



# Christ's Message to American Christians

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**A**s we examine God's Word from cover to cover, we find that every part of it points in some way to the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament points forward to Him, the Gospels reveal Him, and the rest of the New Testament points back to Him. Even the other two persons of the Trinity point to Christ. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit that "He shall testify of Me" and "He shall glorify Me". God the Father said about Jesus, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him." And Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that whereas God in former times had spoken through prophets, He has "in these last days spoken to us by His Son."

So if it is true that all of the divine revelation points us to Jesus, then where is it that Jesus points us? We get our answer to this question by simply reading through the words of Christ as recorded in Scripture. Here we find Him directing us over and over again to one central theme: the commands that He gave us. Listen to these words of Jesus from the Gospel of John:

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death (John 8:51). If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15). He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me (John 14:21). If a man love me, he*

*will keep my words (John 14:23). He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me (John 14:24). If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love (John 15:10). Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (John 15:14).*

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, right after giving us a long list of revolutionary commands and teachings, Jesus says these words:

*Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it (Matthew 7:24-27).*

We in the American church have tried to explain away the Sermon on the Mount and other commands of Christ by saying that they are part of the Old Testament Law (and thus anyone who repeats what Jesus said about obedience is guilty of legalism). Or, we've said that His commands were given only to reveal our own sinfulness, and even with the power of God they are impossible to obey. Or, we've argued that literal obedience to them is not necessary now, but rather postponed until some future period of time. Yet Christ's plea to those who use this type of reasoning is,

*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? (Luke 6:46). Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matthew 7:21-23).*

Then, in the remainder of the New Testament, Christ's followers repeatedly affirmed the importance of obeying His commands. Listen to these words:

*And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4). In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:8). If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing (1 Timothy 6:3-4). By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 5:2-3). Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Revelation 22:14).*

Yet here in America we Christians, even conservative Christians, have largely ignored the commands given to us by Christ. Whether through heresy, carelessness, or pure rebellion, we have put much of Christ's teaching into a place where it might as well have not been said. As far as the world

around us can tell, Christ must have commanded His followers absolutely nothing about certain subjects: subjects which in actuality were discussed by Him extensively.

Through our actions, we Christians have caused the name of Christ to be blasphemed among the heathen. We have ceased to be the true salt and light that God has called us to be. Through our compromises, we have lost our preserving influence in this society, and iniquity has truly come in like a flood. And now, with the last moments of time ticking quickly away, God is calling us one more time to genuine repentance: repentance from sin and toward God.

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When we speak of America's need to repent, we could mention numerous horrible sins into which this country has fallen headlong, sins such as abortion, homosexuality, drunkenness, and witchcraft. Though these plagues have been destroying the souls of multitudes, I

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thank God that there are still many Christians who are boldly speaking out against them.

But there are three major areas of disobedience that virtually no one seems to be mentioning, three specific subjects about which Christ taught extensively but which Christians today are teaching virtually nothing. Three issues about which God is saying to the church of today, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Here, then, are the three major areas in which we Christians have been trampling underfoot the commands of Christ, and for which God is calling us to repent.

## 1 Divorce and Remarriage

The average unbeliever looking at the American church today would have to conclude that Jesus said absolutely nothing about this subject! There is essentially no difference between the world and the church in regards to the frequency of the divorces and remarriages that occur.

Both the teaching of Jesus and the teaching in the epistles make it clear that divorce is wrong, and should seldom if ever occur among His people. If divorce does take place, however, it is always wrong for the divorcee to remarry while the former partner is still alive. Such an action, according to Mark 10:11, constitutes adultery against the former spouse. The apostle Paul confirms this in two separate passages by writing,

*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord*

*(1 Corinthians 7:39). For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man (Romans 7:2-3).*

The devastation that has occurred because of the plague of divorce and remarriage is incalculable. The injured spouses, the suffering children, the juvenile delinquencies, and the escalating crime rates are all fueled by the explosion of this practice during the last 50 years. The church of Jesus, which should have been standing as a fortress against this evil, has instead given way to it completely. Only eternity will tell how many souls will be lost as a result of this horrible compromise by the professed body of Christ.

God says in the book of Malachi that He hates divorce. His will is that it would never happen, especially among those who claim to be His people. In the non-so-distant past, divorce actually was relatively rare in this country. Part of the reason it was rare was because remarriage after divorce was severely stigmatized. Once remarriage became an acceptable option, however, the number of divorces increased exponentially.

The professed church of Jesus Christ has entered into this deception wholesale. Very few are the church leaders who are speaking out against divorce and remarriage at all. Fewer still are the pastors who bravely refuse to marry someone who has previously been divorced. And almost nonexistent are those who teach that true repentance for divorced and remarried couples will mean to separate themselves from these adulterous relationships.

Most conservative Christians would rightly conclude that a homosexual couple, even a married homosexual couple, would need to repent of their relationship and separate from each other if they want to become followers of Christ. Yet we have somehow concluded that the only thing necessary for a divorced and remarried couple to do (if anything at all) is to repent of the ceremony but then go on living together just as though they are not committing adultery against anyone. By making this compromise, we as Christians have effectively given up our right to call homosexuals to true repentance.

## 2 Loving our Enemies

In Matthew 5:44 Jesus commands us, “Love your enemies.” In Matthew 5:39 He tells us to “resist not evil” but rather to turn the other cheek when someone smites us. And in John 18:36 Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight . . . but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Though literal obedience to this kind of teaching appears unreasonable and unworkable, we find Jesus’ disciples reiterating it in the epistles. Paul, for instance, writes in the book of Romans:

*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:18-21).*

But what if  
an enemy attacks  
my family?

For many years after Christ left this earth, His followers strove diligently to obey these commands of their Lord. They were known far and wide as people who would take wrong rather than do wrong to others.

They showed love to their enemies and preferred to suffer or even die rather than inflict injury on someone else.

Consistent obedience to these commands, understandably, was never easy to carry out. Eventually Christians began to make excuses and ask questions about whether this teaching really ought to be taken literally. “But what if my enemy attacks my family? May I not seize a weapon to defend them?” “But what if my enemy crosses the border of my country? Shouldn’t I take up arms to defend my nation?” “But what if my government asks me to join its military and fight against its ungodly adversaries? Am I not responsible to obey my authorities?” In response, the church’s theologians began to develop complicated ideas (such as the “just war” theory) to rationalize how followers of Jesus could be involved in earthly warfare without violating the commands of their Savior.

As Christ’s teaching was gradually discarded in favor of human reasoning, the church entered into a compromise that has probably brought more reproach to the name of Jesus than any other since the beginning of Christianity. It is truly staggering to imagine all the wrongs that could have been avoided had Christians everywhere stayed true to Christ’s

call to love our enemies. There would have been no bloody crusades in the Middle Ages in the name of Christ. There would have been no Catholic Inquisition in the name of Christ. There would have been no enslavement of the American blacks in the name of Christ. Even Hitler's evil plans would have been thwarted, since most of the recruits in his army were people who claimed to be part of the body of Christ.

The commands of Christ regarding the treatment of our enemies are so numerous and so clear that it is hard to see how any Bible-believing Christian could miss them. Yet here in America it is nearly impossible, by looking at Christ's followers, to discern that He said anything at all about loving our enemies. In fact, Christians generally are even more likely than non-Christians to be supportive of military power and action. Christians generally are more likely than non-Christians to champion the right to own weapons to defend ourselves from criminal activity.

*Sell that  
ye have  
and give  
alms...*

### 3 Laying up Treasures

In Matthew 6:19 Jesus commands us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." He commands us further in Luke 12:33 and Matthew 6:20, "Sell that ye have, and give alms," and "Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven."

Why is it wrong for Christians to accumulate wealth on this earth? Because it steals our love, for Jesus said our hearts will be with our treasures. Because it denies the hungry, thirsty, and naked of the provisions that we could be giving them. Because it destroys our faith in God, Who ought to be the focus of our trust. Because we have a far better investment opportunity available to us, namely, treasures in Heaven.

But the number one reason that it is wrong to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth is that it is direct disobedience to the commands of Jesus, the very One that we claim as our Lord and Master. The simple fact that He told us to "lay not up" and to "sell and give" ought to be more than enough reason to simply obey.

Yet for most Christians in America, it is just as though these commands do not exist. Our behavior in this area is no different from that of the non-Christians around us. We have piled up enormous amounts of wealth in stocks, bonds, savings accounts, retirement plans, and other earthly investments, with no regard whatsoever to the fact that Jesus told us not to do it. If anything, in fact, Christians tend to be

more enthused about accumulating earthly wealth than their non-Christian neighbors.

Jesus' teaching on this subject is so abundant and so plain that it is truly amazing that we as Christians could have missed it. He made statements like "Woe to you who are rich" and "Blessed are you who are poor." He said it is easier for a camel to go through



a needle's eye than for a rich man to make it to Heaven. He told stories of rich men going to hell and poor men going to Heaven. And in Matthew 25 he indicated that a key factor in our eternal destiny is whether or not we have used our earthly resources to help those in need.

Christ's disciples also taught and practiced these commands of their Teacher. In Acts 2 & 4 we see the early Christians obeying Christ's commands explicitly. In 1 Timothy 6, Paul writes that the love of money is the root of all evil. James tells rich men who have heaped together wealth for the future to "weep and howl" for the miseries that are coming upon them. And John writes that if we withhold our possessions when we see a needy brother, then the love of God cannot be in us.

Our disobedience in this area has brought much reproach to Christ's name. Christians are known in this country far more for their greed than they are for their generosity. The non-Christians around us would be utterly astounded to hear that our Leader said anything at all against the accumulation of wealth.

### In Conclusion

Lately it has been very encouraging to see increasing numbers of Christians beseeching God to pour out revival upon the American church. The great revivals of the past have all been preceded by much prayer by God's people, and I long for this to be an indication that another great revival is not far away.

Yet, is it possible that God is saying to the church in response to these prayers, "I am willing to revive when you are willing to repent?" Could it be that God is saying the following to us?

"I've already told you what you need to do. Go listen to the words I spoke to you through my Son. Go read His words in the Sermon on the Mount. Hear His commands, obey them, and teach others to do the same. Then, and only then, will I send you the revival you are seeking." ~