**BIBLE TALK**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

**Fenced In By The Word of God**

**7/19/2020**

Last week on our program we emphasized the fact that the Bible is the complete and all sufficient revelation of God to man. What we have in the Bible is the “all truth” (John 16:13) – the “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3) – “the faith” that was “once for all” delivered to the saints (Jude 3). If we want to know what the will of God is for our lives, we must go to the Bible. That is our standard of authority. Our standard of authority is not what “my preacher” says, or what I may think or feel is right. It’s not what the Magisterium of the Catholic Church says, or what the Book of Mormon says, or the writings of the Watch Tower Society. The standard is the Bible and the Bible alone. And we asked the question last week, by what authority are you being guided? Are you assured that your beliefs and practices are founded on the Bible? The only way we can know that what we believe and practice in religion is sanctioned by God, is by giving book, chapter and verse for those beliefs and practices.

Paul said in Romans 10:17, *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* Proper faith can only come from God’s word, the Bible.

What I want to emphasize on our program today is that we are restricted by God’s word, concerning what we believe and practice in religion. When God gives instructions in His word, the Bible, we must not add to, subtract from or modify anything He says. Let me illustrate the point I want to make today like this: suppose I should tell my son, “Here’s five dollars, go buy a loaf of bread.” He returns with the loaf of bread, a candy bar, and a can of soda pop all paid for with my money. I say to him, “Son, I just told you to buy a loaf of bread.” He says to me, “But, Dad, you didn’t tell me not to get a candy bar, or soda pop.” He could correctly argue that. However, I had, in times past, specifically told him on several occasions, “Whenever I tell you to do something, don’t add to what I tell you, nor take from it, nor substitute anything else for it,” Having told him that, he then should know that he was always restricted to my instruction, no more, no less. And I should not have to repeat the restriction with each order I give.

God has done this in the Bible. God tells us in several places and in several ways that we must not add to His word, or take from it, or modify anything He’s tells us to believe and do. God doesn’t have to repeat the restrictions every time he tells someone what to do.

This was true under the Old Covenant God made with the children of Israel. Under this covenant God gave them the Law of Moses. And more than once God told the children of Israel not to add to or take from His law. Look with me at a couple of examples. In Deut. 4:1-2, Moses said to the children of Israel, *“Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to* *observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is* *giving you. You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may* *keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”* Notice, the children of Israel were told not to add to or take from the word God had commanded them. In Joshua 1:7-8, God said to Joshua, *“Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all* *the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the* *left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your* *mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that* *is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good* *success.”*

But not only did God want the children of Israel to observe His law without adding to it or taking from it, He also instructs Christians under the New Covenant to obey His commandments without adding to or taking from them. Look with me in Rev. 22:18-19, *“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If* *anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;* *and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his* *part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”* Someone may say that this passage only applies to the book of Revelation, not to all the New Testament. It is true that the phrase “the words of the prophecy of this book” has reference to the Revelation, but let me ask this question, should we not treat the rest of the New Testament scriptures with the same respect as the book of Revelation? The point is, this is a principle that has always applied to God’s law. It was true under the Old Covenant and it is true under the New, that is, we should not add to or take away from God’s word.

Consider with me also 2 John 9: The American Standard Version translates, *“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that* *abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son.”* The Greek word translated “goeth onward” is *proago*, and Thayer defines this word to mean “to go before…to proceed, go forward.” To “go before,” or to “go forward” is to go outside the bounds of the teaching of Christ, and thereby not abide in His teaching. Would not adding to or taking from the teaching of Christ be going onward and not abiding in it. This passage makes it clear that we are restricted by the teaching of Christ. Jesus said to Jews who believed Him, *“If you abide in My word, you are* *My disciples indeed.”* (John 8:31) True disciples of Jesus are those who abide in His word. They do not add to or take from it.

The apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 4:11, *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God….”* What does it mean to “speak as the oracles of God?” Look with me in Numbers chapters 22-24. Balaam was a prophet of God. He was a greedy prophet, but he knew what it meant to be a prophet and to speak the words of the Lord. Balak, the kind of Moab wanted Balaam the prophet to curse the children of Israel. But notice what Balaam said in Numbers 22:18, *“Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, ‘Though Balak* *were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the word of the* *LORD my God, to do less or more.’”* After failing to curse Israel, and feeling the anger of Balak, Balaam says again, *“If Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the* *word of the LORD, to do good or bad of my own will. What the LORD says, that I must* *speak'?”* (Num. 24:13) Balaam was not allowed to speak of his own will, from his own mind, but only what the Lord said that he should speak. This is what Peter is saying in 1 Peter 4:11, *“If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God….”* We are not allowed to go beyond the word of the Lord, to speak more or less, or do more or less.

This is the attitude that Jesus had. Consider the following statements from our Lord.

**John 8:28**  *“When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do* *nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.”*

**John 5:30** *“I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous,* *because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”*  Notice, Jesus did nothing on His own authority, because He was seeking the Father’s will and not His own.

**John 12:49** Jesus said, *“For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”*

**John 5:19** Jesus said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees* *the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”* Jesus did not simply rely on what He wanted to do, He looked to the example of His Father and acted based on that. Now, if Jesus refused to teach on His own authority and refused to do His own will, but to teach and do only what the Father commanded, should not that be our attitude toward God’s will today?

In reading scripture there are two questions that can be asked. These two questions represent two different approaches to scripture. The first question one may ask in reading scripture is, “Is it forbidden?” The one who asks this question believes that one can do anything that God has not forbidden in the Bible. For example, since infant baptism (that is baptizing babies) is not specifically forbidden in scripture, than it is permissible.

The second question one may ask is, “What does the Lord require?” The one who asks this question while reading scripture believes that one can do only the things that God has instructed to do in scripture. And so since believers baptism for the remission of sins is the baptism that is taught and required of us in the Bible, then we are restricted to practice that baptism, and that would exclude infant baptism.

Now, let me ask you, which approach should we take based on the passages of scripture we have just studied? Since the Lord want us to abide in His teaching, not adding to or taking from what He has said, it seems evident that the second approach is the correct one. We need to ask, “What does the Lord require?”

When God commanded Noah to build an ark out of gopher wood, God did not have to specifically forbid all other kinds of wood for all other woods to be unauthorized. You see, when God specifies something, He excludes everything else related to that category. When Jesus specified unleavened bread and fruit of the vine for the Lord’s Supper, would it be right for us to add meat and potatoes to it? They are not specifically forbidden. But we understand that when the Lord specified what He wanted, we are restricted to what He said, and that excludes everything else.

Someone might be thinking, “You are placing too much emphasis on keeping law. God wants us to emphasize loving Him and reverencing Him.” Let me say first of all, if the Bible is the word of God, then it bears His authority. To the extent that the Bible is God’s word, then it is authoritative; if it isn’t His word, then it is no more authoritative than what any of us may come up with and put down on paper. Question: can we truly love and reverence God when we ignore or minimize the message that He has given? God is directly tied to His own word. Our response to His word is our response to God. If we love God we will love His word and keep it. 1 John 5:3, *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”* We cannot give proper respect and love to God if we do not pay attention to the message that He inspired to be inscribed with ink on the pages of the Bible. The proper attention to God is to give proper attention to His word and that means we must abide in it, not to add to it or take from it. Strictly keeping God’s word is a show of love and respect for Him.

Our time is gone for today. We thank you for listening.

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