word of men (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:37).
 2. This will affect HOW I approach what His word tells me to do.

b. I have to reverence it – if we see the Bible as the word of God, we WILL show it due honor.

- i. Psalm 119:38 - *Establish Your word to Your servant, Who is devoted to fearing You.*
- ii. I should not treat it like a novel or some practical "how to guide" with suggestions. It is HOW God communicates with us.
- iii. 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 (cf. 2 Peter 3:16 – twisting to their own destruction, 2 Corinthians 4:2 – not handling the word of God deceitfully, 2 Timothy 4:3-4 – heap up teachers to tell them what they want to hear, cf. Matthew 15:3-9, etc.). I will NOT treat it as common. Psalm 119:11, *Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.* Psalm 119:97, *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.*
- iv. 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. Consider, 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 –***

- i. If I am pursuing holiness, I understand that it is a fulltime commitment. It becomes who I am and affects every area of my life, as we have been studying. I will NOT know what I need to be doing, if I do not open my Bible to read and study it regularly.
- ii. Psalm 1:1-2 - in his law one meditates day and night.
- iii. Acts 17:11 – they searched the scriptures
- iv. 2 Timothy 2:15 – be diligent to present yourself approved – rightly dividing His word
- v. 2 Peter 3:18 – grow in grace and knowledge
- vi. Joshua 1:7-8 – so was Joshua told, *Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*

d. ***I need a proper attitude as I study it –***

- i. Believing it can be understood - Ephesians 5:17, cf. 3:3-, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 – able to make us complete.
- ii. 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.* 9x in this psalm, the word “delight” is found. Psalm 119:97, *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.* 12x in this psalm, he speaks of “love” for God’s law. Studying God’s word should not be a drudgery. The spiritually minded take pleasure in being able to learn more of His will.
- iii. I need to be open-minded – while a challenge, as I study I ought to approach His word with an open mind, ready to change if I learn that I need to. Again, consider the Bereans – Acts

17:11, or Apollos – Acts 18:26-27, Cornelius – Acts 10:33. NOTE: This does not mean you “fall for anything” that sounds good – cf. Ephesians 4:14 – tossed to and fro...

- iv. I need to be disciplined as I study – willing to work at understanding. 2 Timothy 2:15 – be diligent... (KJV – “study”); It is a good habit to read the Bible every day and study on a regular and consistent basis.
 - v. IF I am pursuing holiness, I will see the importance of God’s word and that will be reflected in my studies.
- e. ***I need to handle it accurately*** –
- i. 2 Timothy 2:15 - rightly dividing the word of truth.
 - ii. I need to respect its boundaries – Deuteronomy 12:32, Revelation 22:18-19, etc.
1 Corinthians 4:6, *Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.*
 - iii. I need to seek to understand context – don’t take a text out of its proper setting or audience.
 - iv. I cannot twist it to say what I want it to say. We have already noted the examples – 2 Peter 3:16, etc.
- f. ***I need to believe that it can change me for good*** –
- i. 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it is able to make us complete.
 - ii. Acts 20:32, Paul commended the Ephesian elders “to the word of His grace which is able to build you up...”
 - iii. Psalm 119:9, *How can a man keep his way pure? By taking heed to Your word.*
 - iv. Psalm 119:104-105 - *Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*
- i. ***I must intend to obey it!***
- a. 1 John 5:2-3, 2:3-6 – how do we know and love God? By keeping His commandments.
 - b. James 1:21-25 – Be doers and not hearers only.
 - c. 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!*
 - d. Matthew 7:21-23 – not enough to say you believe if you do not obey.

IN conclusion: If I am to grow spiritually and pursue holiness, I MUST take God’s word seriously. Not only considering that God revealed this to me, but also I must intend to respond to its message by doing what it tells me to do. It is just that simple. Not easy, but simple. The question is, what are you doing in your pursuit of holiness?