Least or Great: Your Choice

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May, 2024

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter shall pass from the Law, until all is accomplished!

Therefore, whoever nullifies one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*. Mathew 5:18-19 NASB*

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15 NASB

As I have noted before, please remember that the ONLY Scripture available when this was written WAS what we call the Old Testament.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." 1 John 5:3

I have recently been reminded that there are many Believers who have never read the whole Bible for themselves. Many may be convinced they can't understand it so don't even want to try. Others, like I used to say, have so many obligations there just isn't TIME to do it! They do not yet comprehend the importance of knowing the Word OR the continuity of the Whole Word. Yet, it seems that some of them are the first to howl over what they see as an error in teaching from it! Funny, like we would think we could write a review on a movie we haven't seen! The Word is so far different from just reading a book or seeing a movie. Our Abba has placed gems hidden in the Word for those who search them out…and intentionally left some things unclear UNTIL a deep study is made.

It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. Prov 25:2 NASB

Messiah Himself said that our standing in heaven is dependent on how we handle His Word in our lives now! Have we even read it and studied it for ourselves? Do we esteem it highly or casually?

No, it isn't a salvation issue…that is a matter of faith and action. Just one of many examples:

that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; Romans 10:9 NASB

But salvation is only the <u>entrance</u> into our eternity!

Western Greek thinking has dominated traditional Christian practices for centuries and it has focused on salvation; partial truth. Whenever the sanctification process also described in the Word is brought up, I have learned to count on SOMEBODY jumping up to say it isn't relevant because we are saved! I am among those who say that an extremely important part of our faith walk today is getting back to the "faith given once for the saints" as Jude urged. It is far more important what we do WITH Him, than anything we try to do FOR Him.

Several pastors I knew years ago were very quick to say there is no different "standing" in heaven or that the idea of casting your crowns before Messiah was just a pretty song. In the Word, Messiah says there will be "different standings," least to great; depending on whether we teach His Whole Word or not. And there are five heavenly crowns mentioned in Scripture: the imperishable crown, the crown of rejoicing, the crown of righteousness, the crown of glory, and the crown of life.

I have been advised by more than one pastor that a seminary education can be completed without ever studying more than one or two books of the Word. Also, for 50+ years, the Textual Criticism approach has educated the faith out of many a student.

I see that one popular online Christian "questions and answers" site notes the importance of knowing and keeping the Law, but goes on to say that Jesus' death fulfilled all righteousness so we need not be concerned about that. This was said in the context of parsing out civil and ceremonial laws, which is NOT done in Scripture, but in traditions of man. "Law" as a translation for His "teachings "leaves an impression that it is negative and misrepresents the purpose and meaning intended. Consulting commentators isn't always the best route to go. This is a primary example of how man's traditions have twisted the meaning of Scriptures, as Peter warned was so easy to do with Paul's teachings.

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found spotless and blameless by Him, at peace, and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which there are ***some things that are hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*** *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that*

you are not carried away by the error of unscrupulous people and lose your own firm commitment, 2 Peter 3: 14-17 NASB

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive compensation for his deeds done through the body, in accordance with what he has done, whether good or bad. 2 Cor 5:10 NASB

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 1 cor 3:13-15 NASB

Again, we see that it is not a salvation issue, but rather an assessment of how we have handled His Word…are we hearers only, or doers of it?

For those unaware, there are distinctions within the Torah/Law for different groups of people to whom the various aspects of the Torah apply… and as we are not in the Land, much of what we do is considered "mikrey kodesh" or holy rehearsals.

Western Christianity has gone far adrift from the Word of YHWH that our Messiah Yeshua/Jesus Who IS God, lived and taught. Just because errors have been perpetuated for 2,000 years does NOT make them become acceptable to our Father. We have truly been living in His grace and mercy for some time….but now it is drawing near to the time of Messiah's return. The call to return to the ancient paths is found in the Scriptures and has been heard and taken up by many, many people around the world today.

Many Church authorities today DO say that there is no need for concern about righteousness because Jesus fulfilled it. Yet, churches base their practices on the teachings of the RCC, which changed the commanded day of worship/rest from Shabbat/Saturday to Sunday, among many other manmade changes. This never happened in Scriptural history. If Jesus/Yeshua had wanted to start a different church, it seems He had many opportunities to do so… and DIDN'T! He confirmed multiple times that He only taught what His Father did, They are One in purpose and teachings. Before and after His death and resurrection, believers looked ahead and back to what He has done for us. He DID write His commandments on our hearts after they were first written on stone, but they are the SAME commandments.

He laid out how He wants His people to live and walk; the calendar with His holy days, which are all about Messiah's work on our behalf, what He considers food and not food, and so forth. These are the commandments John says we are to keep, which means "to guard" them and protect the time from other distractions. He never told us to celebrate Messiah's death and resurrection on a pagan feast with a pagan name (Oestra/easter) and He never told us to celebrate Messiah's birth, except perhaps during the Feast of Tabernacles when He came to live or "tabernacle" among us in the flesh. (John 1:14)

He has called us over and over to obedience! He warned us through several prophets and writers of the Brit Chadasha/Renewed Covenant/NT that we should not be driven to and fro by every wind of doctrine, but remain steadfast. The standard to determine this is NOT current, not the errors of our fathers, but from His Word, back to the beginning.

I can look back in my life and see so many times when I decided I was doing a "good work" FOR God. While it may have been a good thing, the Word says that if it wasn't directed by Him, it will be one of those works that gets burned by fire, even though I am still saved.

I am sure David thought he was doing a "Good thing" to put the Ark of the Covenant on a brand new unused oxcart, but Abba Father made it totally clear, it was NOT good in His eyes….because it was NOT done out of obedience to how He had commanded the Ark to be handled.

Annanias and Saphira thought they could do a "good thing" by selling their property and giving it to the disciples to be distributed to those in need. What they missed was that they thought they could secretively keep back part of the proceeds for themselves… and our Abba knew and passed judgment immediately in their sudden deaths.

I struggled for a season with the idea of philanthropy.. for example, when people get together to fund safe wells for poverty stricken areas. How could that be NOT good? He finally made it clear to me that it has to do with the source and heart of the action… is it called for from Yah's heart, or from our own perceptions? Is it done for the praise of Him, or to be seen by men? If only for men, it, too, will be "burned up" in judgment, though the doers can still be saved. They just won't have much "standing" in Heaven.

Jonathan Edwards wrote of these matters…he, too, distinguished the source of any "good" action. He said that it matters how one carries out the Word in his/her life. Is it for the sake of bringing joy and glory to God, or to ourselves? He believed that everyone will be satisfied in heaven, no matter where they stand… but compared the parable of the talents to demonstrate again, that those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly, and those who sow abundantly will reap abundantly.

Brothers and sisters in Messiah: we yet have an opportunity to return to our Abba with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. We yet have an opportunity to determine if we will be counted “least” or “great” in eternity. We can demonstrate our faithfulness and obedience to do His will when we search out His Word deeply to discover and confirm for ourselves what that means. If you need help to comprehend the context, remember that context was God’s choice of the Hebrew language, land and culture through which to bring our Messiah…not a Greek or Western mindset.

We yet have an opportunity to walk after Him in HIS ways, not our own ideas of what He likes. We can learn to recognize where the distortions Paul warns us about have crept in. We must learn to recognize and turn away when we are focused on manmade traditions and reveling in the appreciation and praise of men, rather than looking above and to our eternity.

Lay down the works of YOUR hands and look to HIS leading only!