

23 *Not Do According To His Will*

Knowing the Message Implies Responsibility With Eternal Consequences

We have been learning the commandments of Jesus by systematic study. We have learned Jesus intends you to obey His commands as if Heaven depended on them, because it does. Jesus clearly tells us the consequence if you now *know* these commands but then lose sight of those commands and do not follow them:

And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and ***made not ready, nor did according to his will***, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom ***they commit much***, of him will they ask the more. (Luk 12:47-48 ASV)

Is Jesus threatening non-believers with a beating with stripes and being torn asunder for disobedience by temporal (earthly) affliction? No. For the verse that immediately precedes this passage is:

The ***lord of that servant*** will come in a day when ***he looketh not for him***, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the ***unbelievers***. (Luk 12:46 KJV.)

Thus, Jesus says the servant who was beaten and torn asunder truly belonged to the Lord! Jesus says the "Lord of that servant" will return one day. Consequently, the person in the parable is the Lord's *servant*, which is not a category

Jesus ever applies to non-Christians. A servant of the Lord Jesus is instead only a person who at some point truly followed Jesus.¹

Moreover, the word for “unbelievers” in Greek is *apiston*. It literally means “non-believer.”² The use of this term here necessarily also implies the servant must be a *believer*. The servant of the Lord who disobeys His Lord suffers a fate *identical* to that of a non-believer, *i.e.*, an *apiston*. Jesus is saying a servant who disobeys His Lord is treated just like he was a *nonbeliever*, which clearly implies the servant is a *believer*. Jesus deliberately tells us the class set of *believers who disobey* are treated just like the class set of *unbelievers who never believed*.

Also, the fact Jesus intends us to know the servant is a believer is not merely logical. It is also the point of the parable. Jesus says He will come on a day His servant who has disobeyed Him is ill prepared. Obedience, not *faith*, is what Jesus says this servant of His lacks.

Furthermore, that an unbeliever is in view being assigned a final judgment with unbelievers is clear as well from the Parable that precedes it: the Parable of the Good

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1. “If any man *serve me*, let him *follow me*; and where I am, there shall also *my servant be*: if any man *serve me*, him will the Father honor.” Joh 12:26 ASV
 2. The cheap grace proponents have disliked the KJV translation. Some more recent translations (*e.g.*, ASV, NLT, YLT) translate *apiston*’s meaning as *unfaithful*. This is to support the notion that this good servant turned evil merely ends up in heaven with stripes among other *unfaithful* Christians. However, the context negates this, because “torn asunder” is a torment. Moreover, the parallel in Matthew says the good servant ends up in a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 24:48-50.) Jesus elsewhere identifies this place as the “fiery furnace” where all sinners are sent when the angels execute the final judgment. (Matt. 13:42, 49-50.) Furthermore, the usage in the New Testament bears out *apiston* has but one meaning: *unbeliever*. For example, in 1 Cor. 7: 12, 16, 21, *gunaika apiston* means an “unbelieving” wife. In 1 Cor. 7:13, it talks of an “*apiston*” (unbelieving) husband. On suits brought before *apiston*, in 1 Cor. 6:1-7, it has but one meaning: *unbelievers*. (Vine.) See also, Acts 26:8..

Servant Turned Evil.³ Jesus is warning His true servants to not lose patience, and turn to evil. The end result is you will end up having your portion with *unbelievers*.

Consequently, Luke 12:47-48 which follows the Parable of the Good Servant Turned Evil is a major lesson of Jesus on the necessity to obey.

Now that you know your Lord's will, it is incumbent on you to follow it. It is not optional. It is not merely for the super Christian. It is not simply a path to a close discipleship with Jesus where *rewards* alone hang in the balance. Instead, Jesus says the question whether you are torn asunder and given a portion in hell with unbelievers is what hangs in the balance.

Sins of Ignorance

What is actually more frightening is Jesus implies 'ignorance of the law is no excuse.' For Jesus says, "but he that *knew not*, and did things *worthy of stripes*, shall be beaten with few stripes." Thus, if you sin in some manner unaware of the Law's commands which is serious enough that you are "worthy of stripes," you are still responsible to have *known* them. You will suffer stripes despite not knowing them. These stripes are not in heaven, but in hell, as previously stated

This is why it is so imperative to learn the Law applicable to you (which varies and is far less for Gentiles/ Sojourners) than it is for Jewish Christians.

However, two caveats are appropriate here. First, Jesus qualified His expression. He left open the possibility that there are sins done in ignorance that are "not worthy of stripes," and thus cannot be blameworthy. Yet, Jesus did not identify such sins. Thus, if you have not diligently searched for God's commands that apply to you, there appears to be latitude on some commands that if you disobey them in igno-

3. See chapter "Conclusion: The Five Keys To The Kingdom" on page 1.

rance that you are not at risk from Luke 12:46-47. It seems reasonable to assume sins of ignorance that are not “worthy of stripes” would be violations where you would not suspect from *conscience* that such a command even exists.

Would it be an excuse that a cheap grace advocate ignored the Law (except tithing) and denounced its applicability to Christians by accepting teachers who taught contrary to the true Sole Teacher to follow — Jesus — when He said anyone who taught even the smallest command in the Law was no longer to be followed was a false teacher?⁴

The answer is this cannot possibly be an excuse. When you *know of the command*, but dismiss it due to wrong *doctrinal* presuppositions, particularly when Jesus’ words *put you on notice*, then this certainly is *no valid excuse*. If this were an excuse, Jesus would never have excoriated the Pharisees and said they are going to hell due to the shallow doctrines on the Law. Jesus said they negated the express Law based on oral law (Matt. 15:6). The Pharisees wrongly taught the less important commands (tithing) from the Law to the neglect of the more important commands. (Matt. 23:23.)

The second caveat on the question whether ‘ignorance is no excuse’ is as follows: If we look at Hebrew Scripture, we learn that sins of ignorance took on a greater *significance* once you *learned* of the Law you had violated.⁵ When you learned you had previously sinned, and had not known you

4. “Think not that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these *least commandments*, and *shall teach men so*, shall be called *least* in the kingdom of heaven: but *whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*.
Mat 5:17-19 ASV

5. “When a ruler hath sinned, and done somewhat through *ignorance against any of the commandments* of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty; Or *if his sin, wherein he hath sinned, come to his knowledge*; he shall bring his offering, a kid of the goats, a male without blemish.” Lev 4:22-23

were sinning, you were to bring an atoning sacrifice. Whenever bringing any sacrifice, the Bible taught you must first repent (*i.e.*, commit to turn around), and then and only then was the atonement going to be effective to cleanse you and lead to forgiveness.⁶

This might suggest that culpability for sins of ignorance is actually only upon *learning* of the past violation of the sins done in ignorance. The moral taint would be by taking no steps of repentance, including the appeasement of the one you wronged, as Jesus outlined, prior to pleading the atonement's effectiveness to you.⁷

Unfortunately, one cannot be 100% sure this is true, and that moral taint is necessary. The command to bring the sacrifice does not suggest that you are innocent before learning of the sin you committed. Rather, it implies you *sinned* already, and you simply *learned* that you had sinned. If this is so, then what Jesus means is that you will be responsible for sins done in ignorance *even if you never knew* you had sinned, as long as the sin is "worthy of stripes."

My resolution of the 'sins of ignorance' issue mentioned in Luke 12:46-47 is that we are responsible (and subject to God's wrath in hell) only if our sins of ignorance are worthy of stripes. This would appear to require moral taint for violating laws you never knew about. Consequently, if you should have known by the sense God gave you that something is wrong, then you *are guilty even if you did not know it was also banned in the Bible*.

How might this apply in real life? It would follow from this that if your conscience keeps nagging you about something, and you cannot find a Bible verse to support your *conscience's* concern, you should stop the behavior unless you are confident God's Law permits the behavior. When

6. See "Atonement: Be Reconciled First To The One You Sinned Against Or Otherwise No Effect" on page 1 *et seq.*

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your conscience bothers you, it likely means you are involved in a sin of technical ignorance of the Law, but which is a sin worthy of stripes. You don't want to find out later that your conscience was right, and there was a command you were ignoring in the Law.

The danger in this approach, however, is two-fold.

First, you might try to impose your conscience on others even when you are *ignorant* of the Law's express command, and cannot cite any principle to others. When you are doing this, you are creating an Oral Torah (Law) that you are insisting others obey.

The other danger is you could let your conscience be so piqued by many little things that are not Biblically mandated that you create your own sense of personal righteousness apart from God's law. You can become a Pharisee because now you (a) have denigrated the written Law; and (b) created your own Oral Law, which gives you a false sense of self-righteousness.

With those dangers in mind, it does seem that avoiding sins of ignorance is worth the effort if perchance they are "worthy of stripes." Because our Lord tells us to be concerned.

Conclusion

Whether sins of commission or omission, a servant of Jesus who knows His Lord's will and does not do it will be punished with many stripes. You will be torn asunder and put with unbelievers on judgment day in a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. Thus, you must take everything you learn as a command from Jesus and diligently follow it. You must behave as if heaven hangs on your obedience, because it does.