

"Authoritative"

When God gave us the Bible, did He speak with authority over our lives and souls? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Today, we're going to explore the authoritative nature of the Bible. Stay with us.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We look to God, our Creator, for life and for every blessing. James 1:17 says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." We owe God our love, our respect, and our obedience for all that He has done for us. That's why we must take the Bible seriously. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

From the time that we know right from wrong, we're accountable for our actions. Children are accountable to their parents, students to their teachers, and citizens to the civil authority. When we broke the rules, we faced the consequences whether we liked it or not. Human nature seems to have a rebellious streak that doesn't like rules or laws. We don't want anyone telling us what to do. History tells of man's relentless rebellion to authority. From the beginning, people have craved their own way and set aside the will of God. We all struggle in this war between our desires and our duties, between right and wrong.

The Bible provides God's written commandments. In words passed down through the centuries God has revealed His spiritual and moral laws. God spoke with authority when they were written, and they still have God's authority behind them today. What God said, He said to all people in all places for all time. Time cannot change them; our culture cannot ignore them and they cannot erase them. People can rebel and refuse to hear God's commandments, but God will have the last say in the matter. God is still God, still Creator, and still Judge.

Now if you want to study more about the Bible and the things that we're talking about, we have this free booklet, "Give Me the Bible," and it's free of charge. If you'd like a 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 Hebrews 2:1 to 4, and then we'll explore the authority of the Bible.

Our reading today comes from the book of Hebrews chapter 2 verses 1 to 4. And here the Hebrew writer is encouraging the people to whom he's writing to be very serious about listening to God.

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

That's a reading from God's holy word emphasizing the authority of the message of God. Let's pray together. Oh, Father may we always take You seriously. Help us to stay steadfast in our devotion to the things that You have taught and not drift away from them. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

God is the authority! He has all authority and is the final authority above all others. When God speaks, no one can overrule Him. Without His consent, no one has any authority at all. He has all authority because He is our Maker, our Creator. He gave us life and provides every blessing that we enjoy. As our Maker He has every right to have complete control over our lives and our souls.

God gave all authority to Jesus Christ. John 3:35 says, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand." Now no one can remove, edit, or annul the authority of Jesus Christ. No court can overrule the Lord Jesus. He is our Creator; He is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19 verse 16). In Matthew 28 and verse 18 Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." Paul said in Ephesians 1:20 to 23 that God "raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Jesus is the only head of His church, and there is no other.

People can ignore and rebel against the Lord Jesus in the present, but the time will come when no one can ignore Jesus. Philippians 2 verse 9 to 11 says, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Now regardless of what we think today, we're gonna face the Lord Jesus on Judgment Day. 2 Corinthians 5 and verse 10 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." You, you cannot accept, escape rather, this appointment and you can't delay it, now, no matter who you are. Those who are right with God long for judgment day, and those who are not right with God will dread it.

The Lord Jesus on Judgment Day will judge us all by His teaching. He said in John 12 and verse 48, that "The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day." I tell you there is a last day, a day of reckoning and judgment, on which the Lord, the righteous judge, will bless the righteous and condemn the unrighteous. Hebrews 4 verses 12 to 13, says "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 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."

As we've said, on the last day the Lord will judge us by His words (John 12:48). According Matthew 23 and 34 Jesus sent forth prophets, wise men, and scribes with His message. Now the scribes were there to write down the teaching of Jesus that it might be preserved for all time. At the great white throne on Judgment Day, the Lord will consult what the Holy Spirit moved men to write in the Scriptures. We will be judged by what is written in God's books. Revelation 20 verse 12 says, "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." Now what the Lord said in the first century will judge us on the last day. God will have the last word on every spiritual and moral matter. God alone determines what is right and wrong. And we will be judged by His written words.

We'll not be judged by what people think, by unwritten traditions of the early church fathers, by opinion polls, by church councils or ancient creeds of men, or by some man-made document. The last and final word that judges our souls and decides our eternal destiny are the same words that Jesus

spoke in the first century and were written down. We will be judged by the words of Jesus found in the New Testament. And for this reason we need to know what the Bible says, don't we?

Wouldn't it be sad to face judgment and not know about God and the grace of God? Wouldn't it be sad to face judgment and never know the gospel of Christ and how it could have saved us and given us eternal life? The Lord Jesus said in Luke 9:25 to 26, "For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? 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." If the Lord Jesus has the final say about your soul and your destiny, should you not focus your attention on Him? If His words are going to judge you on the last day, what advantage would you have by being ashamed of what He taught?

Some think challenging the authority of God in large matters is rebellious, but should we not fear to challenge the Lord in smaller matters as well? The Lord Jesus wants us to "observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28 and verse 20). James argued, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." (Now) If you do not commit adultery but (you) do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (James 2 verses 10 to 12). Now we can't choose which commandments of God matter and which don't. We aren't judges of God's commandments; God's commandments are judges of us!

Martin Luther understood this and he recognized every commandment of God mattered. He said, you know "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing him. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point." Now you may be faithful in many things, but are you rebelling against God on some point?

Some think the Bible is too old or too strict and needs changing. Some think Christians ought to change our religion to fit society; but no one can change the Bible. What it said when it was written is what it will say on the last day! The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away." Oh, it's foolish to think that we can edit out God's moral law or rewrite His doctrine. There is but one gospel, and Paul said in Galatians 1:8 to 9, "But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one (that) we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one (that) you received, let him be accursed." Now God will not permit anyone to change what He has taught; and our task is to abide in the words that Jesus spoke.

The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:21 to 23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'" Now here it's not talking about religious and doing religious things and being religious in your speech. Oh, those things don't make us right with God. A true Christian is one who hears and does the will of the Father who is in heaven.

Now, the many people who said, "Lord, Lord," truly thought they were right with God. When He rejected them, they argued with Him. They thought they were acting in His name. And you can imagine how shocked they were to find out that they were rejected and lost. Now these were religious people

who talked and acted like good, religious people; but Jesus refused to let them enter heaven, because they did not follow God's teaching. They were lawless and ignored what God taught. They did what they wanted and taught what they liked. They followed what they thought was popular; but these folks didn't do the will of God. They were never right with God. They were religious, yes, but they were not righteous! They were spiritual but not obedient. Lawless people are not interested in pleasing the Lord by keeping His commandments; they're interested in their own ways.

What about you, my friend? How do you measure up with the written word of God? How do you measure up with the Bible. Even if you think you're better than someone else, how do you measure up with the Scriptures, with the authentic teaching of Jesus? We might justify ourselves, but will God justify us? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4 verses 4 to 5, "For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." Now the Pharisees thought they were righteous but they stood condemned. They added many oral traditions to the Law of God. And when people change the gospel or God's instructions to the church, they too will find themselves at odds with God. They may think they're right with God but find out that they're in spiritual jeopardy.

Well, why does all this matter? Well, it's simple and clear: when people challenge God by disobeying His commands, they condemn themselves. When they obey God, they enjoy His promises. God told a rebellious Israel in Isaiah 1:18 to 20, "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; (and) though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be eaten by the sword; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." This principle, my friend, is still true. You can't live in rebellion to God and expect God to bless you eternally. You can't ignore or rewrite His words to suit yourself and imagine God approves of it. God's word is settled in heaven; it's God's final authority and cannot be broken or undone. Isn't it better to obey the Lord than to presume everything's okay?

Let's pray together. Oh, Father help us to be obedient children of Yours. Help us to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. In Jesus name, Amen.

God is the Creator, and we are the created. People feel free today to contradict God's word and say something like, "well, I don't believe ... (and then they mention some sinful behavior)...and I don't believe that it's wrong." Well, they're expressing their judgment. But in matters spiritual and moral, people's feelings aren't the final authority. We will be judged by what God has written in the books. And so, what has God said? What say the Scriptures? Galatians 6:7 to 8 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Now, you are indeed accountable for your actions, your words, your thoughts, and your choices. God will have the last say and the only say about matters of right and wrong.

Now if you love God, you want to keep His commandments. You want to please Him. You pay attention to God's word so you'll know the truth. And you would rather follow God's truth, even if it is difficult and unpopular, and go to heaven than to join the world in sin and then lose your soul. It's better to search out God's will from the Scriptures than presume what somebody thinks is so. Respecting God means being careful and diligent to obey His words.

And so, to become a Christian, I encourage you to do that. Put your faith in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ. Now, what Peter told the people on the day of Pentecost is what we need to obey. He said in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Why not do what God says today and become a Christian. Now, don't assume that you're saved, be sure of it by hearing what the Scripture says. And get right with God!

Well, we hope that today's study has stirred you to respect what God says. This month we're offering a free booklet, Give Me the Bible. If you live in the United States and want a free 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 in written form, in audio form, or in video form or you can download a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses and you'll love them if you decide to take one. Now, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you to get to heaven. We want you to know the Lord and to love Him with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. We want you to be the kind of person Him first and realizes that He loves you. We want you to go to heaven.

So please, please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, a place where you can go an worship, we'll be happy to help you find one. Well, as always we say to you we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word, study for yourself, learn what God says. Don't just accept what someone says and thinks but listen to what God's word actually says. Read it for yourself. Tell a friend about this program let 'em know that you're watching. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.