

Lawless Ways

Some things are lawful, and others are lawless. We need to _____ the difference. Lawless ways will not lead to _____. What is lawful and what is not? Psalm 119:105 says, “Your _____ is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” God’s ways help us to see the _____ and give light in a confused world. Psalm 119:130 says, “The unfolding of Your words gives _____; It gives understanding to the simple.” We search the Scriptures, because they contain the understanding necessary to know God, to have _____ life, and to live holy lives.

Today, we’re focusing on what God _____ as lawless ways. The Lord distinguishes between many things. There is a _____ way and a _____ way, and they lead to different destinies. There is right and wrong. There are _____ prophets and _____ prophets. There is the true gospel, and there are other gospels that will not _____. We must _____ the Word of God if we wish to see the difference between the true way and many false ways.

Moses said, “Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God _____ from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD’S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your _____?” (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). When we follow God’s ways we find _____ for ourselves and for our fellow man. When we ignore or break God’s commandments, we _____ ourselves. For this reason we must learn to listen and act carefully to _____ the Lord. We can never be lawless and expect to _____ the Lord. One cannot be lawless and be righteous at the same time.

Our reading today comes from Matthew 7:21-23.

First John 3:4 says, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” Because lawlessness doesn’t listen to God or recognize God’s authority over our lives, lawlessness leads inevitably to _____. Lawlessness always leads us _____ from God. Jesus _____ righteousness but _____ lawlessness. Hebrews 1:8-9 says about God’s Son Jesus, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your _____. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of _____ beyond your companions.”

When we understand what God’s _____ are, we realize that straying away from God’s teaching and commandments is lawlessness. It transgresses God’s commandments by doing what God says _____ to do or by failing to do what God instructs us to do. It goes beyond the limits of the commandments of God and does what it desires for _____. Wise people _____ and do what the Lord says, while foolish people _____ to do the words of the Lord (Matthew 7:24-27). Lawlessness has a _____ end. The Lord Jesus Himself said, “The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers [that is, lawless people], and throw them into the fiery _____. In that place there will be _____ and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will _____ like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13:41-43).

Longer quotations may not appear in the Study Sheet, but can be read in the accompanying transcript.

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Lawless ways will not lead anyone to be _____ with God. So we need to _____ what lawlessness is. First, lawlessness happens when people believe that there are no _____ at all. Such people believe they can live as they _____, and there will be no consequences. When you take the view that there are no rules, you're saying that you don't _____ what God says; and if you say you do not care what God says, you're revealing that you do not care about God Himself.

The Lord Jesus, however, said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will _____ the kingdom of heaven, but he who _____ the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter" (Matthew 7:21). On another occasion Jesus said, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not _____ what I tell you?" (Luke 6:46).

When you ignore and disobey God's ways in _____ things; it's not long until you throw out God's ways in _____ things. Paul described how lawlessness _____ with time. Romans 6:19 says lawlessness leads to _____ lawlessness. The Lord Jesus recognized the effects of lawlessness on how people _____ one another. Matthew 24:12 says, "And because lawlessness will be increased, the _____ of many will grow cold." Sin hardens the heart and makes people callous.

Why does God have a law? First Timothy 1:8-11 says, "Now we know that the law is _____, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound [or healthy doctrine], in accordance with the _____ of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted." God gives us His law in the _____ that people will respect it and repent of their sins.

Second, lawless means _____ from God's words and ways. Moses told the Israelites as they were coming to the promised land, "So you shall _____ to do just as the LORD your God has commanded; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall _____ in all the way which the LORD your God commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess" (Deuteronomy 5:32-33). Careful obedience and doing things as God prescribes is necessary.

The Lord God told Joshua, "Only be strong and very courageous, being _____ to do according to all that the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good _____ wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7). When people leave God's way for other gods or human traditions, they leave God's _____ as well. Proverbs 4:25-27 says, "Let your eyes look directly ahead, And let your gaze be _____ straight in front of you. Watch the _____ of your feet, And all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your _____ from evil." When a person stays with God, he'll find God stays with him.

Third, lawlessness happens when people _____ to God's word. Deuteronomy 12:32 says, "Whatever I command you, you shall be _____ to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it." People often _____ their ideas and traditions to God's word. The Pharisees were not content with the _____ law of God; they believed that they needed to add their own human traditions. Many churches do that today with their _____ councils, laws, and creeds. Proverbs 30:5-6 says, "Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not _____ to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar."

Some people believe that God _____ through them today. God said through Moses, "But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I've _____ commanded him to speak, or who

speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20). There are many false prophets today who speak things that God never _____. They made it up on their _____ initiative, and the fact that it proves false shows that God never spoke through them.

Jeremiah faced many _____ prophets. Jeremiah 23:16 points this out. “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the _____ of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They’re leading you into futility; They speak a vision of their _____ imagination, Not from the _____ of the LORD.’” They are speaking their own made up _____ not God’s words. In verse 26, Jeremiah observed such false prophets are “prophets of the deception of their own _____.” God reveals in Jeremiah 23:21-22, “I didn’t _____ these prophets, But they ran. I didn’t _____ to them, But they prophesied. If they had stood in My _____, Then they would have announced My words to My people, And would have turned them _____ from their evil way, And from the evil of their deeds.” Many preachers today _____ to be prophets, while they tickle ears rather than teaching God’s holy word.

Paul faced preachers in his day who preached a _____ gospel. He said in Galatians 1:8-9, “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should _____ to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

Fourth, lawlessness happens when people _____ from God’s words. The Lord Jesus said, “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called _____ in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called _____ in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). The Pharisees were _____ at finding loopholes in God’s laws. For instance, the Lord Jesus asked the Pharisees, “And why do you _____ the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have _____ from me is given to God,” he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made _____ the word of God” (Matthew 15:3-6). Jesus said their worship was vain, because they _____ as doctrines the commandments of men.

At the end of the book of Revelation, John speaks clearly that no one can _____ what was written in that book. He said, “I warn everyone who _____ the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19). What is true of this specific book of Revelation is surely true of other books that God gave. No one has the _____ to correct God by adding or taking away from the written word of God. God doesn’t need an editor.

God said to Jeremiah, “Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD’s house, and speak to all the cities of Judah that come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I _____ you to speak to them; do not hold back a word” (Jeremiah 26:2). Paul could say to the elders of Ephesus, “Therefore I testify to you this day that I’m innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the _____ counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). The Lord Jesus expected the apostles to teach people “to _____ all that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). We can’t choose to follow what we _____ with and then ignore the rest of God’s teaching.

Fifth, lawlessness happens when people _____ on their own initiative. Sometimes they feel _____ to act in the silence of God, thinking “God doesn’t condemn this, so it must be all right.” When God specifically tells us what He wants us to do, and someone does something different that is not mentioned

in Scripture, they're acting on their _____ authority. They're presuming that anything _____ prohibited is automatically permissive.

The Lord Jesus did not speak on His own _____ the Father's will; He said, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has _____ Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; and therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has _____ Me" (John 12:49-50). The Lord Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will _____ the apostles "into all the truth" and "will not speak on His own authority" (John 16:13). If they would not act on their own authority (that is, Jesus and the Holy Spirit), how can we?

The word "baptism" is a _____ word referring to dipping or immersing. When people _____ pouring water or sprinkling for baptism, they're acting on their own authority. When people baptize innocent _____ who need no repentance, they are acting on their own initiative. When people _____ mechanical instruments in the worship of the church, they're acting on their own authority.

In Jeremiah 23:16 false prophets spoke "visions of their own _____ not from the mouth of the Lord." The Lord said in chapter 23:32 of Jeremiah, "'Behold, I'm against those who prophesy _____ dreams,' declares the LORD, 'and who tell them and lead my people astray by their lies and their recklessness, when I did not send them or charge them.'" We cannot act on our own authority. The New Testament records what God desires for the _____. As Christians, let's act within the teaching of the New Testament and never presume to act on our own.

James 1:22-25 says, "But prove yourselves _____ of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he's looked at himself and gone away, he's immediately _____ what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the _____ law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does."

Listening without doing doesn't _____ with God. What we do with what God says reveals our hearts and attitudes. The one who listens but doesn't _____ is treating God with disrespect. James 4:17 says, "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is _____." To know you ought to repent but fail to do so is sin. To know you ought to become a Christian but do nothing is sin. To know you ought to worship at church but remain away is sin. To know you ought to study the Bible and pray but do nothing is sin. Sin arises not only from what we do but also from What we fail to do.

Don't let lawlessness corrupt your heart. Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized because it fulfilled all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). Jesus bore the cross in order to do the Father's will, and we too must learn to do the Father's will to enter the kingdom of heaven. Put your trust in the Lord, repent of your sins, confess Jesus Christ as God's Son, and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.