

"Me Too?"

When God says some behavior is sinful, is it sinful for everyone in every age? Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring the nature of morality. Are morals absolute or are they relative? Can people ignore the morals of the Bible and still please God? Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way; we're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 4 and verse 4, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" The phrase, "It is written," in this context means that God wrote it and it stands as binding and authoritative, forever. The psalmist in Psalm 119:89 said, "Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens." God's word doesn't fade away, doesn't change, and doesn't stop having authority over us simply because our culture changes. People change, but God and His word do not change. They stay the same in every age, in every land, and in every culture. God is Lord over all. Thanks for taking time with us today. We hope you'll join us each week.

A recent poll indicates only one-third of all adults, that is around 34%, believe in moral truth. That it's absolute and unaffected by the circumstances. Even more shocking is that 83 percent of American teenagers believe moral truth is relative to circumstances. They think moral truth changes with time and circumstances. It's not surprising today to hear, "You can't say that something is true for everybody! How do you know? Just because something is true for you doesn't mean it's true for everybody else." Such statements reveal not only what the speaker thinks about truth but also about God. So, we ask, "Can God speak authoritatively to all people for all time a message that cannot be changed?" People who ignore the God who created us and then presume they can pursue their own morals are actually rebelling against God. They've allowed popular opinions to rule in their lives in the place of God. In fact they've become their own gods.

Now since this is an important message, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, 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 stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11, and examine God's authority in our world today.

Our reading today comes from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 6 verses 9 to 11. He speaks straight about right and wrong and who can inherit the kingdom of God. Let's read together.

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Ah, yes people can change and get right with God. And how badly we all need to do that. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful that You have told us the difference between right and wrong. Help us to love You enough to be obedient to Your word. In Jesus name, Amen.

When someone tells me he can believe what he wants about morality, he's actually saying one moral belief is as good as another. Well, that's popular thinking today; but the more you examine it, the more you'll see that, that belief cannot be true. What people think about a behavior never

determines whether it's moral or not. Just because someone thinks a behavior is moral doesn't make it right. Thieves may think stealing is a good thing, but you don't want anyone breaking into your home and stealing your valuables. Rapists may regard defiling a woman as pleasurable, but no woman wants to be raped. People who commit sin always downplay the harm that sin does, but the victim sees how wicked sin really is.

People today have bought into the notion that love somehow transforms immoral behaviors into moral ones. They believe love makes wrong into right. God calls fornication, sex between two unmarried people, sinful; but many today think "love" makes fornication okay. Well, it doesn't matter a child could be conceived out of wedlock or a serious social disease may be transmitted; love in their minds makes fornication morally okay. It never occurs to them that their sexual desire may lead them to lie to themselves about the morality of sexual sin.

God said in Galatians 6:7 to 8, "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." The Lord tells us not to be deceived, because man tends to lie to himself when he wants something. People get involved with a sin, and all of a sudden that sin isn't so bad. People have a family member that gets involved with some sin, and all of sudden that sin is now morally okay, in their minds. Do we honestly believe that God has changed His mind? Has God changed His mind or have we lied to ourselves about God's will? When people think they can overrule God's morality, aren't they mocking Him? Aren't they showing the greatest kind of disrespect? Don't they misunderstand God?

Proverbs 19:21 says, "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand." God doesn't change, and He especially doesn't change His morals in order to suit mankind. Moses wrote in Numbers 23:19 that, "God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" God said in Malachi 3 and verse 6, "For I the LORD do not change." Psalm 33 verse 11 says, "The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation."

We need to know why the Lord's counsel stands forever and why we should pay close attention to it. Well, first, because the gospel is universal. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16:15, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." When Paul spoke to the pagan philosophers in Athens in Acts 17 and verse 30, he said, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent." Jesus commissioned the apostles to appeal to every culture in every land until the end of time. His message was for everyone and applied to everyone. The gospel gives hope to all men of salvation and forgiveness of sins.

The gospel was not merely a message for ancient Palestine; it's also a message for postmodern America and our postmodern culture. If the blessings of the gospel are available to all men—and they are—then all men are accountable to God. Salvation is necessary because people are lost in sin. If God met the need to save us from sin through Christ, isn't God also the authority that determines what sin is? Why would God send His Son to die on the cross, when people can personally decide what sin is and what sin isn't? In actuality, we've deceived ourselves into believing that we can determine right and wrong for ourselves. Believing we can overrule God with our personal beliefs must be terribly offensive to God.

Second, the words of Jesus reveal His eternal and final authority. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 24 and verse 35 that, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Though men through the centuries have taken great pains to destroy and to suppress the teaching of Jesus, the

Bible is still available throughout the world. The moral and religious teaching of Jesus won't disappear, simply because our culture has changed its mind about certain moral issues.

On the night before His death, the Lord promised the apostles in John 16:12 to 13, "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all (all) the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." Jesus promised the apostles that they would be guided into all the truth. They wouldn't lack anything. God wouldn't withhold any spiritual or moral truth that they needed to bring men to life and godliness. The principles found in the New Testament reveal the complete and sufficient will of God. It's the whole truth, and it doesn't need help. In fact, the Lord takes offense at anyone who would add to His Word or take away from it.

Jude, the brother of the Lord, recognized that the faith, that is, that body of revealed truths given to the apostles, was to be given once for all time. He wrote in Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." Now this faith was delivered only once for all time. The idea that the gospel would need reinventing for the whims of each passing culture is never, never, never contemplated in Scripture. Every culture was to conform to the gospel. The gospel was given to change the sinful things in every culture so that it might conform to the once-for-all delivered will of God. The delivered faith is once for all just like the sacrifice of Christ on the cross was once for all to bear our sins (Hebrews 9 verse 28).

Third, the gospel is unchangeable. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 30 verses 5 to 6 that, "Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words Lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar." Revelation 22 verses 18 to 19 warns everyone about this specific book of Revelation. He says, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book." Now if this warning is true about the book of Revelation, wouldn't it also be true about any other book of the New Testament? We have no right to edit what God says to suit ourselves.

The book of Galatians describes some Jewish Christians who wanted to bind Jewish laws and traditions on the Gentile converts to Christianity. They were taking things from the old covenant made with Israel at Sinai and expecting the Gentiles to obey both the teaching of Christ and the Jewish laws and traditions. Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6 to 8, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed." God will curse anyone who would dare to change or edit the gospel. Anything that is unchangeable, especially coming from God, must necessarily be absolute.

Now these three characteristics, derived from an absolute God, make the gospel absolute truth. Those who espouse Christianity have very little to say or offer if the gospel they believe and preach is not settled in heaven. It's a great offense to God to suggest that in dealing with our sins somehow the death of Jesus wasn't enough or its message isn't universal, final and unchangeable.

It is the ultimate confusion to suggest that sin is an ever-changing concept subject to the passing whims of culture. This suggests that Jesus didn't know what sin is or was or what it will be. It means the all-knowing God in heaven really doesn't know as much as we do. It suggests that we can take a vote

on what we think and then treat God as if He's subject to what we decide. God is God, and we aren't. He makes the moral rules that will judge us on the last day, and we are accountable to Him. He can't deceive Himself about right and wrong, but we can deceive ourselves. He knows everything, and we'll never be as smart or as wise as He is. Shouldn't we listen to Him, rather than imagine that we can reinvent morality to suit ourselves?

The universal, final, and unchangeable nature of the gospel, revealed by an absolute God, and that makes it absolute not relative. If we didn't believe our message is settled in heaven, we'd have nothing to offer. Paul argued that if the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was not true, then our faith is in vain and our preaching is in vain (1 Corinthians 15 verse 14). And then in verse 17 he said, "if Christ has not been raised, (then) your faith is worthless; (and) you are still in your sins."

The death and resurrection of Jesus provide an eternal and universal message. It's a consistent message of forgiveness and life. To say, "People can think differently, but for me personally Jesus died for my sins and rose again on the third day," is a confusing statement. What people think doesn't change the truth or change the facts. Jesus either died for our sins or He didn't. Jesus either arose from the dead bodily or He didn't. Saying both options are true at the same time is illogical and contradictory. If both doctrines are true, we can't be certain we are forgiven or have a home in heaven. Truth matters in our practical lives. If the bodily resurrection of Jesus is both true and false at the same time, we have no hope at the grave of a loved one. If truth is relative to our whims, we must take back everything we believe. We're only fooling ourselves if we think we can sin against God and everything will be okay.

Well, why does this matter? It matters because God matters, His teaching will judge you someday, and you matter. When people draw their moral values from their personal desires rather than from God, they drift away from what's right and what's moral into what's wrong and immoral. Once people start setting God's moral law aside, they forsake God and they rush into immorality. Rhett Butler used a foul word in the movie, *Gone With the Wind*, in 1939; and foul language soon became fashionable. Today movies and television allow the most foul language imaginable. If we give the devil an inch, he'll feel free to take a mile. If you ignore God's moral law, you could ruin your life and risk your soul. Don't do that. Stay with God.

Let's pray. Oh Father, help us to take You seriously and to glorify Your name by being obedient to Your will. Putting our faith and trust in You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Let's return to 1 Corinthians 6:9 to 11, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." Let's not deceive ourselves. Even the laws of the land cannot change God's laws. What God says is wrong is wrong and will remain wrong until the end.

Thankfully we have hope in Christ. Hope that lasts forever. The sinful pagans at Corinth didn't remain in sin; they repented, they changed their lives. While they were in sin, God would not let them inherit the kingdom. But they came to Christ; and the Lord washed them, made them holy, and regarded them as righteous. There's always hope for people who forsake their sins and turn to the Lord. Rather than saying sin isn't sinful, repent. Rather than thinking you can change God's mind or His laws, be obedient to His will.

Proverbs 3:5 to 6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight." When people forsake the Lord's laws, they do so to their own peril. Instead let's put our trust in Jesus, repent of our sins, confess the Lord Jesus as the Christ, and be baptized into Christ. Let's determine to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Him. Let's study the unchangeable Word of God and realize that it stands as written until the end of time.

We hope that today's study about sin has made you to consider your soul. If you 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.

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Today's a good day to start worshiping at church. And there's a church probably in your area. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, let us know, 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 this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.