

"God's Enduring Word"

The Bible is an ancient book, but its message is relevant and authoritative today. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to look at the authority of God's Word.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We want to know what God desires for us and requires of us. We don't want to be deceived by popular opinions or follow the broad path to destruction. We want to know the Lord Jesus and to enjoy the promises that He makes to those who follow Him. God is good, and we want to imitate Him. The Bible teaches us how to be like Him and the things that we must avoid. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Though the Bible is an ancient book, it contains God's vital message for us. We cannot afford to ignore it. The New Testament reveals what God has done for us and contains the commands that God requires of us. The grace of God is a wondrous blessing, yes, but God's grace challenges us to turn to righteousness. Titus 2 verses 11 and 12 says, "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age." Grace doesn't excuse us from responsibility; it obligates us to change our hearts and be God's people!

Now the more that we know about God's goodness and love, the more we wish we were like Him. The more we count our blessings, the more we want to thank Him for what He has done. Now this appreciation of God's goodness leads us to repent, to change our lives. Oh, we can't stand in the shadow of the cross and still love sin and error. The cross leads us to love the Lord and the truth that He teaches. Now we can know the Lord by studying His teaching, His Word, the Bible. And that's the key to a loving Him.

Now if you want to study more, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 2 Timothy 3:12 to 17, and then we'll explore how God's Word touches our lives.

Our scripture reading today comes from 2 Timothy 3 verses 12 through 17.

Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

That's a reading from God's holy word about what the bible can do for you. Let's pray together. Oh Father we're thankful for Your word and for what it can do in our lives. Help us to allow it's changes in

our hearts and in our behavior. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Let's have a heart to heart talk today and think about how we see the Bible. The Word of God is your key to understanding the will of God. Because it is the inspired word of God, you can trust it to tell you the truth. Now sometimes the truth hurts; but I'd rather hear the truth that stings for a moment than listen to a lie that causes me suffering for eternity. I'd rather change my thinking in this life than to find I was deceived in the life to come.

What I think of the Bible reveals, really, what I think of the God of the Bible, who created me and to Whom I am accountable. When people dismiss the Bible as an irrelevant book, they're dismissing the Lord Jesus also. And I hear some say they want Jesus but they do not want the Bible. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9 and verse 26, "For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

Perhaps one reason people don't want to look into the Scripture is that they see themselves as they are morally and spiritually. And they may not like what they see. James urged in James 1:21 to 25, "Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing."

When people both hear and do the will of God they find the blessing that God intended. The Lord Jesus said in Luke 11 verse 28, "Blessed... are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Now they are the wise ones who build their houses on the rock and stand in times of testing according to (Matthew 7:24 and 25). The Lord Jesus approves of them. Hebrews 5 verses 8 and 9, says, "Although He was a son, (speaking of Jesus) He learned obedience through what He suffered. And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Now when you obey His words, you're obeying Him!

Now occasionally I hear charges against the Bible that are unfounded. First, speaking of the New Testament, some say, well, "God didn't give us a book of laws." Really? Now I realize the New Testament is not primarily a book of commandments, but it certainly does have laws and commands! Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9 verses 19 to 22, "For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) (he said but I did) that I might win those under the law. (Then he said) To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (that is the law of Moses and then he said) (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) (he said) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some."

Now Paul always considered himself under the law of Christ. He said in Galatians 6 and verse 2, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." And Paul is not alone. James 1:25 says, "But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing." Yes the New Testament is a law; but it's a perfect law of liberty. You remember Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32, that "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Now God's word

sets us free from sin, free from the consequences of sin, and free to live righteous lives. And my friend, that is a blessing! It is a law of liberty.

Now we call Jesus "Lord." Well, how can He be Lord and yet have no commandments? How can He rule if there are no rules? Some say the Bible is just merely a love letter, but I tell you it is much, much more. Let's consider the imperatives in the New Testament; now one student found more than 1200 imperatives. Now an imperative is a command. Now some commands are positive, telling us to behave in a certain way, while others are negative, instructing us to avoid or to stop a certain practice. These imperatives function as laws or commands. And they aren't suggestions; they are God's requirements. Well, obviously, we must consider the context and the ones to whom the command was given; but this doesn't mean that God spoke them needlessly. They matter to God and should matter to us!

The New Testament distinguishes the way people live outside of Christ and the way they should live inside of Christ. People who know and practice the way of Christ enjoy the promises of Christ. Ephesians 4:17 to 24 says, "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. (And) They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (and that is) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Now this passage in Ephesians is still true today. Truth is still in Jesus! And if we want true righteousness and true holiness, if we want to rise above darkness, and if we want the words of eternal life, we must come to Jesus.

Second, some say the New Testament instructions went out of use with the passage of time. Oh they were once binding, but times have changed and they aren't binding now. Well, I call this the "cultural argument": Christ once spoke against a moral or religious practice in their minds in an ancient culture; but since we live in a different culture, His teaching no longer applies to us today. That's the "cultural argument" that people hear. Well, this argument simply isn't true. What God called immoral in the first century is still immoral today. The practices God demanded or forbade in the first century, He still does. Psalm 119 verse 89 says, "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." Now God's word doesn't change with the passing of time. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."

1 Peter 1:23 to 25 says, "you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you." Now God's word cannot perish and it cannot change!

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 28 verses 18 to 20 that "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. (Jesus said. And so He said) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Jesus commissioned His followers to preach the one true gospel to every person in every culture, in every nation, and in every age.

And God calls everyone to repent. Now no one can ignore this call. "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17 verses 30 to 31). Now Peter assures us, that "The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3 and verse 9).

Now no generation can exempt itself from accountability to the Lord. No generation can tell God to just hush and to leave us alone. Now when generations in the past abandoned God's way to follow their own ways, they found that course led to their destruction. The history of Israel reveals that popular opinions cannot turn sin into righteousness. That when Israel despised God's statutes, and they embraced idolatry to be like nations that surrounded them, they found out that they couldn't dismiss God so easily. God judged them (2 Kings 17 verses 14 to 18).

We must realize that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. God gave Him all authority over every nation and every culture in every age. The Father has given all things into the hands of the Son (John 3 and verse 35). Hebrews 4 verse 13 says, "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account."

At the end of time, all nations will gather before the judgment seat of Christ. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (And) Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25 verses 31 and 32). And we know that those who obey Him will enjoy eternal life, and those who ignore Him will face eternal punishment (verse 46).

Revelation 20 verses 12 to 13 explains even more about the Judgment, "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done." Jesus will judge us by the things written in the books, not by culture. What was written in the first century will judge us! The universal character of the cross, the gospel, repentance, the church, and the judgment permeates Scripture. And Jesus is the Lord of all flesh (John 17 and verse 3); He reigns over every person in every culture in every age; and there is no exception.

You can now see that the passage of time does not change God's words. What was true in the first century is still true today. What God required of the church in the first century, He requires of us today.

Someone said that facts are stubborn things; they are true whether people believe them or not. Whether a culture accepts or rejects Jesus as Lord doesn't change the fact that He is our creator and will judge all people in every age and everywhere. Belief or disbelief doesn't establish a fact and it doesn't erase the truth. Fact is fact regardless of cultural perception. Let's pray together. Oh Father help us to place our faith and trust in You and in Your word and to listen to the things You have taught us and to believe them. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Since Jesus is your Creator and the One who will judge you by His words on the last day, shouldn't you give serious thought to what He says? If He has the words of eternal life, shouldn't you give serious thought to what He says? If Jesus sacrificed His blood on the cross to bring you forgiveness of sins, shouldn't you give serious thought to what He says?

I hear people say, well “I don’t like doctrine.” Well, doctrine is merely teaching; it’s God telling us what’s right and true. We all need teaching to know what is true and how to live. Others say, well “Phil, don’t you know that doctrine is divisive?” Well, is it really? You know it’s not God’s teaching that divides; it’s the spirit of wanting something different than God’s teaching that causes confusion and conflict. Division comes from people wanting to add to God’s teaching or to take away from God’s teaching. Division comes when people listen more to worldly cultures than to God Himself. They listen to human traditions rather than to God’s word.

When people follow their desires or some human idea rather than listen to God’s instructions, they follow that broad path that leads to destruction. You cannot draw close to God, if you count other voices as more important than His voice. And this is why we urge you to listen to the voice of God in every matter.

And this is why we go to the New Testament itself for what we teach. We know faith, love, repentance, confessing Christ, and baptism are essential to salvation. And we know baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. So we cannot follow the changes the religious world allows, so we don’t sprinkle infants who neither believe nor are in sin. The grace of God leads us to follow the Scriptures without adding or subtracting anything. My friend do you follow the Lord?

We hope that today’s study about God’s word has stirred you to think seriously about what God says. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can download these lessons at www.searchtv.org. Please watch Search anytime on YouTube and tell a friend about it! Subscribe to our channel, “SearchTVMinistry.” There’s also, on our website, www.searchtv.org, a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. We offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold don’t worry, we’re not here to get your money. We’re here to help you get to heaven.

We do ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. If you’re looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we’ll be happy to help you find one. We’ll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God’s Word with us and tell a friend about the program. As always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord’s Way.