Matthew 28: 16-20

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Introduction

We live in the 21st century and it is a time when, in the United States and many of the remainder of the western countries at least, many of the “powers that be” want to reject the fact that people are imperfect, at best, and possibly evil, at worst. They believe that there is no place for a discussion of sin in the current environment. They believe the Gospel is irrelevant and would go to great lengths to discount it. Issues related to television personality and Brother in Christ Phil Robertson go a long way to illustrate the type of world in which we live. Brother Phil, a man who made a decision to follow the Lord in the way he can best understand Him regardless of the consequences, became the subject of derision and contempt from those who would destroy the truth from God without attempting to understand those words. You may not agree with his beliefs or his interpretation of Word, but there is no doubt that he is a God server as he best understands it. The Apostle Paul was specific about people like Americans when he wrote these words to Timothy (2 Tim 4:3) “3For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”

Study

We don’t study it often and are tempted to write-off the Lord’s teaching in Revelation 2 and 3 because we assume these letters were written to churches that had problems. That is both right and wrong. While the letters were written to churches, we have to remember that brothers and sisters just like us formed those
churches. And, just like a cancer spreads through the biological body, spiritual cancers had spread through the spiritual bodies to whom John was writing. It was not by coincidence that, through John, Jesus reminded those brothers and sisters that He was the cure for the cancer among them. And what was the cure? “Remember Your First Love” To six (6) of the seven (7) churches listed in these verses, the Lord called on them to return to His side, obey what they had been taught and to remember their first love. Review the words Jesus sent to the churches in Asia Minor and notice how often He calls them back. Listen to the warning He sent to the six (6) churches to whom He sent concerns and remember, Christians made up each of these Churches:

Ephesus: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and obey the things you did at first.

Pergamum: I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

Thyatira: I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Sardis: I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent.

Laodicea: I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Philadelphia: know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars...I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

In contrast to the six (6) churches, notice what Jesus says to the seventh (7th) in Smyrna:

I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell

It’s All Greek To Me....

Obey. The Greek (τηρός transliterated as tēreō; phonetically as tay-reh'-o) means to guard (from loss or injury, properly by keeping the eye upon; by implication to detain (in custody; figuratively to maintain); hold fast, keep, keeper, to observe, to preserve, to reserve, watch.

Command. The Greek (ἐντέλλομαι transliterated as entellomai; phonetically as en-tel'-lom-ahee) means to order, command to be done, enjoin, to charge, (give) command, and commandments.
you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

**Application**

What Jesus taught was always simple and direct. As we saw last week, the obedience He demands is a matter of salvation defining this obedience in very specific terms:

23 Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me. (John 14:23-24)

What were the things Jesus commanded? At first glance, the list might seem to be hard to comprehend and, in fact, in just Matthew 5, 6 and 7, it seems overwhelming and there are still 20 chapters left in the gospel:

- Step up and be the seasoning of the world with your love for God; let your light shine to declare the glory of God
- Truly search for God in a way that the legalists don’t
- Don’t be angry with your brother; don’t insult anyone; make amends
- Don’t lust
- Don’t divorce except for marital unfaithfulness
- Keep your word but don’t make any bold statements declaring them to God, let your answers be simple; make your word good.
- Don’t resist an evil person with violence; accommodate those who are in authority.
- Love you enemies and remember that God loves them all.
- Don’t be “righteous” in front of people and give to the needy in secret.
- Pray privately and simply. Extra words don’t give you extra “brownie” points.
- Remember God is holy; be thankful; be grateful; be forgivers because you are forgiven; avoid temptation.
- Fast but don’t look like you are.
- Don’t put your confidence in earthly possessions because they will rust and corrode. Serve God, not money.
- Don’t spend your time worrying, God has everything under control. He will provide.
- Don’t judge others. Be concerned about your own life and actions.
- Pursue God in everything you do. Do to others what you would have them do to you.
- Look out for false prophets. They are everywhere trying to deceive you.
- Bear good fruit, because this is how Jesus recognizes you.
- Put the words of Jesus into your life because everything else is just shifting sand.

**Discussion**

1. Review the list of the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount listed above. Which of these (there may be several) would you like to develop in your life? Remember that all of these can live in the same person at the same time. How can you develop them? What hinders their development?
2. Consider the thought “everyone has a moral compass”; at its root, does this statement show a relationship with God or a trust in our own beliefs (even outside of God)?

3. Many commentators disagree about whether or not “simple obedience” is possible. To some there is nothing simple about it while to others it seems to be very easy to do. What are the things that prevent us from being simply obedient?

4. Consider your own faults and sins. How can you become obedient?

References

Walk This Way, L. Todd Collier, 2013.

Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries. Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 2003, Quickverse.


Discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, First Fortress Press, 2003

My Time: (make a list of the important concepts you discussed today that you want to pray about and turn over to God this week)