

## "Lawless Ways"

Some things are lawful, and others are lawless. We need to know the difference. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." Lawless ways will not lead to heaven. What is lawful and what is not?

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Psalm 119:105 says, that "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." God's ways help us to see the truth and give light in a confused world. Psalm 119:130 says, "The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple." We search the Scriptures, because they contain the understanding necessary to know God, to have eternal life, and to live holy lives. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

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

Moses told all Israel in Deuteronomy 10:12 to 13, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require 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 good?" When we follow God's ways we find blessing for ourselves and for our fellow man. When we ignore or break God's commandments, we hurt ourselves. For this reason we must learn to listen and act carefully to obey the Lord. We can never be lawless and expect to please the Lord. One cannot be lawless and be righteous at the same time.

Now we offer this study on what God calls lawless ways free. And if you'd like a printed copy of our study and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have materials free on our website at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org).

We'll now worship in song, we'll read from Matthew 7:21 to 23, and explore the Scriptures for the things God says are lawless ways.

Our reading today comes from Matthew chapter 7, verses 21 to 23. This passage falls toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount, and it shows how people can be religious and yet not be righteous, how they can be spiritual and yet still be lawless and not right with God. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" The King James Version uses the word iniquity there. This is a statement from the Lord Jesus himself. Let's pray together. "Heavenly Father help us to be lawful and not lawless, help us to be sincere and to be truthful in everything we do. And Father help us to listen to Your words that we may be right with You. In Jesus Name, Amen."

1 John 3 verse 4 says, that "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 sin. Lawlessness always leads us away from God. Jesus loved

righteousness but hated lawlessness. Hebrews 1:8 to 9 says about God's Son Jesus, that "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

When we understand what God's laws are, we realize that straying away from God's teaching and commandments is lawlessness. It transgresses God's commandments by doing what God says not 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 itself. Wise people hear and do what the Lord says, while foolish people fail to do the words of the Lord (Matthew 7:24 to 27). Lawlessness has a bitter end. The Lord Jesus Himself said in Matthew 13:41 to 43, that "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 furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

Lawless ways will not lead anyone to be right with God. And so we need to examine what lawlessness is. First, lawlessness happens when people believe that there are no rules at all. Such people believe they can live as they please, and there will be no consequences. When you take the view that there are no rules, you're saying that you don't care 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 in Matthew 7:21, that "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter." On another occasion Jesus said in Luke 6:46, "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

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

Why does God have a law? Well, 1 Timothy 1:8 to 11 says, "Now we know that the law is good, 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 gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted." God gives us His law in the hopes that people will respect it and repent of their sins.

Second, lawless means departing from God's words and ways. Moses told the Israelites as they were coming to the promise land in Deuteronomy 5:32 to 33 says, he said "So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. You shall walk 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." Careful obedience and doing things as God prescribes is necessary.

The Lord God told Joshua in Joshua 1 and verse 7, "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful 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 success wherever you go." When people leave God's way for other gods or human traditions, they leave God's blessing as well. Proverbs 4:25 to 27

says, "Let your eyes look directly ahead, And let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you. Watch the path of your feet, And all your ways will be established. Do not turn to the right nor to the left; Turn your foot from evil." When a person stays with God, he'll find God stays with him.

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

Some people believe that God speaks through them today. God said through Moses in Deuteronomy 18:20, "But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I've not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die." There are many false prophets today who speak things that God never said. They made it up on their own initiative, and the fact that it proves false shows that God never spoke through them.

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

Paul faced preachers in his day who preached a false gospel. You remember he said in Galatians 1:8 to 9, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach 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 take away from God's words. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5 and verse 19 that "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." The Pharisees were experts at finding loopholes in God's laws. For instance, the Lord Jesus asked the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3 to 6, "And why do you break 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 gained from me is given to God,' he need not honor his father.' So for the sake of your tradition [Jesus says] you have made void the word of God." Jesus said their worship was vain, because they teach as doctrines the commandments of men.

At the end of the book of Revelation, John speaks clearly that no one can change what was written in that book. He said in Revelation 22:18 to 19, "I warn everyone who hears 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." Now what is true of this specific book

of Revelation is surely true of other books that God gave. No one has the right to correct God by adding or taking away from the written word of God. God doesn't need an editor.

God said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 26 and verse 2, "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 command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word." Paul could say to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:26 to 27, "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 whole counsel of God." The Lord Jesus expected the apostles to teach people "to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28 and verse 20). Now we can't choose to follow what we agree with and then ignore the rest of God's teaching.

Fifth, lawlessness happens when people act on their own initiative. Sometimes they feel free 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 own authority. They're presuming that anything not prohibited is automatically permissive.

The Lord Jesus did not speak on His own outside the Father's will; He said in John 12:49 to 50, "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given 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 told Me.'" The Lord Jesus said that the Holy Spirit will guide the apostles "into all the truth" and "will not speak on His own authority" (John 16:13). Now if they would not act on their own authority (that is Jesus and the Holy Spirit), how can we?

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

In Jeremiah 23 and verse, 16 false prophets spoke "visions of their own minds not from the mouth of the Lord." And the Lord said in chapter 23 verse 32 of Jeremiah, "Behold, I'm against those who prophesy lying dreams [he says], 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." Folks, we cannot act on our own authority. The New Testament records what God desires for the church. And as Christians, let's act within the teaching of the New Testament and never presume to act on our own.

Let's pray. "Oh Father help us always to stay within Your will, to do the things that You have taught us, to listen to You, and to be obedient from our hearts because we love You. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen."

James 1:22 to 25 says, "But prove yourselves doers 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 forgotten what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently at the perfect 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 work with God. What we do with what God says reveals our hearts and attitudes. The one who listens but doesn't obey 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 sin." 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 the right things that 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 and verse 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. Do what is right!

We hope that today's study about lawlessness has caused you to think. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to [searchtv@searchtv.org](mailto:searchtv@searchtv.org). Or you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now there's a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches that are in your area at [www.searchtv.org](http://www.searchtv.org). You can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! We ask that you subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." Now when you're watching the program be sure to like the programs that you watch; this helps to spread the program to other places. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So we ask you to focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Everyone needs a church family. And there's probably a church of Christ near you. Now if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always we say, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.