

8. 5 Last Days Commands-Part 8

Stand Fast In The Faith-Part 2

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Find this week's sermon audio and video message [HERE](#).

This morning, we are continuing our series, “**Five Last Day's Commands**”—or “*Five Commands to Christians Living in the Last Days*”—which comes out of:

1 Corinthians 16:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. ¹⁴ Let all *that you do* be done with love.

This morning, we find ourselves looking at the second command in this series to—“**Stand fast in the faith.**”

I think when Paul said this, he primarily had the gospel in mind. Everywhere Paul took the truth of the gospel he was confronted with the lies of the devil—and 2000 years later nothing has changed.

Only the true gospel can bring new life in Christ, a false gospel, no matter how sincerely it is believed and embraced cannot save anyone—and no one knows that better than the devil!

The Lord has commissioned us to go into all the world preaching the gospel to the lost—which is why we must know the *true* gospel so we can share it accurately with those we come in contact with!

This is why we have set aside a few weeks to study what the true gospel is all about and how to share it with others.

1. **There is a day of judgment coming (gospel introduction)**
2. **Repentance**
3. **Jesus Christ is Almighty God—Lord of all**
4. **Jesus Christ Died for Their Sins**

When you present the gospel to people, you need to make sure that they understand (from God's Word) that—being “good” (whatever that means) won't get them into heaven.

Proverbs 20:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Most men will proclaim each his own goodness...

Most people will say, “*I know I'm not perfect, but I think I'm good enough to get into heaven.*” But God is telling us in His Word that if you're not perfect, you're not good enough—and no one is perfect—

Romans 3:23 (NKJV)

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (sinless perfection),

Romans 6:23 (NKJV)

²³ For the wages of sin is death (eternal death—hell), but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To deal with this subject properly, we need to turn to Matthew 19—

Matthew 19:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

In this section of Scripture, we see Jesus evangelizing a man who comes to Him seeking how he might have eternal life—*who is this seeker?* Well, we learn from the passage that he was both young and wealthy. Luke adds that he was also a *ruler*—probably of a synagogue which was a very influential and honored position for a man to hold, especially a young man.

So here we have a young, successful, prominent, influential man who was moral and religious coming to Jesus who wanted to receive eternal life. Now on the face of it this seems almost too good to be true—a situation that every pastor dreams about!

I mean to have a rich, young, moral, influential person in the community seeking them out and basically asking—*"I'd like to be saved, I want to go to heaven—can you help me?"*

If there was ever a time in the ministry of Jesus that we would expect to see a straightforward presentation of the gospel it would be here! In fact, this passage is without a doubt the most powerful example in all the gospels of the difference between our modern approach to sharing the gospel and how it differs from the way Jesus presented it.

This is really an interesting incident, especially for those of us who are leaders in the church and concerned with reaching the lost with the gospel.

One pastor put it well—

Most of the energy we expend in evangelism is designed to bring people to a point where they become aware of their need for salvation—but here's a young guy who had already come to that conclusion before Jesus ever had a chance to show him that. There was no need to explain to him how we know God exists, why we can trust the Bible as the Word of God, or why he should be concerned about eternity. All the pre-gospel issues were already taken care of, and he looked like 'the hottest evangelistic prospect' Jesus had encountered so far!"

Again, this is the kind of person the modern church dreams of coming into the fellowship—rich, young, successful and motivated—any evangelist worth his salt would never let a potential convert like this get away—but Jesus did. *How?! Why!?*

Let's look at the passage and try to discover what's really going on here and why Jesus handled this young seeker the way He did.

Matthew 19:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

First of all, by calling Jesus a *'teacher'* (even a *'good teacher'*) he was lumping Him in with all the other teachers and prophets in Israel's history—which ignores the uniqueness of Jesus.

If Jesus was only one of many religious teachers in history, then His words carry no more weight than the teachings of any other religious leader or teacher—like Buddha, Confucius, or Mohammed. Yet, Jesus never allowed Himself to be lumped in with any other religious teacher.

He constantly set Himself apart from the other religious leaders of history with statements like:
"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).

- Only Jesus, the sinless Son of God could have paid the price for our sins and rescue us from coming judgment.
- What separates Jesus Christ from all the other religious leaders and teachers throughout history is that—they were just men claiming to have a way to God—whereas Jesus said He is God the WAY, the only way to God the Father in heaven!

Acts 4:12 (NLT)

¹² There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

Christianity (salvation) is bound up in and dependent upon not only the teachings of Jesus Christ, but also the Person of Christ Himself—which makes Christianity unique as compared to all the other religions of the world. You can remove Buddha from Buddhism, Confucius from Confucianism, Mohammed from Mohamedism (Islam) and nothing would change, because those religions aren't built on their leaders—on their teachings, but not on them personally.

But remove Christ from Christianity and it ceases to exist because Christianity is inextricably linked to and built upon the Person and work of Jesus Christ!

So, before Jesus answers his question about the "how" of eternal life (how it is obtained)— He first addresses the more important issue of the "Who" of eternal life.

Matthew 19:16-17 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" ¹⁷ So He said to him, "**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God...**

Jesus was saying one of two things here—either He was saying: "**Why are you calling Me good, there is no one good but God? So don't call Me good I'm not God**" or "**Why are you calling Me good, there is no one good but God? Do you recognize that I am God?**"

Believing that Jesus is God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity is absolutely essential for salvation (John 8:24). So, the first misconception that this young seeker was harboring under was that Jesus was a special man, a good teacher and maybe even a prophet—but nothing more.

His second misconception had to do with what was involved in obtaining eternal life—he thought he could receive it by doing something rather than by believing in someone—namely Jesus.

We see this reflected in his question to Jesus—"**What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?**"

At this point all of us who are Christians would have expected Jesus to say something to the effect—"You don't do anything to receive eternal life—it's a gift from God that you receive by believing in Me and receiving Me as your Lord and Savior."

That's what we would expect to hear Jesus tell this young seeker of eternal life—but that's not what Jesus says to him. Here's where Jesus' gospel presentation, which up until this point has been fairly straight forward—takes an interesting if not puzzling turn.

You see, in verse 17 we read that He tells this man, "***If you want to enter into eternal life—keep the commandments***"—*what?!!*

At first glance this seems to go against everything the Bible teaches about salvation—that it isn't obtained through works of righteousness like keeping commandments—it is a free gift received by faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NLT)

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Titus 3:5 (NLT)

⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

A works centered approach to salvation was not only common among the Jews in Jesus day—but is still very common among so many today who are trying to work their way into heaven by trying to do 'good things' like going to church, keeping sacraments and holy days, helping the poor etc.

But listen to what Paul said with regard to this—

Galatians 2:21 (NKJV)

²¹ ...if righteousness *comes* through the law [commandments], then Christ died in vain."

- So then why did Jesus tell this man if he wanted to receive eternal life, he had to obey God's commandments (the Law)?

The answer is that Jesus refers to the Law to show this young man that eternal life was not a reward for good people trying to be better—it was a gift given to those who acknowledge that they are sinners and unworthy of it.

The Law is a mirror that reveals our sin and therefore our guilt before God—

Romans 3:20 (NLT)

²⁰ For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are [*to drive us to Jesus for salvation*].

Jesus knew that before this man could receive Him as his Savior—he first needed to see himself as a sinner.

One author—

"Jesus needed to show him that he was a sinner and didn't need a little sprinkle of some kind of secret ingredient that Jesus could provide that he could add to his righteous, moral life that would tip the scale in his favor and finally earn him the eternal life he thought he deserved."

Jesus knew that this religious, moral man needed to realize that he wasn't good enough to get into heaven by keeping the works of the Law—and so He used the very Law this young man thought would save him to—condemn him—to show him his sin!

When Jesus said to him, ***“If you want to enter into eternal life, keep the commandments,”*** He wasn't preaching salvation through works—as one author put it:

“He was taking this man and slamming him up against God’s standard of righteousness, not because keeping the Law would bring him salvation, but so that he would see how far short he had fallen from truly keeping it”.

Matthew 19:17b-19 (NKJV)

¹⁷ ***...if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.*** ¹⁸ He said to Him, ***“Which ones?”*** Jesus said, ***“You shall not murder, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' ¹⁹ 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ”***

Here Jesus quotes five commandments from the second table of the Decalogue that deals with our relationship to our fellow man—summing it up by quoting from Leviticus 19:18— *“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Now listen, if this rich, young ruler had responded to Jesus by confessing, *“I’ve tried to keep God’s commandments, but I keep breaking them—is there another way for me to have eternal life?”*

If this man had said this, I am confident Jesus would have said to him, *“You can’t keep the Law for eternal life and you’re wondering if there is another way—I am the Way the Truth and the Life—the only way for you to get to heaven is through Me.” (John 14:6)*

Unfortunately, he didn't say that, but rather he self-righteously responded to Jesus—

Matthew 19:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ ***...“All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?”***

It's interesting that with all he had going—he was young, rich, moral, religious and held a position of power and prestige as a leader in the synagogue—for all of that he still felt empty. Deep down inside he knew something important was still missing in his life.

So many people are successful in life; they have money and material possessions; they're decent people, they're law abiding and moral; they're religious and attend church regularly—but they still sense something is missing.

They have *religion*—but not a genuine, vital *relationship* with the living God through His Son, Jesus Christ! Many people who come to church are simply looking for solutions to their *felt needs*—but that is not enough to bring them to genuine salvation.

Remember that when you share the gospel with people—Christianity is not a glorified self-help or self-improvement program. There are a lot of people who look at believing in Jesus as a way to get things from God—and so they want to *add* Jesus to their life without realizing that Jesus must become their life.

**Christianity is all about surrendering their life to Jesus
as their living Lord (Master)
not just their intellectual Savior.**

But before that will happen, they have to vacate the throne of their heart and invite Jesus to come in and take His rightful place as King over their life. This man knew he needed spiritual life so badly and wanted it so desperately that Mark tells us he came *running* to Jesus to get it.

You can almost hear the urgency in his question—***“Tell me what can I do to have eternal life?”***

This is something that most Christians dream about—having someone come to us and beg us to tell them how they can have eternal life.

How many of us would have knelt right there with this guy and had him repeat the ‘sinners’ prayer with us? But not Jesus, He knew better. He wasn’t looking to build a big following—He was looking for *true disciples*. And He wasn’t going to be manipulated into giving eternal life to someone just because they were desperate to fill some emptiness inside without acknowledging and repenting for their sins.

John MacArthur in his book, *“The Gospel According to Jesus”* had this to say on this subject:

“Our modern ideas of evangelism err in some key points of the gospel as presented by Jesus. Modern evangelism is preoccupied with decisions, statistics, aisle walking, gimmicks, prefab presentations, pitches, emotional manipulation and even intimidation. It’s a simplistic message of shallow faith based on cheap grace. Unbelievers are told that if they invite Jesus into their hearts, accept him as personal Savior, or believe the facts of the gospel, that’s all there is to it. But the aftermath has been tragic. Multitudes of people who have professed faith in Christ with no real change in lifestyle or submission to Christ. Who knows how many people have been deluded into believing they’re saved when they are not?”

Jesus will never take us on *our* terms; He will only take us on *His* terms or not at all—which becomes the basis for verse 21:

Matthew 19:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Let me just say this—nowhere in the Bible are we taught that a sinner is saved by selling his goods and giving the money to the poor. Jesus is not laying down a universal principle for everyone to obey if they want to be saved. There were other rich people in the Bible that didn’t have to give everything away before they could be saved—Abraham, Job, Solomon, Joseph of Arimathea etc.

The only universal principle for salvation is the invitation by Jesus to *“come and follow Me”*—which involves believing in Him and receiving Him as your Savior and Lord. But whatever is keeping you from doing that is what Jesus is saying has to go—you can fill in the blank (a relationship, a desire for fame and or fortune, success...etc.).

- Jesus knew that this man was covetous—he loved money.
- Possessions were his god—they were an idol in his life occupying the throne of his heart.
- By commanding him to sell his goods, Jesus was forcing him to examine his own heart and determine his priorities.
- With all of his commendable qualities, the young man still didn’t truly love God with *all* of his heart—he had a divided heart.

Since as Jesus said, *“No man can serve two masters...”* he would have to make a decision as to who or what was going to be the one and only God of his life.

Matthew 19:22 (NKJV)

²² But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Unfortunately, for this man, he made the wrong choice.

Matthew 16:24-26 (NLT)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. ²⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. ²⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?"

One author had this to say,

"The young man went away grieved, but he could have gone away in great joy and peace. We cannot love and serve two masters (Matt. 6:24ff). We can be sure that, apart from Christ, even the material possessions of life give no lasting joy or pleasure. It is good to have the things money can buy provided we do not lose the things that money cannot buy. Unless this rich ruler eventually turned to Christ, he died without salvation, one of the "richest" men in the cemetery" (and eventually hell)."

We could call this—the story of the “good man” who went to hell.

Much of contemporary evangelism is woefully deficient in confronting people with the reality of their sin.

Remember the part of the gospel message we are studying this morning is that:

- We must tell people is that **Jesus Christ Died for Their Sins.**
- That they're not 'good' people;
- They're sinners who are unworthy of the least of God's blessings.

Preachers offer happiness, joy, fulfillment—and anything else that is positive to try and get people to come to Christ.

Most of our witnessing centers on a person's emotional or psychological needs and then offers Jesus as a quick cure for the problems of life.

That's why churches are full of people whose lives are basically unchanged.

They have been told that coming to Jesus would in some way meet their needs, take care of their problems, bring them happiness—and don't get me wrong that's true but only if they are willing to abandon the self-life and become a servant of Christ.

We need to change our presentation of the gospel, so that we don't become “salesmen” for Jesus and package and present the gospel as a miracle cure all for the aches and pains of life—without dealing with issues like sin and surrender.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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