

SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR AWAY

Harmony M.B.C., May 18, 2008; July 30, 2016

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2Kings 22:8 And Hilkiyah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

2Kings 22:10-13 And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. 11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. 12 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king's, saying, 13 Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great *is* the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

One of the great problems of the day among God's people is the failure to read and study the word of God. But failure to do so is not new. Our two bible texts show that this was a failing of the children of Israel in the days when they got in trouble with God. Then, as now, it has the same consequences.

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Bible reading by adults during the week by region-Northeast 38%; West 42%; Midwest 45%; South 57%. (2006)

We want to look at the idea of how important reading, understanding and doing the word of God is to believers in all ages. May the Holy Spirit help us this morning to attach a great and critical importance to the great privilege and duty.

I. God's Word is the Christian's Law and Living Guide

- ◆ **Provides a route to purity we could not otherwise know: John 15:3** Now ye are **clean through the word** which I have spoken unto you
- ◆ **No need to worry about ignorance tripping us up: Psalms 119:9** BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.
- ◆ **A sensitized conscience and guide: Psalms 119:11** Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
- ◆ **Inspires us to run from evil practices: Psalms 119:101** I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

- ◆ **Provides good clarity about our walk: Psalms 119:105** NUN. Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.
- ◆ **Excellent reference point for conduct; Psalms 119:133** Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.
- ◆ **Its power can set us apart: John 17:17** Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.
 - ▶ **1John 2:5** But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him
- ◆ **Inspires us to expose our actions to the Lord as a check: John 3:21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.
- ◆ **Using the word of God as a guide provides a proof of our love for Christ:**
 - ▶ **John 14:15** If ye love me, keep my commandments.
 - ▶ **John 14:21** He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.
 - ▶ **John 15:10** If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.
 - ▶ **1John_2:5** But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

II. To Be Ignorant of the Law By Which We Live Is Unwise

- ◆ The main thing we notice about what we read in our text was that these people **DISCOVERED** some things in the Word of God that they did not know.
 - A. They had gotten so far from their knowledge of God and His Words that they forsook the Lord and practiced idolatry. **2Kings 22:17** Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands....”
 - B. They had wandered so far away from their separated commitments that they had lost sight of the fact that they were not supposed to be mingling with the unbelievers of the world. (**Neh. 13:1**) “... the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God forever....”
- ◆ There are a lot of plainly written things in the Word of God that professed believers of this generation are ignorant of.

III. Being Ignorant of the Words of God is one thing; But, **To Ignore This Guidance Manual Is Very Unwise**

- ◆ Daniel saw clearly the relationship between paying attention to God’s guidance and consequences of not doing it: He is lamenting the enslaved condition of Israel and praying to God for relief (in **Daniel 9:5-6**), and here is what he says: “We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled,

even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spoke in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.”

- Believers Discover Things About Their Conduct and consequences of paying attention to the word of God; and consequences of not paying attention, When They Read God’s Word - this is good
- What is not good is for believers to read it, consider it, make excuses for why they do not follow it, or rationalize it away
- Those who do that remind me of the people Jesus tells us about in **Luke 14:16-20** “Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 And they all with one *consent* began to make excuse. The first said unto him, **I have bought a piece of ground**, and I must needs **go and see it**: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, **I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them**: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, **I have married a wife**, and therefore I cannot come.”
- Those who do this are like the son who was ordered by his dad to go work in his fields and told his dad he would go and then did not go (**Mat. 21:30**)
- Believers who act this way are like drivers who ignore oncoming trains at a railroad crossing
 - Like people who want to stay dry but walk out in the rain without umbrellas or rainsuits

IV. Ignoring the guidance manual of God then is truly unwise; But to **Customize Guidance In This Word Is Most Unwise**

- ◆ There is a story in Jeremiah about a king and his advisor who customized the word of God (**Jer. 36**): Here is what we read about his custom cutting of the word of God (**Jer 36:23**) And it came to pass, *that* when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast *it* into the fire that *was* on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that *was* on the hearth.
- ◆ This is extreme customization, but it starts with 3 or 4 pages...notice though how it ends...the whole of God’s writings are burned up in the fire.
- ◆ But this is not the end of the incident. We read in the next chapter of Jeremiah, that God told Jeremiah to write the words again and to add more words to the message. (The consequences of customizing God’s word is that it adds to the condemnation gained from the act)
- ◆ In **2 Cor. 2:17**, Paul speaks of many who “corrupt the Word of God.” Customizing the meaning and guidance of God’s word to fit a cultural permissiveness or error is just such a corrupting (Gr. To adulterate).
 - Did you know that in America today, murder of unborn infants is not

murder...it is getting rid of an unwanted mass...it is a woman's health choice

- Did you know that in America today perverted sex acts are not sodomy, or bestiality, or child molestation...they are sexual preferences and alternate lifestyles?
- Did you know that in America today, discipline of your child is not obeying the word of God about disciplining your child...it is an act of child abuse?
- Did you know that in America today, drug abuse and all the godlessness and destruction associated with it is not an abomination to God...it is chemical dependency and a psychological disorder?
- Did you know that in America, extortion and theft by deception in business today is not extortion and theft...it is business savvy?
- Did you know that in America today lying to everyone is not lying...it is good politics, good business, and diplomacy?
- ▶ Customizing God's guidance to fit with contrary social or cultural morality is like rebuilding a church building to make it into a beer joint or liquor store.
- ▶ Modern day corrupting or adulterating of the guidance of God is much like Satan's advice to Eve. Satan turns the warnings of God into statements that suggest something totally different.
- ◆ Some modern day examples of customizing of God's guidance includes such subjects as **man's subjection to God, woman's subjection to man, what constitutes moral conduct or dress, the order and government of a church, baptism, giving, what sodomy or homosexuality really means**, and dozens more things.

V. Conclusion

Psalms 119:89 Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.