



“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32).

Supreme Loyalty

Central Truth: God’s message may not be altered by any person.

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Topic: Doctrine: Heresies In; Obedience: To God/Scripture.

God has spoken. Really! God has spoken to us. Think about that!

God has spoken through nature: *“The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made”* (Romans 1:20).

God has spoken through providential happenings. Joseph realized that his being in Egypt was not because of his brothers' hatred but because of God's design. *“It was not you that sent me hither, but God”* (Genesis 45:8).

God has spoken through chosen men. For example, *“The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel”* (Ezekiel 1:3) with the commission, *“Hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me”* (Ezekiel 3:17).

God has spoken through His written Word since *“all scripture is given by inspiration of God”* (II Timothy 3:16).

God has spoken through Jesus. That revelation is greater than any that comes through nature, providence, chosen messengers, or written Word (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

What God has spoken remains true and inviolable forever. *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven”* (Psalm 119:89). It cannot be improved by change; so, man is forbidden to tamper with it (Deuteronomy 4:2) lest God send His judgment upon one who dares to change His Word (Revelation 22:18, 19).

We worship and serve the God who has revealed himself. We live under His injunction, *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exodus

20:3). Supreme loyalty is due to Him only.

I. THE BLESSINGS OF GOD

Supreme loyalty is due to God because of His blessings. Ancient Israel should have learned that lesson well.

Joshua led her into the Land of Promise to fight against a people who were stronger than she, who lived in walled cities well defended against invasion, who were much larger in size than the Hebrews. Yet, they went in and possessed the land.

How did Israel possess Canaan? Moses said, “*The LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee*” (Deuteronomy 12:29). And that He did! Look at the strange conquest of Jericho. It was an object lesson to teach the nation that her victories were from the Lord. She conquered the great military fortress of Jericho with God fighting for her, but could not conquer the little village of Ai without God (Joshua 7). Notice the verbs used to describe God's acts in behalf of Israel as she marched against her enemies: “cut off, possess, succeedest, dwellest.”

That is just like God. He blesses us beyond measure and then asks, “Will you serve Me?” We can say, “*Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation*” (Psalm 68:19). What else could we do than to give supreme loyalty to Him?

What do we owe to a heavenly Father who through “*his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness*” (II Peter 1:3)? His abounding blessings have made all grace overflow us so that we, “*always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*” (II Corinthians 9:8). What should we give Him? We must give Him all we are and have, plus all we can become. That is supreme loyalty!

II. THE TEMPTATION TO CONFORM

The Hebrews were a nomadic people for forty years as they wandered in the wilderness between Egypt and Canaan. Before that, they were herdsmen of their flocks in the land of Goshen. Before that, they were nomads in the land of Palestine when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob moved to and fro in that land, following the available pastures and water for their flocks. What did they know of tilling the land and producing crops? The generation which entered Canaan was twenty years old and under at the time they left Egypt. Their wilderness wanderings had hardly prepared them for a sedentary lifestyle in Canaan.

What agricultural methods would the Hebrews follow when they possessed the land of Canaan? It would be natural to adopt the farming method of the Canaanites. And that included the grossest immorality and evident idolatry! The Canaanites believed sexual orgies were necessary in their fields to make the seeds sprout and grow. They felt it necessary to offer sacrifice to the god (whom they called Baal) of the sun, of the rain, and of the soil in order to produce a harvest. Would the Hebrews be deceived into following those customs?

God warned, *“Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, . . . and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise”* (Deuteronomy 12:30).

God hates the evil way. He will not let sin go unpunished in any person or culture. He requires holiness in His people. Therefore, He says, *“What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it”* (Deuteronomy 12:32). That is a call to supreme loyalty. Ancient Israel was not alone in the temptation to conform. We are lured today to follow the lifestyle of “successful,” “popular,” or “important” people. We are pressured to dress in their styles, to sing their music, to read their novels, to watch their most popular programs on television, etc. But God speaks quite differently: *“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the LORD, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”* (II Corinthians 6:17,18). It pays to resist temptation and give supreme loyalty to God.

III. THE CHALLENGE OF HERESY

Beware of heresy! Heresy is a doctrine or practice that is contrary to the truth as God has revealed it. It has always been a problem in the world, in ancient as well as in modern times.

A. Heresy may arise through a religious person. God warned Israel about *“a prophet or a dreamer of dreams”* (Deuteronomy 13:1) who would lead her away from the truth. It is not strange that heresy arises from within the religious community itself. That is the logical place for the devil to work to corrupt the faith of a people.

God had commanded His people to listen to His words by His prophets. *“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of*

him” (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19). That is why the messengers of the devil often come as apostles of Christ when they are *“false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light”* (II Corinthians 11:13, 14). Be sure the religious teacher you follow is committed to the full truth of Holy Scripture.

B. Heresy may be accompanied by an exhibition of the supernatural. What if a religious teacher *“giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass”* (Deuteronomy 13:1, 2)? Will you follow him because a supernatural power seems to attend him? What about miracles by one who does not hold to the full truth of God in Scripture?

Remember that Satan has great power. He is able to empower his followers to do great things. The pagan magicians in Egypt imitated the miracle of Aaron's rod becoming a serpent (Exodus 7:10-12). In the last days, the messengers of Satan will make fire come down from heaven (in imitation of God's miracle in the days of Elijah?). People will see it and be deceived into false worship. Yes, miracles will be done by the power of the devil (Revelation 13:11-15).

Be sure the power is of God before you receive the person through whom it is manifested. *“Many deceivers are entered into the world”* (II John 7).

C. Heresy arises to turn your allegiance from God. It is always accompanied by the invitation, *“Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them”* (Deuteronomy 13:2). The goal of the devil is to turn you from the true and living God.

Even Christians can be deceived. Paul lamented that the Christians in Galatia were turned from the true gospel to a false gospel (Galatians 1:6, 7). They had been bewitched that they should not obey the truth, even though they knew the gospel of Jesus (Galatians 3:1). Paul admonished them, *“Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8).

Take care to keep your supreme loyalty toward God.

D. Heresy is a test of your love to God. God permits it to come to test you, *“to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul”* (Deuteronomy 13:3).

Love is more than emotion. It is commitment; it is allegiance; it is loyalty. One who loves God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength will have neither time nor opportunity to turn aside to heresy (Mark 12:30). He who turns to error testifies that he does not love God supremely.

E. Heresy must be dealt with sternly. *“That prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God”* (Deuteronomy 13:5). Heresy must not be condoned. It must be stopped, however severe the measures required.

What if a preacher whom we have known and respected gets into heresy? The Bible says, *“Let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8, 9). That is the way we will *“put away evil”* from us (Deuteronomy 13:5).

IV. THE WAY OF GOD

Examine the verbs in Deuteronomy 13:4. *“Ye shall WALK after the LORD your God, and FEAR him, and KEEP his commandments, and OBEY his voice, and ye shall SERVE him and CLEAVE unto him.”* Each is a verb of action, demanding effort on our part. That sounds like supreme loyalty, doesn't it?

Loyalty to God does not come by accident. It requires concentration and effort on our part. To drift with the tide will surely lead one astray, for the tide of the world is anti-God.

That is why Christians must study the Bible daily, pray daily, watch their lives daily, and look for opportunities to serve God daily. That is why Christians must never be swept up in movements, teachings, or lifestyles which are contrary to Bible principles. Work at increasing your loyalty to God.

Here are some practical principles which might be drawn from this study. (1) Know Bible truth so you can recognize error when it arises. (2) Consider the consequences before you join the crowd in anything. (3) Check all persons and all religious teachings by the Bible, not by the persuasiveness or personality of the teacher. (4) Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15; 5:11). (5) Make a personal commitment of loyalty and obedience to God, whatever the personal consequences may be. That is the supreme loyalty of which He is worthy.

Questions

1. How do we know God has spoken to mankind?
2. What does Psalm 119:89 say about God's written Word?
3. How does a reminder of God's blessings call us to loyalty to Him?
4. How might temptation cause us to lessen our loyalty to Him?
5. What is heresy?
6. Why must we not trust a man just because he speaks in the name of God?

7. Why are miracles no proof that a person is from God?
8. How is error a test of your love to God?
9. Why must heresy be dealt with so sternly?
10. How can you show supreme loyalty to God this week?