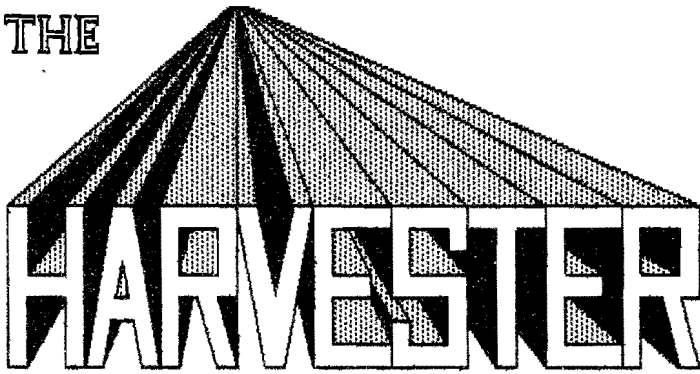


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"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." [Luke 10:2]

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## GOD MEANS IT!

Children are taught early in life to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). To emphasize the importance of obedience, the parents usually give the command and follow it with a statement of cogency, such as, "I want you to clean up your room now and I mean it!" When a parent says it like that, he reminds the child that the command is not negotiable. It is a serious matter, otherwise the parent would not have given the order in the first place. In the same manner God has given us many commands to be followed and He means it! He gives his people certain orders and he intends for them to follow those requirements exactly. No back talk, no questions, no deviations.

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FORWARD AND  
ADDRESS CORRECTION

A few incidents from the Old Testament days should bring this important lesson home to us. Although we are no longer bound to the Old Law, one of the reasons why we must still study the Old Testament books is to learn from history and from the lives of others who are much like us (Rom. 15:4). These stories should reinforce the idea that God gave specific commands to his people and he wanted them to obey without question or hesitation. Whenever the people doubted God and disobeyed his commandments, it resulted in sin and death (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23). Thus, whatever the Lord told them to do, unequivocally he meant it!

Moses, who delivered the Old Law to the Israelites, is an interesting character to study. He is admired by every Jew, yet this man never made it to the Promised Land of Canaan! The incident that kept Moses from reaching this earthly goal is told in Numbers 20. God told Moses to take the rod and speak to the rock and then it would give forth water to quench the people's thirst. Unfortunately, Moses did not do exactly as he was told (v. 11). Evidently Moses did not take God's Word very seriously nor did he think God meant what he said. Moses took his rod and struck the rock twice. This clear disobedience displeased God so much that he had to punish Moses. Moses was not allowed to enter Canaan because he did not obey God exactly. Sure, water did come out of the rock but Moses failed to sanctify the Lord in the eyes of the Israelites (v. 12).

The same thing will happen to everybody today who does not obey God as he commands. Moses was guilty of changing the Word of God, adding and subtracting to the specific orders he was given. Like Moses, anyone who adds to or subtracts away

from God's Word (Deut. 4:2) will not get to enter the Land of Promised Rest (Heb. 5:7-19).

Another man who did not follow God's instructions carefully was King Saul. He was told in very plain language to NOT spare any of the enemy's possessions (1 Sam. 15:3). But Saul clearly disobeyed God. He and the people *"spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them"* (v. 9). Saul wanted to please God and though he had very good intentions, the fact remains: Saul did not think God meant what he said or else Saul would not have acted so foolishly.

So often we think we can please God by doing things our own way (Prov. 14:12), but usually our way is not according to his Word (Isa. 55:8-9). It has to be God's way everytime, if we are to be successful. There is no excuse for neglecting a commandment of God, yet today's society has little regard for God and his Word. What God says, he means! *"Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"* (1 Sam 15:22).

The sad story of Uzzah is another case worth investigating. In 2 Samuel 6 David was preparing to bring the ark of the Lord back to Jerusalem. According to the Old Law, the ark had to be carried by hand and only the Levites (sons of Kohath) could bear it (Num. 4:15). That is exactly what God commanded. And obviously he meant it too, for as the oxen stumbled and the cart swayed, Uzzah reached and touched the ark to steady it and he died instantly. He was punished for violating God's orders. Uzzah, like Saul, may have had good intentions but such intentions can

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never be a replacement for obedience to God's Word.

So what does all this teach us? When God says something, he means it! Folks, he really means business and does not expect His Word to be taken lightly. When we disobey, we should anticipate punishment.

Therefore, as we look to the New Testament and review the New Law under which we live, we must realize that God meant for us to obey every commandment applicable.

When God said, *"Whatsoever things are true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Phil. 4:8), he meant it! He meant for us to keep our minds out of the 'gutter' and centered on spiritual matters.

When God said, *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ... Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord"* (Eph. 5:25, 22), he meant for spouses to get along together and to develop a proper and lasting relationship!

When God said, "*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection ... I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*" (1 Tim. 2:11-12), he meant that! He does not intend for women to take a leadership role in the public assembling of ourselves together such as in the ungodly trends we witness today.

When God said, "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2), he fully meant it! He intends for the gospel news to be spread throughout the world and that not a single word be held back from its destination.

When God said, "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Eph. 4:4-6), he meant there are no legitimate denominations, no different 'branches' as some claim, no various faiths, and no multiple Gods. There is only one!

When God said, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16), he meant exactly what he said! An accountable person cannot be in a saved condition without BOTH faith and baptism (Acts 2:38; Jas. 2:20; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Like a parent to a child, when God tells us something, he means it! He desires that we obey his every command without question and that we treat his Word with the utmost respect. Can we honestly say that we do that?

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who did Hagar despise after she became pregnant by Abram?
2. Because God fought for the Israelites, one Israelite could put to flight how many enemies?
3. What parable refers to anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God?
4. What book of the Bible records Paul's sermon from Mars' Hill?
5. What physical characteristic stood out in King Saul?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Which prophet was hand-picked to be educated for three years and then brought into the king's service? DANIEL (Dan. 1:5)
2. To whose cries are the ears of the Lord attentive? THE RIGHTEOUS (Psa. 34:15)
3. In the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, what did the rich man say was causing his agony? FLAME (Luke 16:24)
4. The dragon which appeared in Revelation has how many heads? SEVEN (Rev. 12:3)
5. What two things did Jacob do when he first met Rachel? KISSED HER AND WEPT (Gen. 29:11)

<p>DON'T BE TOO HARD ON THE CRITIC. HE IS PROBABLY USING HIS ONLY TALENT.</p>
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## TRAIN UP A CHILD

*"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* (Prov. 22:6) Many times I have heard this verse discussed in sermons and in conversations between individuals. And to the best of my recollection every single time it has been misapplied.

The common usage of the verse, which I am familiar with, is that if you raise a child properly then, even if he goes astray after he becomes an adult and gets out on his own, when he reaches old age he will 'return to his raising.' Or in other words, if you raise a child in the Church, and he leaves the Church after he is grown, that you need not worry because he will return to the Church when he is old.

This is indeed a consoling thought for those who are parents of children who have left the Church. It is very comforting to think you did a good job raising your children and that after they get through 'sowing their wild oats' they will settle down and live like they were raised. It has been my experience that those who discuss this verse often are those who have grown children who have left the Church.

I do not seek to discourage anyone from the hope that their children might repent. However, I feel it necessary to point out that this verse does not teach what so many believe that it does. If we examine the verse closely this will become very apparent. The verse says nothing about a child ever returning to the way he was raised. It simply points out that, as a general rule, if a child

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