

# Work Out Your Own Salvation

James Smyda

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I'm sure if you've watched the news at all this year in 2020, you have to be aware of the fact that we are in an election year. In an election year you typically hear a lot of talk about politics and various issues that are at stake and in particular the election itself. There's a particular phenomenon of human nature that we have all the time, but we tend to see it more strongly in an election year. It's a concept often referred to as "group think". To give a definition of what I'm referring to, let me read to you a brief definition I pulled off the website of Psychology Today. It says:

*Groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs when a group of well-intentioned people make irrational or non-optimal decisions spurred by the urge to conform. The problematic or premature consensus that is characteristic of groupthink may be fueled by a particular agenda or it may be due to group members valuing harmony above critical thought.*

Notice, as it mentions here, this is people valuing harmony, wanting to fit in with the group of those around them, with their friends and others with whom identify. This is a common human nature phenomenon. The reason I mention this is that you often see this particularly in an election year. If you talk to people in depth about why they are for or against a particular position or policy, a lot of times you will find that they didn't really research the subject. They look at the facts or weigh the pros and cons of various points of view on it and try to come to an educated decision on why they felt the way they did. They just went along with what their group of friends thought or the people they respect and hang out with. Or maybe a political party they identify with or a particular politician they happened to like. That individual is either strongly for or against that particular subject and that sounded good so they adopted that point of view as well.

We in the church of God don't get too involved in politics, but we can be guilty of this same type of thinking. This can be particularly dangerous when it comes to our spiritual lives. As individual Christians we have a responsibility to work out our own salvation; we are going to see that Paul tells us this is a responsibility we all have. Ultimately when it comes down to whether we make it into the Kingdom of God or not, we are going to be judged on our individual decisions and the choices that we make. We all hold accountability for that. We are not going to be able to stand before God and Christ on our judgment day and use the "Nuremberg" defense. If you are familiar at all with the history of World War II, after Germany was conquered, there were war crime trials that took place in Nuremberg, Germany. There were a lot of individuals who committed atrocities during the war and they were put on trial for these. A common defense that a number of people used was, "I was just following orders. I just went along with what everybody else was doing, what the whole country was doing and I did it too".

They used that as a defense. That is not going to work for us in our spiritual lives. God is going to judge us on how well we followed the instructions in His book and we are not going to be able to say, "Everybody else was doing it, my favorite minister said it was okay, so I followed along." No, we all have the responsibility to work out our own salvation and we all hold the accountability to stand or fall upon the decisions that we make and how we live our lives.

If you would like a title for this sermon it's:

### Work Our Your Own Salvation

As I mentioned, Paul specifically tells us that we have this responsibility. We see that he makes this point in his letter to the Philippians.

**Philippians 2:12** *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

13) *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*  
(NKJV)

Notice he says, even in His absence—because just like when people are at work and the boss is around, they want to look busy and to appear like they're working and being diligent. But if the boss isn't around, they slack off and are not as diligent in doing things. Paul was saying the same thing, "Whether I am there with you or not, God is watching. You have the responsibility to live what you know and you are all going to be accountable for your own choices and actions because we all stand or fall upon that." This is something we all have to understand; this is how God operates. He doesn't just allow us to go along with groupthink and say, "I was doing what the crowd was doing." He is going to judge us on our own individual choices.

This is a point He has made very clear, even in the Old Testament in His dealings with ancient Israel. All throughout the Bible this was a theme that we all have an individual responsibility and accountability for our own choices. In Deuteronomy 30 we will see that towards the end of Moses' life, he was emphasizing this point to the Israelites. All of them had to make their own individual decisions for their lives and, as he pointed out to them, this was a choice between life and death. Their lives literally depended upon the choices they made. This is very true for us as well, because for us it is not just about our physical lives, it is about our eternal salvation. So, life and death are in the balance in the decisions we make.

**Deuteronomy 30:11** *For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off.*

12) *It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?*

13) *Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?*

14) *But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.*  
15) *See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil,*  
16) *in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.*  
17) *But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them,*  
18) *I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess.*  
19) *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;*  
20) *that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.” (NKJV)*

As he mentions, we all have to individually make our choices as to where we are going to stand. It is literally a question of life and death because those are the consequences. We all own the consequences and accountability for our choices. We cannot transfer that to somebody else and say, “That was what everybody else was doing and I just went along too”. That is not going to work; we all have to make our own decisions and have the accountability for them.

As I mentioned, this was stated at the end of Moses’ life and the end of his time with ancient Israel. Joshua made a very similar statement. Joshua 24 is also towards the end of Joshua’s time leading Israel.

**Joshua 24:14** *Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!*

15) *And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (NKJV)*

Joshua was saying that he had made his choice and he and his family had chosen which route they were going to go. You guys have to choose as well. You have individual accountability for what your choices are and it’s a matter of life and death. We can’t just take the position of going along with the crowd and try to fit in and do what is popular. That is not going to work because we all have the instructions right here in the Book and we have to follow them as best we can understand—regardless of what anybody else is doing. We are all individually going to be accountable.

Human beings have a tendency to want to shift that accountability onto somebody else. We kind of want to go along with the crowd or follow a particular leader because there is a comfort in that. We fit in and we don't have to face any social pressure from other people and this can make decision making easier. Human beings, going all the way back to Mount Sinai, as we are going to see, have had a tendency to say, "Just give me a strong leader, a strong human being that will tell me what to do and I'll just follow whatever they say. I'll go along and fit in".

They want to avoid that personal accountability to work out their own relationship with God and work directly with Him. You will know what I'm talking about, if we look at Exodus 20 and the account where God is delivering the Ten Commandments to the Israelites—I'm sure we are all familiar with the story—God comes down to Mount Sinai and appears before the people and then they see fire and clouds and they don't actually see God but they see His presence. They hear His voice thundering out to all the people so they don't have to just take Moses' word for what God's commandments are because they can hear themselves.

All the people heard the thundering voice of God telling them the commandments that He expected them to hear, but notice the people's reaction. The way they respond to this is essentially saying, "God is too scary; we don't want to deal directly with God, Moses. You just hear what He has to say and you tell us and we'll follow what you say. God is too scary and we don't want to deal directly with God."

Notice Exodus 20:18.

**Exodus 20:18** *Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off.*

19) *Then they said to Moses, You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.*" (NKJV)

God is too scary; we want to be separated from Him.

20) *And Moses said to the people, Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin."*

21) *So, the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was.* (NKJV)

What they were doing was saying, "It is too scary dealing directly with God—you just go hear what God has to say and just tell us Moses and we'll just do what you say."

We have more details of this account if you turn to Deuteronomy 5 where Moses is reviewing the events of what happened at Mount Sinai when the Ten Commandments were delivered. In the earlier part of this chapter he goes back through all the Ten Commandments again but we're going to skip over that and pick up in Chapter 5:22.

**Deuteronomy 5:22** *“These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.*

23) *So it was, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders.*

24) *And you said: Surely the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives.*

25) *Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die.*

26) *For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?*

27) *You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it. (NKJV)*

Notice what they are saying, “God is too scary—you just go and tell us Moses and we’ll just follow you.” This is a tendency of human nature. Instead of having a personal relationship with God in which we have to work things out and take personal responsibility for our choices we often just want to go along with the crowd, or a strong leader telling us what to do. We just do whatever others say so we won’t have to make personal decisions. Then we won’t have to deal with the accountability associated with those decisions. This is a trend throughout human nature. Notice another biblical example in 1 Samuel 8. We are going to pick up with an event that happened with Samuel toward the later part of his life.

**1 Samuel 8:1** *Now it came to pass when Samuel was old that he made his sons judges over Israel. (NKJV)*

I think it is interesting that it is Samuel who made his sons judges over Israel. If you look back through Samuel’s story, most of the other judges mentioned throughout the book of Judges it specifically mentions that God made them judges, or the Holy Spirit worked with them and inspired them. It makes it pretty clear that God placed them in this role. When it refers to Samuel’s sons, it says Samuel made them judges over Israel but notice how they behaved.

2) *The name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.*

3) *But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.*

4) *Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, 5) and said to him, Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.”*

6) *But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, Give us a king to judge us.” So, Samuel prayed to the LORD.*

7) *And the LORD said to Samuel, Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.*

8) *According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.*

9) *Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.” (NKJV)*

There are a couple of interesting lessons in this particular story. Samuel's sons were obviously misbehaving. They weren't following God's instructions and they were not following Samuel's example. The people had a right to complain about this. Notice how they responded to it. It wasn't just a matter of, your sons are misbehaving, they are not doing according to Godly judgment, they are not following your example, they're not following God's instructions and this is a problem that we need to have addressed. What they did was, see the middle of the road as they jump from one ditch to another.

I had a good friend when I was attending AC who used to jokingly say that about herself. She would look at her own behavior sometimes and laugh and say, I only see the middle of the road, as I jump from one ditch to the other. You see, you are in a ditch on one side and instead of moderating and getting back into the middle, you overcorrect and go all the way to the other side and jump into the other ditch. That's what they did here. Instead of saying that they need judges who were going to behave correctly and be Godly judges, their solution was to just throw out the whole system. We want a king like all the other nations. We just want a strong physical leader who will tell us what to do and we will follow along with that. The key to understanding what's going on here, go to 1 Samuel 12. The whole statement that God said to Samuel—"they have not rejected you; they have rejected Me"—to understand that clearly, look at 1 Samuel 12:12.

**1 Samuel 12:12** *And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, No, but a king shall reign over us, when the LORD your God was your king. (NKJV)*

God was actually their king so what they are saying is, they want a physical king, they wanted a man to be their king. That's why God says, "They are not just rejecting you, they are rejecting Me." It wasn't just that they wanted a judge who would be a Godly judge and behave well and handle the role in a Godly fashion. They wanted to throw out the system that God had made and even replace God with having a physical king, when God was their King. It's this same human nature tendency of wanting a strong physical leader who will just tell us what to do and then we don't have to make difficult decisions. We don't have to decide what we have to do and then take accountability for those decisions. We just say, "I'll just follow whatever the strong leader tells me, whatever he says must be right, so I'll just follow along." This is a problem of human nature. Not only does this relinquish the accountability for our own decisions and our own responsibilities in life, it can be very divisive as well.

An example of this in the New Testament is in 1 Corinthians 1:10. A problem that Paul dealt with, within the Corinthian church was the idea of people latching on to a particular teacher they liked. They took the attitude that we very often see in the church of God today—it's an idea I like to call, God only works with this group or He only works through this particular minister or this particular leader and all of truth gets revealed through this organization or this particular individual.

Not only does this become divisive, but causes individuals to look down on others who are not following the particular leader or group they are in. It also comes to the point where people are basically forsaking their own personal responsibility to work out their own salvation, because they are latching onto the idea that God works through this organization and only this organization or this leader and only this leader. So, I can just hang up my brain and follow whatever that person says because it's straight from the mouth of God and canonized and I can just follow along. They don't have to take personal responsibility for their own choices. Notice what Paul had to say about this whole phenomenon in dealing with the Corinthian church.

**1 Corinthians 1:10** *Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

11) *For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.*

12) *Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."*

13) *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*

14) *I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,*

15) *lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.*

16) *Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.*

17) *For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. (NKJV)*

Paul further addresses this in chapter 3.

**1 Corinthians 3:1** *And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.*

2) *I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;*

3) *for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

4) *For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? (NKJV)*

What I find ironic in the church of God environment today, is that when people beat their chest and say that they are in this group or follow this particular leader and that person is the only one who God works through they tend to see themselves as spiritual giants. They are the most mature and the most enlightened. Paul says the exact opposite and that they are still children. This is totally carnal and this behavior by itself says you are totally immature. It leads to the mentality that one can just follow whatever this group or individual is saying without having a personal responsibility to prove all things. Or to do as Mr. Armstrong used to say, "Don't believe me, believe your Bible."

In other words, take out your Bible, do your own diligent study, come to your own decision because you have to take accountability for the decisions that you make. You cannot say that everyone else was doing it, so I just did it too. We also have to understand that this whole idea that God only works through one individual or one group and all truth comes through them is totally false. We are all flawed and we all have our strengths and weaknesses where we are right and spot on and areas where we need to grow and we're off base. That's just being human and it's true of all of us. Notice the rest of what Paul says, starting in verse 5 of chapter 3.

- 5) *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?*
- 6) *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*
- 7) *So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.*
- 8) *Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.*
- 9) *For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.*
- 10) *According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.*
- 11) *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*
- 12) *Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,*
- 13) *each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.*
- 14) *If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.*
- 15) *If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*
- 16) *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*
- 17) *If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (NKJV)*

He refers to all of us having that same personal responsibility. But notice the other valuable lesson in all of this is. God works through multiple servants and gives people different roles and different understanding—not that there are all different doctrines.



What I'm getting at is that none of us has all understanding or has it all worked out perfectly. I have said for years, if you are looking for the individual who has it all figured out or the group which has all truth and has everything exactly right, has nowhere else to grow, good luck with that. Because I don't think that individual or group exists. I don't think there is anyone who has ever walked the face of the earth, with the exception of Jesus Christ, who had everything figured out, had every detail of the Bible exactly figured out, exactly right, taught it perfectly and never made any mistakes. That guy just doesn't exist; we are all flawed. As a result of that, because we have to stand or

One of the principles you need to get out of this sermon is that we all need to make a point of diligently studying our Bibles on a regular basis. We hold accountability for the choices we make and we all have room to grow. There are always things we can learn a little more about than we already know. We cannot just sit back and relax on cruise control and think that we have been in the church for years and have heard it all and just need show up at services and open our Bibles but the rest of the week it just sits on the shelf and doesn't get opened. What happens with that is you will fall into a "groupthink" mentality.

Christ in one of his parables gave us an important warning on this in the parable of the Ten Virgins. I'm sure this is a story we are all familiar with. But what I want you to see is how the foolish virgins had the concept in their mind that they could get the oil that they needed from the others around them. They thought they could get it from those with whom they were affiliated—friends and acquaintances around them—they thought these were going to resupply them.

**Matthew 25:1** *Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.*

2) *Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.*

3) *Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,*

4) *but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*

5) *But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.*

6) *And at midnight a cry was heard: Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!*

7) *Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.*

8) *And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.*

9) *But the wise answered, saying, No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.*

10) *And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*

11) *Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us!*

12) *But he answered and said, Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.*

13) *Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. (NKJV)*

If you notice the lesson in this—I'll just briefly go through the aspects of this particular parable, I've gone through this in a lot more detail in previous sermons—but often some of the important lessons in this parable get missed. It gets looked at that the lesson is preparing for the long haul or having extra supplies to make it through a long journey. But that is really missing the point here. Notice that all ten of them are described as ten virgins, so these are all converted Christians. They are on their way to a marriage, on their way to the Kingdom of God to marry Jesus Christ ultimately and it says they all have lamps. God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths. They all had oil in their lamps. Even the foolish had oil when they said their lamps were going out—there had to be oil in the lamp for it to be burning in the first place. What is it that enables this lamp to give light for us? It's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us to understand the Word of God and understand what it's trying to say. It reveals to us what it's trying to tell us about our path. The importance of the vessel here—I've gone through this in previous sermons in detail which I won't take the time to do today—that the vessel is our lives as individuals. The distinction between the wise and the foolish is, they were all converted church members, they all had the Bible, they all had the Holy Spirit to show them what the Bible meant but the wise were practicing it in their lives. The Holy Spirit was in their vessel—in their lives and how they lived—it wasn't just head knowledge for them. They weren't just coasting along with something; they obviously practiced on a day-to-day basis how they lived their lives.

Notice what happens when it gets down to crunch time and they realize they don't have enough to make it though. What do the foolish do? They think they can get oil from others around them. These are individuals who thought, as long as they were warming a seat in this group, as long as they were following this particular leader and going along with the crowd then they were in good shape with God. But when it got down to crunch time, what were they doing? They were thinking they could get what they needed from these other individuals. What did the wise tell them? No, you have to go back to the source. You have to have a direct relationship with God and work out your own salvation with Him because that's the key to having that personal relationship and practicing it in your life. We can't just submit to groupthink and think as long as I'm following along and complying with the crowd, I'm good. It doesn't work like that. We have to have our own personal responsibility.

What does this mean in terms of church organization or the ministry and leadership in groups? Does this mean that we are all independent and those roles aren't important anymore? No, it doesn't mean that. Turn over to Ephesians 4:11. What we are going to cover is Paul addressing the roles of the ministry, but then he goes into explaining why these roles exist and what their purpose is. We can see very clearly that they have a purpose for us.

**Ephesians 4:11** *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ... (NKJV)*

Now let's notice why.

- 12) *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*  
13) *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*  
14) *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*  
15) *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—*  
16) *from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (NKJV)*

We can see that God placed roles, he placed teachers and leaders in the church for a reason and one of them is to edify the brethren and try to avoid them being tossed about by every wind of doctrine. They are to give sound teaching and leadership and a sound direction. It's not a situation where we say we just don't need that anymore, we're all personally responsible and those roles don't count. No, it doesn't mean that. What we need to be careful about is not falling into the pitfall that ancient Israel did as we read in Samuel's account. When they saw his sons were misbehaving, how did they respond to that? They didn't just say that these guys are not fulfilling the role of judges according to the Bible; they are not adequately fulfilling this role; the fruits are horrible and we don't want to follow this. That is a legitimate issue. What did they do? Their thought was to just reject the system entirely and go with something else. That's a phenomenon that has often happened in recent decades as well. People have seen abuses of the ministry, they have seen ministers who were faithful for years, go off course and start teaching that the Sabbath is on Sunday and the trinity and all sorts of ideas that we all came out of. They look at that and realize they can't respect that anymore. Instead of just looking at that and saying I'm not going to follow that guy anymore because now he's abandoned the truth and his fruits are bad. I'm not going to follow that; they say that they just don't need this at all anymore and reject the entire thing. That is seeing the middle of the road as we jump from one ditch to another.

Neither do we want to be in the position of, the ministry said it, authority taught it, it must be right, it must be from God. No, we all have an individual responsibility to do our diligent study because we have to realize, just because someone has been faithful for years and teaching the truth, doesn't mean they can't go wrong. Notice 2 Timothy 2:14.

**2 Timothy 2:14** *Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers.*

15) *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (NKJV)*

Rightly divide the word of truth by diligently studying it and taking your own responsibility to be very familiar with it.

16) *But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.*

17) *And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort,*

18) *who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some. (NKJV)*

Notice he is referring to individuals who were previously faithful in the truth and he said now they have strayed; now they have gone off course and are teaching heresy. Their actions are not right with God. He is saying “Beware of this”. This is the whole issue of why we have to be diligently studying the Bible and we have to be diligently sorting out what is the truth in the Book? We have to use this as our guide and realize human beings are flawed and that’s true of all of us. Even if someone has, for years, had a good track record teaching the truth, doesn’t mean they are right about everything and doesn’t mean they will always remain faithful. That’s why we have to practice what Mr. Armstrong said so many times; “Don’t believe me, believe your Bible.”. Follow along and be diligent in your own study to sort it out, so you have an informed point of view. If you are being taught error, you then have a background in which to be able to spot it. Because you are familiar with what the Book says, you won’t be just following along with what a particular teacher has said to you.

One of the pitfalls in all of this, is looking at a particular individual or group and saying, this is where God works and therefore all truth comes through them and whatever they produce has to be right. This is a very dangerous mentality. A really obvious example of this, and one issue I am sure many of you have at some time or another looked into. How did popular Christianity start to believe that the Sabbath was on Sunday? How did things switch when the Bible so clearly says it’s Saturday? How did things switch over and now Sunday is being looked at? If you ask a typical Protestant why that’s the case, many will try to make an argument from scripture. It will typically be a weak argument and they do a lot of mental gymnastics but they will try to turn to a scripture and say here’s the justification. If you ask an informed Catholic about the subject, they’ll just come right out and tell you that the Pope changed it. The church has that kind of authority and they will typically use the term, the Vicar of Christ. In other words, the Pope basically has the authority of Christ so if they declare that the Sabbath is now on Sunday, then that’s binding and we have to follow along with that. This is a very dangerous idea because it puts flawed human beings above scripture.

I would also like to look at an example today in the Bible that is very similar to this. I think we are more familiar with the Catholic Church and the term “Vicar of Christ”. During Christ’s ministry on earth, there was a group called the Pharisees who were the religious leaders of the time and they had a similar phrase—again we are familiar with the term “Vicar of Christ”. What we are going to see is the Pharisees used the phrase, “Seat of Moses” in a very similar way. It was the idea that they had the authority of Moses and it was similar to the Catholic church saying, the “Vicar of Christ”; in other words, we have this authority so we can change things and it’s all binding as a result. Notice Matthew 23:1.

**Matthew 23:1** *Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples,  
2) saying: The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat.  
3) Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not  
do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. (NKJV)*

Verse 3 has been an enigma for me most of my life, and I think for a lot of the Church of God who try to understand exactly what Christ is saying here? It certainly would appear that He's saying, whatever the Pharisees teach, you are bound to do it, just don't follow their actions. As we're going to see, this contradicts basically everything else that Christ had to say about the Pharisees in the Bible. To shed some light on this, I'm going to build a puzzle for you and we are going to come back and see what the problem is in the verse. What we are going to see is that the core issue comes down to a manuscript issue. But we'll get to that in a minute.

What I would like to do first is give some background to help understand this phrase, the "Seat of Moses". I'm going to quote from a book called, The Hebrew Yeshua versus the Greek Jesus by Nehemiah Gordon. Let me first give you a little background about how this book came about and who Nehemiah is so you have a context from which to understand this.

Nehemiah is a well-known Hebrew scholar; he is what is called a Karaite Jew. A Karaite Jew is a Jew that rejects all the rabbinical traditions that they tried to add to scripture. Karaite Jews just takes the Old Testament as scripture, reject all the rabbinical stuff but they also just believe in the Old Testament. They don't really believe that the New Testament is Scripture and don't view Christ as the Messiah. That's where Nehemiah fits into the picture. He looks at the New Testament as historical documents, not as inspired scripture. He's a well-known scholar and known for his ability in doing research and digging up ancient manuscripts and ancient historical documents and really digging in to find the facts. He is fluent in Hebrew and he also speaks Greek and several other languages. Because of his scholarly reputation, a good friend came to him several years ago and his friend is somebody that does believe in the New Testament. He basically presented to him—while scratching his head over Matthew 23—said that something has to be wrong here because everything else that Christ has to say about the Pharisees is extremely condemning. He is brutal in His critique of them but this one verse appears to be saying that whatever they teach you have to go along with and follow. That doesn't seem right. Nehemiah started researching this and that brought about the book I'm going to quote from. He refers to the Hebrew Yeshua. The reason he uses that terminology, is that if you look at Christ's name as it would be written in Hebrew, Yeshua was His name. Instead of Jesus which is in Greek, Yeshua was how it would be in Hebrew so that's where that comes from.

I will read you a quote to get the historical context of what this phrase, "Seat of Moses" is. Again, this is from Nehemiah's book, The Hebrew Yeshua versus the Greek Jesus and this quote comes from page 3.

*The metaphorical interpretation of “Moses Seat” as Mosaic authority seems likely. It is a basic Pharisaic doctrine that the Rabbis have the authority of Moses. This is expressed in the well-known Mishnaic account about the dispute between Rabbi Gamaliel II and Rabbi Joshua. These two Rabbis disagreed about when Yom Kippur was to fall in a certain year, but Rabban Gamaliel sat on the Rabbinic court and hence Rabbi Joshua was compelled to accept his ruling even though he knew it to be factually wrong. Rabbi Dosa explained to Rabbi Joshua that he must give in to Gamaliel’s ruling because*

[and now there is a quote within a quote because Nehemiah is going to quote from the Mishnah Rosh Hashanah, Chapter 2:9 and the quote is:]

*“If we go and challenge Rabban Gamaliel’s court, we must also challenge each and every court that has presided since the days of Moses until now.... each and every set of three Rabbis that preside as a court over Israel are equivalent to the court of Moses.”*

He’s basically saying here that they have the authority of Moses and what they say is binding. Returning back to Nehemiah’s statement.

*So, the Rabbi’s really believe that they reside in the place of Moses.*

The Rabbi is using the phrase, the “Seat of Moses”, which is the equivalent of the Catholics saying “Vicar of Christ”. It was the same idea, as the Catholics who believe that the Pope has the authority of Christ. They viewed it as the Rabbis having the authority of Moses. Just like Moses recorded scripture, if they make a judgment or proclaim something true, they have the authority of Moses and therefore it’s binding.

Return back to Matthew 23 because as I mentioned, in English it appears that Christ is saying that whatever they teach, you are bound to do. Notice how this contradicts everything else that Christ had to say about them. Notice even just in chapter 23, pick up in verse 13, how condemning Christ is of the Pharisees and all that He has to say about them.

**Matthew 23:13** *But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*

14) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore, you will receive greater condemnation.*

15) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.*

16) *Woe to you, blind guides, who say, whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it.*

- 17) *Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?*
- 18) *And, Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it.*
- 19) *Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?*
- 20) *Therefore, he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it.*
- 21) *He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it.*
- 22) *And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it.*
- 23) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*
- 24) *Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!*
- 25) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.*
- 26) *Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.*
- 27) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.*
- 28) *Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*
- 29) *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,*
- 30) *and say, If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.*
- 31) *Therefore, you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.*
- 32) *Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt.*
- 33) *Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?*
- 34) *Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city,*
- 35) *that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.*
- 36) *Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.*  
(NKJV)

He is extremely condemning. He calls them blind guides, He calls them fools, they are hypocrites, He's just brutal. Does it really make sense that Christ is saying, whatever these blind guides tell you, you have to do, just don't follow their actions. Something just seems wrong with that when you look at it on face value.

One of the common mistakes that is made with this, is that He called them hypocrites numerous times. He's just saying, do what they teach just don't do what they do because these guys teach but don't follow their own statements. This is based on a statement in Luke 12 so let's briefly look at that.

**Luke 12:1** *In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*

2) *For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.*

3) *Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops. (NKJV)*

Oftentimes people take this particular scripture and say that all Christ was really saying is, "These guys are hypocrites and don't follow through on their own teachings. So, you're supposed to follow their teachings, just don't follow their actions."

Notice what Christ also referred to as leaven in Matthew 16:5.

**Matthew 16:5** *Now when His disciples had come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.*

6) *Then Jesus said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees."*

7) *And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread."*

8) *But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?*

9) *Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up?*

10) *Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up?*

11) *How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (NKJV)*

Notice verse 12.

12) *Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (NKJV)*

He is specifically saying that their doctrines and teachings are leaven and lead people into sin. Now we have a massive contradiction. Christ couldn't be saying you need to follow whatever they teach; He's saying that their teachings are leaven and lead people into sin. In fact, if you turn over one page to Matthew 15, you'll see an example where He says, they teach His doctrines as the commandments of men and put aside God's instructions. Matthew 15:1.



**Matthew 15:1** *Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus, saying,*

2) *Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? [Notice tradition is what's important to them] For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."*

3) *He answered and said to them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?*

4) *For God commanded, saying, honor your father and your mother ; and, He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.*

5) *But you say, Whoever says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God"—*

6) *then he need not honor his father or mother. Thus, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.*

7) *Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:*

8) *These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*

9) *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. (NKJV)*

Notice He specifically says their teachings are leaven, their doctrine leads people to sin and they teach His doctrines as the commandments of men. They put aside God's instructions in favor of their traditions. Does it make any sense that Christ would be saying, whatever these guys talk, that you have to do but just don't follow their actions. These are the individuals He called blind guides, He called them fools, He called them white washed tombs. They are hypocrites and their doctrines lead people into sin and they teach as doctrine, the commandments of men. Does it make sense to say, in spite of all that, whatever they teach you have to do? Does that make any sense? No, that is just massively contradictory.

Now we get to come back to understanding what is Christ actually saying in Matthew 23. As I mentioned before, Nehemiah Gordon ended up writing his book as a result of an individual who came to him—someone who does believe in the New Testament as scripture and Christ as the Messiah—presenting to him that something had to be wrong with this verse. There has to be an error somewhere because this just doesn't make sense. This verse contradicts everything Christ had to say about the Pharisees because He is so incredibly condemning of them that it doesn't make sense for this to be the case that He is saying follow whatever they teach. He came to Nehemiah because he speaks multiple languages, he's an expert in researching manuscripts and ancient documents and enlisted his help thinking maybe this guy can research and help us find what might be a clue here.

Nehemiah starts looking into this and again, he speaks Greek in addition to Hebrew so the first thing he logically does is go to the Greek manuscripts and comparing that to the English and what he finds is, the Greek manuscript words it just like the English does. It's saying that whatever "they" the Pharisees teach, that you have to follow. He runs

into a brick wall. So, he's wondering where else he can go with it. Then he finds out that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew and there are manuscripts having been written in Hebrew that have survived to this day. You can analyze the text and realize it's an original document and not a translation from the Greek. It wasn't just taking a Greek manuscript and translating into Hebrew, it obviously came from a Hebrew source originally. When he looked at some of these manuscripts, that was when the light went on and we find the answer.

With that in mind, you'll understand the quote I'm going to read. This is from The Hebrew Yeshua versus the Greek Jesus by Nehemiah Gordon and this comes from page 47 and 48.

*"Armed with this new knowledge, I finally opened to Matthew 23:2-3 in Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew to see what it said. As already mentioned, the King James translation of the Greek reads,*

*"2 the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not.*

*But when I went to look in the Hebrew text of Matthew, I found something quite different.*

*This translates in English,*

*2 The Pharisees and sages sit upon the seat of Moses, 3 Therefore all that **he** says to you, diligently do but according to their reforms and **their** precedents, do not do, because they talk but do not do.*

*In the Hebrew Matthew, Yeshua is telling His disciples not to obey the Pharisees. If their claim is that they sit in Moses' seat, **then diligently do as Moses says!***

*To understand what happened, we must compare the Hebrew with the Greek. In the Greek the disciples were commanded to obey "all that **they** (the Pharisees) say", but in Hebrew, Yeshua told His disciples to obey "all that **he**, (Moses) says." These are two fundamentally different messages, but in Hebrew, this is the difference of only one single letter! In Hebrew, "he says" is yomar while "they say" is yomru. The only difference between the two in an unpointed Hebrew text is the addition of the extra vav in yomru, "they say". That this is the basis for a completely different message is amazing because vav is one of the smallest letters in the Hebrew alphabet, really just a single stroke! The addition of this tiny letter changes Yeshua's message from an instruction to obey Moses, ("all that he says") to a commandment to obey the Pharisees, ("all that **they** say"). In contrast, in Greek the difference between "he says", (eipei) and "they say" (eiposin) is a much larger difference. This suggests that the Greek translator misread the Hebrew text as*

*containing that extra vav. Maybe this Greek translator did not even understand who or what the Pharisees were all about!"*

You can see the idea of Christ saying, whatever Moses said, that you have to do and follow but don't follow these Pharisees; that makes perfect sense with everything else that Christ had to say. It fits perfectly with the rest of Matthew 23 because the whole chapter is just an absolute blasting of the Pharisees. He calls them fools, he calls them blind guides, he calls them whitewashed tombs, he calls them hypocrites numerous times—he basically says you go and find a convert and you make them twice the sign of hell that you are. He can't be any more severely condemning. You can see the whole idea of whatever they teach you have to do but let me tell you how horrible they are. It doesn't really make sense.

There is a great lesson in this with regard to scriptural interpretation and how we should approach the Bible. If you were looking at the manuscripts themselves, you could go either way; you could argue the subject either way. You could say that the Greek manuscripts which have survived, say whatever they say. The Hebrew manuscript says whatever it says. They are both manuscripts of the book of Matthew and you could argue either one, whichever way you want to go. That is if you didn't start looking at all the other scriptures in the Bible and everything else that gives all the evidence in one direction. Every other scripture and everything else that Christ has to say about it, all weigh in one direction. It's a great lesson in biblical interpretation and how to approach that. Sometimes we're studying a particular subject, regardless of what the subject is and you come across one difficult scripture. Let's just say that one difficult scripture would suggest conclusion A on the subject. But then you have a whole handful of scriptures and they indicate conclusion B. If you're looking at that kind of situation, you are always safer going with conclusion B and the handful of scriptures. You may be in a situation like this where, in English, it sure seems that you should follow what the Pharisees have to say, if you look at the Greek, it says the same thing. It seems to match but if that contradicts a whole handful of other scriptures and your whole case is based upon one scripture, you are better off going with the handful. It may be a head scratcher as to what that one scripture is saying. I know for me personally, most all of my life until I came across this book in the last year or so, I always scratched my head wondering what was Christ really trying to say there. Because it doesn't match anything else that He would say about the Pharisees.

It gives us a great lesson in this whole concept of, God only works through this group or He just works through that one individual and because they're in this office, because they have this authority, we are bound to follow whatever they say. What we have to do is "Don't believe me, believe your Bible". The only way we can do that is if we are diligently taking time to study our own Bibles and be very familiar with them so we can make an informed decision about where we stand. We are all flawed, we all have gaps in our knowledge and in our understanding, that's going to be the case as long as our heart is beating and we are still alive. Human beings are just flawed; that just comes with the package. God judges us on what we do with what we know and how we follow through on that knowledge.

Just to follow through with this whole concept of being an authority. Notice these Pharisees and this whole subject that we have been talking about them being in the seat of Moses. They had a governing body and you might put it in a modern church of God context—often times groups referred to today are council of Elders. Council of Elders is their leading body which makes the decisions for the organization. The Pharisees had a similar group which they called the Sanhedrin. Notice a situation where the Sanhedrin made specific instructions—you might say commandments from their authority—to the apostles and how the apostles dealt with that. Turn over to Acts 4, we are going to see an account where Peter and some other apostles were teaching about Jesus Christ and this didn't go over well with the Sanhedrin; they were not happy with this and they tried to stop the apostles from doing this.

**Acts 4:13** *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

14) *And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.*

15) *But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council [the Sanhedrin], they conferred among themselves,*

16) *saying, What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.*

17) *But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.”*

18) *So, they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.*

19) *But Peter and John answered and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.*

20) *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”*

21) *So, when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.*

22) *For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed. (NKJV)*

Notice the governing body which was looked upon as the authority at the time, is directly commanding them that you can no longer preach in Christ's name. The apostles' perspective was, we have to obey God over you. It doesn't matter what authority you claim to have, when you are directly contradicting what Christ Himself taught us to do, we're going to have to go with following Christ regardless of what you have to say. They continued to do this and this does not go over well with the Sanhedrin; the Sanhedrin has them thrown in prison.

**Acts 5:17** *Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,*

- 18) *and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.*
- 19) *But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,*
- 20) *Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.”*
- 21) *And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.*
- 22) *But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,*
- 23) *saying, Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!”*
- 24) *Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.*
- 25) *So, one came and told them, saying, Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!”*
- 26) *Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.*
- 27) *And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,*
- 28) *saying, Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man s blood on us!”*
- 29) *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: We ought to obey God rather than men.*
- 30) *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.*
- 31) *Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*
- 32) *And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.” (NKJV)*

He basically looked at this and said no, we are not going to follow your authority; we're going to follow God and it doesn't matter what authority you have, we have to follow scripture. That's the responsibility that we all have as well. We have to do our own diligent study and prove all things. This is something that Paul taught us. Go to 1 Thessalonians 5:21.

**1 Thessalonians 5:21** *Test all things; hold fast what is good. (NKJV)*

I want to share with you the definition of the Greek word for “test”. It's dokimazo and its [Strong's #1381](#) and according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon by Joseph Thayer, it means to *test, examine, prove, scrutinize, to see whether a thing be genuine or not*. For us to follow this admonition *to test, to scrutinize*, we have the responsibility to be diligently studying our Bibles. To make it a regular habit. We can't just fall into the “groupthink” of showing up to services and we open our Bible and we're at services and following

along. But when we get home, we close up the Bible and it goes on the shelf and stays there until the next Sabbath when we pull it out again. That's not being diligent in our personal responsibility. We all have a personal responsibility to work out our own salvation. To do that we have to do our best to be educated on all of the decisions that we make and why we do what we do, why we follow the things that we do and to know it from scripture. Because we are going to be judged on them, we have to do our best to make an educated decision and accept the accountability and the responsibility for our decisions.

The last thing we want to do is follow along with the crowd. Because I can assure you when it comes down to our judgment, we can't stand before God and Christ and use the Nuremberg defense and say I was just following what my favorite teacher said; I was just doing what the group said. What all my friends thought was politically correct and acceptable. I just followed along like everybody else. God is going to say, "I set before you, life and death, I gave you the Book and I told you to study it. If you didn't, you chose death."

We all need to be making sure that we are diligently studying the Bible, doing the best we can to make informed decisions. Realize we are flawed, our teachers are flawed, everybody is flawed, that's part of being human. If we do that and diligently pray to God for His inspiration, doing our best to be diligent in our own study and not just following along, then we can make educated decisions and make sure that we are working out our own salvation and choosing life.