

Matthew 19

The Wisdom of Self-control

As we read this chapter two things become very clear. 1) The reality that God's laws and our obedience to them is of no less importance now than it was when they were first put in place at the creation of the earth. They have not eroded with time or become less important to be obeying. 2) That God's blessings for our obedience to His laws are also just as sure now as they were then.

Now we all live in the world and we love the things of the world. Because of this fact we like to think that the punishments for breaking the laws of God might not be so bad or that they might not apply to us at all. We also don't like looking too closely at what God's laws are so that our consciences will stay in the dark as to what is really right and what is really wrong. We like to keep the laws as gray and unclear as possible. Inside we all know that if we look closely at the laws we will find that we are going to have to stop doing things that we love or live to do. So we all try to stay away from really knowing the laws so that we will not be accused of outright disobedience to them. If we don't know then we might only get a warning instead of a serious punishment.

This approach is not going to work. In the desire to hold onto the things of the world we have attempted to cover over the reality of the Awesomeness and Holiness of a God who created the Universe and set up all the laws, which we are trying to ignore. God will not be fooled by our attempted ignorance of His rules. It will not pacify One who had to send His only Son to pay the price for our breaking of those same rules. God's rules are so Holy and unbreakable that the only payment for breaking them had to be from one who was completely innocent of ever breaking them.

Now let me ask you something. If these rules are so dearly paid for how can you expect to survive without making it your priority to know and obey them? Jesus has indeed paid the death penalty for our breaking of them, but that payment was purchased so that we might have the freedom to begin obeying them. You see, if Jesus hadn't come there would be no need to even attempt obedience because there would be no escaping God's wrath for what we had already committed. Each of us would be without hope of escape from Hell. But Jesus did pay the price and now instead of the death penalty we will receive discipline for our disobedience to those rules. Now we must study those laws so that we may learn to obey them quickly thus avoiding His loving discipline. God's rules still stand, but now we have grace and hope through Jesus. It is a gift that should have us joyfully trying to obey every one of God's laws. Indeed, we should be studying the laws intently that we might please our Heavenly Father with our joyful desire to obey Him. We should take full advantage of the salvation we have been given by studying and obeying those laws that we might enjoy the blessings and rewards that come from obedience to them.

God calls each of us to use our understanding so that we might learn from His discipline. We can either learn quickly or we can ignore the correction that He sends to us. To learn quickly always means that we have to painfully deny our flesh and to walk away from whatever we have been doing that breaks His laws. The reason this is so hard is that the things we have to give up are always things that we love to do or couldn't stop ourselves from doing. Put it this way. If you told an alcoholic that he had to give up drugs, would this be hard for him? Of course not. He never did drugs. It's alcohol that he can't leave alone. Walking away from things we love requires self-denial and sacrifice. It is always a hard road, but it always leads to a stronger relationship with God and the wonderful blessings that come from this relationship.

We are fortunate to have such a wonderful and loving Heavenly Father who will pursue us with discipline. His discipline causes our lives to become cut off from the things that we could or would

not leave of our own free will. He backs us into a corner until we have no choice but to look to Him and thank Him for His “severe mercies”. The fact is if we have no self-control, He will enforce His self-control on us in order to rescue us from further consequences.

It’s time to learn self-control and to become responsible for our actions. Let us not wait for God to have to enforce self-control upon us, but rather let us quickly act with putting self-control in our lives. Otherwise we may find that we don’t like the form of discipline He has chosen for us.

May God bless you all with a renewed urgency to seek the Lord with all your heart! Let us love our Heavenly Father more with each passing day!

July 22,09 Written by a fellow servant of Jesus -Seth