
Words of Truth

Don't Make It Harder Than He Has

By: Brian A. Yeager

We often discuss how that disobedience to Christ will result in the eternal wrath of the Lord (Matthew 25:31-46, Romans 1:18, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 5:6, II Thessalonians 1:7-9, Hebrews 10:22-39, and Revelation 21:8). It is good to be reminded that there are eternal consequences for sin. We certainly do not want to offend our Lord's will at all. We know one offense means that we are guilty of all (James 2:10-12). Fear is a helpful tool for us as we seek to please our Lord (Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, Proverbs 14:27, Isaiah 33:6, Philippians 2:12, and Hebrews 12:28-29).

Having said all that we just covered, fear is not always beneficial. Fear can become paralyzing. When John received a miraculous vision of Christ he fell at his feet as dead (Revelation 1:9-17). The Lord told him: "...*Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death*" (Revelation 1:17-18). The phrase "fear not" appears at least 62 times in the King James Version in various contexts with different lessons. The first time that phrase appears is when the Lord appeared unto Abraham in a vision (Genesis 15:1). If you read that account the Lord wanted Abraham to focus on the exceeding great reward rather than on fear.

When Jesus was teaching His disciples He said: "*But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. **Fear not**, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*" (Luke 12:31-32). The disciples had been taught to fear the Lord prior to this (Luke 12:4-5). Jesus wasn't retracting that point. If fear has moved us to continual obedience, fear has served its purpose. There is a point wherein we need to move forward and focus on the prize at the end of a faithful life (Philippians 3:3-20). We have to realize that Jesus died to remove the many fears we place on ourselves.

Don't Make His Death In Vain

There are many things that were accomplished on the cross (Acts 20:28, Romans 5:6-10, Romans 7:1-6, Hebrews 9:15-10:18, etc.). For the purpose of our current study, consider this: "*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on*

him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:14-18).

Fear is a source of bondage (Romans 8:12-15). Jesus died to remove that bondage. That freedom means we should be able to focus MORE on the reward than on the consequences for sin (Romans 8:17-25). If you're doing what's right in the sight of God, fear ought to be something you still see and think about. However, it ought to be seen from the perspective of a rear-view mirror rather than a lead in your life. Yes, few will be saved (Matthew 7:13-14 and Luke 13:23-24). Yes, it is not easy to be saved (I Peter 4:17-19). However, if we are in Christ we cannot make being saved harder than the Lord intended.

A Law That Is Not A Burden

We live under the “perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25). Later in the New Testament we read: *“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith”* (I John 5:3-4). The Greek term that is translated as “grievous” means “burdensome, grave: — grievous, heavy, weightier” (Strong’s # 926). Thus, our Lord’s New Testament commandments are not a burden, heavy, or weighty.

We are to “live” by every word of God (Luke 4:4). All of our Lord’s New Testament instructions are beneficial to us. His instructions are not prison bars. They are the best self-help instructions man will ever know. Think about it. What He tells us to avoid (Romans 12:17-21, I Corinthians 15:33, Galatians 5:16-21, Ephesians 4:17-5:11, II Timothy 2:23, I Peter 2:9, etc.) or engage in (Matthew 5:1-16, Romans 12:10-16, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:14-6:17, Colossians 3:10-25, I Thessalonians 5:11-14, James 3:13-18, etc.) is helpful to our living a peaceful life in this evil world. When you fully obey His instructions the end result is eternal life (I Peter 1:3-9), but the immediate benefit is peaceful living (II Corinthians 13:11 and Philippians 4:6-9). This was even true under the burdensome law of Moses (Isaiah 48:17-18). We may start learning and living faithfully out of fear (Proverbs 9:10). After that good start though, love has a purpose that should become our main focus.

Conclusion

“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love” (I John 4:16-18).