

"That's Your Opinion"

Occasionally people who disagree religiously with others try to end the discussion by saying well, "That's just your opinion!" Well, hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're looking to Jesus to teach us what is fact and what is opinion.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Lord Jesus said in John 18:37 to 38, "For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. (And) Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" People are still asking the question, "What is truth?"; but Christians realize the Lord Jesus came to earth to testify to the truth. And "Everyone who is of the truth hears his voice"; Jesus is the truth, and we must listen to Him. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and want to be a part of your life each week.

There's a big difference between facts and opinions, between the truth and what people imagine to be the truth. And just because someone believes something doesn't make it true. Many religious beliefs are only opinions or human customs, while the truth is rooted in the revealed word of God. A fact is undeniable, because it has evidence to show it is true; but an opinion is merely what someone thinks is true. Calling a fact an opinion doesn't make it an opinion, and calling an opinion a fact doesn't make it a fact.

The Lord Jesus said in John 8:31 to 32 that, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." He promised the apostles in John 16:13, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth." Christians turn to Jesus for the truth. And we can trust Him. His word is proof of what He wants His people to know, and His words bring freedom and eternal life.

Now this is an important study on opinions and truth; and we offer it free! If you'd like a printed copy 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. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have free materials on our website at www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from Acts 28:3 to 6, and explore how we must avoid opinions and turn to the truth.

Our reading today comes from Acts 28 verses 3 to 6. Paul and others had just gone through a ship wreck. And landed on the island of Malta. They were wet and so they were building a fire. And this is what happened.

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live." However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.

Well, Paul was neither a murderer nor a god. But God was with him. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your love and for Your mercy and for Your grace. And Father we're thankful for these stories of old that help us to see how easy it is to jump to conclusions which are not true. Help us always to read Your will, to love it and to serve You. In Jesus name, Amen.

As we mentioned, some folks think simply saying well, “That’s your opinion” or “That’s your interpretation,” is enough to end a conversation about the meaning or importance of a passage of Scripture. They believe if they suggest truth is not settled in heaven but subject to whatever someone thinks. They can believe that any view of Scripture is as good as any other. That they can just kind of end the conversation. Now this is a popular view in our postmodern culture, but it really doesn’t change God’s revealed will. Some things are so plain that they’re not subject to popular opinions. God is still the authority, not our subjective opinions.

For instance, Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death.” Well, what does that mean? Well death is a word that reflects separation. Physically, death is the separation of the body from the spirit (James 2 and verse 26). Spiritually, sin causes a separation of our souls from the grace of God. Isaiah 59 and verse 2 says, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.” Ephesians 2:1 and 2 explains, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.” Now sin doesn’t make one sick, inappropriate, or mistaken. Sin separates us from God and His grace.

Sin not only causes us to be separated from God, it also enslaves us. The Lord Jesus said in John 8:34, “Truly, truly, I say to you, (that) everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” Thankfully, the Lord also gives us an answer to the enslavement of sin. The Lord said in verse 36, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” Well how does this take place?

Well, the Lord Jesus said in John 3:17 to 18, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Now we can be saved from sin by faith. And of course, we’re saved by the grace of God that was shown by the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is God’s plan and God’s way; it’s not an opinion. We don’t believe in the name of the Son of God, if we don’t believe rather in the name of the Son of God we really have no hope of salvation. Faith is necessary! And that’s not opinion. Hebrews 11:6 says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”

The Scriptures are also clear about repentance: repentance is necessary! Paul told the people at Mars Hill in Acts 17:30 to 31, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” Those who refuse to repent of sin will face judgment, this declaration is clear and applies to all people everywhere. That’s not opinion; that’s God’s word!

Now whether we’re willing to accept and confess Jesus publicly is also important. Some people are afraid to say they are Christians. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:32 to 33, “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.” Customarily, those who become Christians confess their faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. The Lord Jesus clearly says confessing Him before others is essential to a right relationship.

Now beyond faith, repentance, and confessing Christ, the Lord Jesus clearly taught everyone who wishes to be right with God needs to be baptized into Christ. In John 3:5 to 7 Jesus told (Nicodemus), “Truly, truly, I say to you, (that) unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" Now Jesus said we must be born again, and that includes being born of water and the Spirit. It's not optional if we wish to enter the kingdom of God. From the earliest times, people understood this was a reference to being baptized, which includes both water and Spirit. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16:16 that, "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in Acts 22:16, "Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." Baptism is without a doubt necessary to salvation and to enter God's kingdom.

The Lord Jesus 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." Now obeying the Lord means listening carefully to what He says and doing what He says rather than offering alternatives or editing His instructions. John 3:36 in the New American Standard Bible says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." Again, the Lord Jesus said in John 8:51, "Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he will never see death." The Lord Jesus said in John 12:48 that, "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day."

Now careful obedience to the Lord is not legalism; it's how we show our love for Jesus. The Lord Jesus said plainly in John 14:15 that, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Now the Scriptures explain more in Mark 3 verses 31 to 5 when it says: Then His mother and His brothers arrived, and standing outside they sent word to Him and called Him. A crowd was sitting around Him, and they said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." Answering them, He said, "Who are My mother and My brothers?" Looking about at those who were sitting around Him, He said, "Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother." Now all relationships with Jesus depend upon listening closely to the ones that we love. Whether it's to our family or to Jesus. But in the case of the Lord Jesus, we must listen carefully and be obedient to show our love for Him.

The Lord Jesus must come first in our lives. Scripture emphasizes how important the Son of God truly is. Matthew 17:1 to 6 tells of an experience where God makes it clear: Six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified." We must understand that the Lord Jesus is truly Lord of all. We must learn to give Him the respect that He deserves.

Jesus understood that those who follow Him will suffer persecution. The apostles certainly suffered for their faith, and many faithful Christians today are still suffering for what they believe. The Lord Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Holding fast to our faith even in the face of persecution and death is vital. There is nothing more important than holding fast to the Lord Jesus.

The Lord explains what will happen one day when He returns to raise the dead in John 5:26 to 29, "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment." Now every person will one day be raised from the dead and face the judgment. Those who did good and obeyed the Lord will receive life with God, but those who committed evil will face an eternal judgment away from the presence of the Lord.

People who follow Christ for a time but turn away from Him need to understand that they are putting their souls in danger. Many people today are just in that very situation. They once followed Jesus but they have turned to a life of sin without Jesus. Hebrews 3:12 to 14 says, "Take care, brethren, (now he's talking about people who have been members of the church. People who have been Christians) Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end." Only those who remain faithful to the Lord will be able to have a home in heaven. Those who fall away and follow sin and unbelief will lose their promise from God.

There is certainly an end to the patience of God. God no longer blesses those who turn away from Him and continue sinning willfully. Hebrews 10:26 to 27 says, "For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries." Now that's God's warning, and we must take God seriously. God loves us and wants something better for us than to be lost. 1 Timothy 2:3 to 4 says, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

The Lord Jesus promised His disciples in John 14:1 to 3 "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." If you'll love and follow Him, He'll prepare a place in heaven for you too. Please don't let anything keep you from accepting and embracing the salvation, which Jesus provided for you on the cross with great love. And so love Him and serve Him!

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're so grateful that Your Son Jesus was willing to pay the price for our sins. To die on the cross so that we might have the hope of everlasting life. Father help us to love You to follow Your Son Jesus. To do His will so that we might live with You forever. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Hebrews 2:1 to 3 says, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" The suggestion that any opinion is as good as any other of the acts and words as if God hasn't really made Himself clear. Is nonsense. The Hebrew writer noted the tendency of people to drift away from the word spoken to be disobedience. And when people offer the excuse, "that's just your opinion," what they're doing is drifting away from the plain clear word into disobedience. They're showing they really don't believe what God has said.

Now if Jesus is Lord—and He is, we need to obey Him by listening carefully to His words rather than drifting away from them. We must abide in the words of Jesus if we wish to know the truth and to be set free. We've been given through Jesus a great salvation. And ignoring what the Lord says means that we're neglecting this salvation. And if we neglect our salvation, we have no hope of living with God in heaven.

To become a Christian, put your trust in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and as your Lord! Repent of your sins and turn your heart toward Jesus to live according to His will. Confess the Lord Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and be baptized into Christ. Now being baptized is that new birth of water and the Spirit. When we're baptized God forgives our sins (Acts 2:38) unites us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3 to 7). And so don't neglect salvation and doing the will of God.

We pray that today's study about truth and opinions has helped you see the Lord has spoken clearly. 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. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH anytime on YouTube! Just subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry." And be sure to like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us don't worry, we're not asking or begging for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

So we ask that you focus your heart on God by worshiping at church. Now everybody needs a church family. I realize that some of you for health reasons cannot attend worship; I'm speaking to those who can attend and haven't been. Now there's probably a church of Christ near you. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.