



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Obedience: The True Test of Treasuring God's Word

PSALM 119:34, 44

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Psalms 119 describes for us what it means to treasure God's Word. The writer took great pains to express his love for the Scriptures. He wrote of the great blessings found in seeking to know, understand, and apply God's words. He described one who hungers for and greatly values the truth God has revealed to us in the pages of the Bible. He described the Word as a light to lead and direct our lives. He prayed for God's help to understand the Scriptures demonstrating a dependence upon God's work to grasp and understand its meaning. As we read through the Psalm we find that all this points to one important goal – an encouragement and challenge to obey God's Word. Remember our three categories of verses found in Psalm 119: praises of God's Word, proclamations about God's Word, and prayers regarding God's Word. If we view the Bible as God's revelation to us, then we will indeed desire to obey it. Many of the proclamations are of a commitment and desire to obey the Scriptures. Several of the prayers are for God's help to obey His truth.

We see the proclamation of the intent to “keep” God's Word is used 22 times in Psalm 119. The writer affirms his aspiration to “observe” God's commands 10 times. Several times the desire is expressed to “walk” in the path of God's truth. All these simply describe a commitment to obey God and His Word. Most people express at least some appreciation for the Bible. Many quote various verses or passages. However the real test for one who treasures God's Word is whether or not they obey what it teaches.

"PSALM 119 REPROVES THOSE THAT DESIRE BIBLICAL KNOWLEDGE ONLY TO INFORM THEIR JUDGMENTS OR SATISFY THEIR CURIOSITY, NOT TO GOVERN THEIR HEARTS IN THE FEAR OF GOD OR TO REFORM THEIR PRACTICES." - THOMAS MANTON

Before we consider this important theme that runs throughout Psalm 119, let's read the next section:

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Heth

*57The LORD is my portion;
I have promised to keep Your words.
58I sought Your favor with all my heart;
Be gracious to me according to Your word.
59I considered my ways
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.*

*60I hastened and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.
61The cords of the wicked have encircled me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.
62At midnight I shall rise to give thanks to You
Because of Your righteous ordinances.
63I am a companion of all those who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.
64The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O LORD;
Teach me Your statutes.*

Throughout Psalm 119 there are many expressions of the desire and commitment to obey God's Word. For our study today let's begin with just a couple of examples:

Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law and keep it with all my heart. (Vs. 34)

So I will keep Your law continually, forever and ever. (Vs. 44)

THE COMMITMENT TO OBEYING GOD'S WORD

Psalm 119 communicates an ardent, fervent desire to embrace and carry out God's mandates and obligations. We see the depth of this commitment in verse 34 and four other places we see the desire expressed to follow God “*with all my heart*”. We read of the length of this commitment as the writer purposes to keep God's law “continually, forever and ever”. In poetic language he communicates his heart's desire not just to know God's Word but to obey it daily life.

The extent of this commitment is expressed in a desire to keep ALL of God's commandments. (See vss. 6, 13, 86, 128). We often hear people quote parts of Jesus' teaching such as “The Golden Rule” or other references from The Sermon on the Mount. But of Jesus' teaching on the narrow way of salvation or moral purity, we hear little. We tend to pick and choose the passages of our own liking and neglect or outright reject those which are more difficult. If we are followers of Jesus Christ it is vital that we are committed to obey ALL of God's Word, not just the parts we like.

WHAT LAW DO WE OBEY?

This brings up an issue which is important for us to deal with in understanding the Scriptures. If we are committed to obeying all of God's Word, what part of God's “law” are we to obey. In recent months I have heard leaders (even leading political leaders) respond this way when asked about particular moral teachings of the New Testament. “So what part of

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON**, TREASURER'S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)
LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS 8:00 A.M.**, SEN. PRES. CONF. RM. (M219) **NOON (LOCATION TBA)**

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God's law do you want us to obey? Stoning of rebellious teenagers? The wearing of mixed fabrics" (referring to examples of the law found in the Old Testament). In this response there is a tacit rejection of several of the teachings of the New Testament. How do we respond to this argument?

There are several designations of law found in the Scriptures. First we have the civic or political law which governed the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Second we see the ceremonial or religious law which laid out the worship for God's chosen people. Lastly, we find the moral law, most clearly expressed in the 10 Commandments. The civil or political law no longer applies since obviously we are not part of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. It was given for the people of Israel at that time in their history. (This is what is often referred to when people try to denigrate clear New Testament teaching by referring to various Old Testament laws.) The ceremonial or religious law was fulfilled in the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We no longer depend upon the sacrifice of animals for the atonement and forgiveness of sin. Rather, it is now through repentance and faith in Christ we are made right with God. The moral law is rooted in the very nature and character of God. This law is universal – for all time, for all people, everywhere.

In Matthew 22 an expert in the Old Testament law was dealing with this same issue. The question and Jesus' brilliant answer give us a clear understanding of that which we should commit to obey:

*³⁶"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"
³⁷And He said to him, " YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' ³⁸"This is the great and foremost commandment.
³⁹"The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' ⁴⁰"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*

A whole hearted commitment to obey God's Word may seem overwhelming to consider. When we understand the designations of civil and ceremonial law, and consider Jesus' summary of the moral law, we have a better understanding of what it is God's expects of us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OBEYING GOD'S WORD

Psalms 119 points out the importance of obedience to God's Word. This is clearly expressed in the New Testament as well. It is a truth that was clearly proclaimed by Jesus. In John 14:15 Jesus said, **"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."** In Luke 6:46 Jesus asks a pointed question, **"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"** If we are genuine followers of Jesus Christ, then we will desire to follow and obey the teachings of His Word.

The epistle of 1 John has a great deal to say about obedience to Christ and His Word being a test or evidence that one is truly a believer. I encourage you to read this whole letter but here is the most pointed example:

*³By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. **1 John 2:3-6***

There is an integral connection between knowing Christ and obeying His commandments. Knowing Christ will necessarily produce obedience. We gain assurance of our salvation by obeying His Word. Anyone who says he knows Christ ought to "walk as He walked" or else assurance is lost and in the end they prove they never knew Christ.

It is vital to point out once again that we cannot earn our salvation by obedience to the God's law. To do so would require PERFECT obedience to His holy requirements, which, obviously, not a single one of us can accomplish. Christ did however. As the perfect Son of God took our sin upon Himself as He suffered and died on the cross. His perfect obedience – His righteousness could then be credited to us when we repent and place our faith in Him. Then with a new life and a changed heart comes the desire to obey Christ and follow His Word. Such obedience is the result of our faith in Christ, not the requirement.

CONCLUSION

We find in the New Testament two powerful illustrations which describe those who hear or read God's Word but do not seek to obey it. In Matthew 7:26-27 Jesus describes the person **"who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them"** as a foolish man who builds a house upon a foundation of sand. When the storms of judgment come, the false spiritual life he has built collapses. James compares one who is a **"hearer of the Word, and not a doer"** to a person who looks at himself in mirror but turns away. James says such a person **"deludes themselves"** and is by no means a genuine believer. (James 1:23-25) There is no change in their life. Let us examine our own commitment to wholeheartedly obey all God's Word lest we be like them.

➤ **ARE YOU WHOLEHEARTEDLY COMMITTED TO STUDYING, LEARNING, AND OBEYING GOD'S WORD?**