

Christ's Message to American Christians



What would Christ say to the church today?

What has He said already?

On May 18, 1980, a volcano on Mt. St. Helens in Washington state erupted with the force of a hydrogen bomb. The eruption sent a lateral blast from the north side of the mountain at 300 miles per hour and created the largest landslide in recorded history. It blew 1,300 feet off the mountain's top and killed 57 people.

One of the people killed in the blast was 83-year-old lodge owner Harry Truman. Scientists had repeatedly warned the old man to vacate his home below the mountain after they recorded seismic tremors from the volcano 2 months earlier. But despite the warnings, Harry Truman chose to ignore the danger and stay in his home. And on that fateful morning, he scarcely had time to turn his head before he and his property were buried under 150 feet of mud and ash.

Were the scientists wasting their breath when they warned Harry Truman of the danger of his situation? Should they just have ignored his condition because, after all, he was going to die anyway?

Obviously, the answer is "no". The scientists had a moral responsibility to warn this man of his condition regardless of his response. Once he received warning, it was up to him what he did with it. But the responsibility of the scientists was the same either way.

The message you are about to read also is a message of warning. It is a warning to the people of America, especially the Christians. The words of Christ recorded in Scripture convince me that this message reflects the heart of God. Yet because the message will seem radical and even absurd to our American mindset, I fully realize the likelihood that it will be rejected immediately by those who read it. My responsibility, however, remains the same. I must deliver the message as clearly as I am able, together with the reasons I believe it to be true, regardless of the response that I expect it to receive.

When God sends warning of impending judgment, He does it for two reasons. First, He speaks with the hope that some may heed the warning and turn from their sin because He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Second, He speaks to increase the guilt of those who will reject the warning and experience His holy wrath. His

warning is a demonstration to all creation that He is righteous in all He says and does.

Although it is true that most readers are likely to reject this message, I pray that it will reach at least a few earnest believers who care for nothing but the glory of God and consider no sacrifice too great to see Him magnified. I pray they will see that God has weighed us in the balance and found us wanting and that Christ is about to spew us out of His mouth unless we repent. I pray that they will break their hearts before their Creator, turn from their sin, and render to God the glory He deserves from their lives.

I do not want to bring this message in a spirit of arrogance or harshness, and I apologize in advance if it sounds that way. I simply feel compelled to pass on to you the burden God has laid on my heart, although I tremble to do so.

By God's grace, I hope to write this message clearly, reflecting accurately God's hatred for sin as well as His love for all sinners. I hope to write it in a way that allows readers to verify its truth for themselves from the Word of God without relying on any private revelation I have received personally. I hope to write it in a way that explains exactly what our sin is and precisely why God is displeased with us. And I hope to write it in a way that gives specific answers about what we need to do to repent.

Any authentic message from God must be firmly founded upon His Word, the Bible. It is His Word alone that can give any authority at all to the message I am about to share.

As 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 remainder 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, "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."

Therefore, if it is true that all of the Divine revelation points us to Jesus, then to what does Jesus point 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 (so 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 that 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 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).

Some have speculated that Christ's cross was the dividing line between the Scriptures that apply to us and those that do not. Thus we can basically ignore everything revealed before Christ's death, including the vast majority of His commands. Yet Jesus said to His disciples after His resurrection,

Go ye therefore, and teach . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you (Matthew 28:19-20).

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 in such a light that He might as well not have said it. As far as the world around us can tell, Christ must have given absolutely no commands about certain subjects—subjects which He actually discussed frequently and 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.

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. We could also discuss the many false philosophies that have swept this nation, philosophies such as Darwinism, Mormonism, liberalism, and humanism. Yet because this is a message to believers, we're not going to take the time and space to do that. Although these gross sins and false philosophies have been destroying the souls of multitudes, I thank God that many Christians still speak out boldly against them.

But there are three major areas of disobedience that seem to be ignored by virtually everyone. Although Jesus taught extensively about these three subjects, Christians today are teaching virtually nothing about them. On these three issues God is saying to today's church, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

When John the Baptist came preaching repentance and warning of the coming wrath, his audience responded in brokenness by asking, “*What shall we do then?*” Just as John gave specific answers in response to this question, so I also hope to give specific answers about how true repentance will look for American Christians. To the unrepentant, these answers will seem downright ludicrous. To the semi-repentant, they will appear burdensome and impossible. But to the truly contrite ones, to those who tremble at the Word of the Lord, I trust that this call to radical repentance will be received as a blessed gift from God to sinners who deserve nothing but His wrath.

Here, then, are the three major issues 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

Jesus states in Luke 16:18 “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” In Mark 10:11-12, He makes a similar statement: “Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

Our Lord addressed few other subjects as clearly as the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Yet the average unbeliever looking at the American church today would have to conclude that Jesus said absolutely nothing about this subject! Essentially no difference can be seen between the world and the church with regard 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 God’s people. If divorce does take place, however, Jesus plainly states that it is 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).

How much wreckage could have been avoided if Christians had stayed true to Christ's teaching? More, no doubt, than what anyone could possibly imagine. This plague of divorce and remarriage has devastated our society. The injured spouses, the suffering children, the juvenile delinquencies, and the escalating crime rates all are 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 for its rare occurrence was that remarriage after divorce was severely stigmatized. Once remarriage became an acceptable option, however, the number of divorces increased exponentially.

This epidemic has grown so quickly that we have now reached the point at which nearly a million divorces are filed in the United States every year. Most of those who do get a divorce will eventually remarry. And most of these remarriages will occur while the former spouse is still living.

The professed church of Jesus Christ has entered into this deception wholesale. Few church leaders are speaking out against divorce and remarriage at all. Fewer still 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 separation 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 and then go on living together just as though they are not committing adultery against anyone. By making this compromise, we as Christians have effectively forfeited our authority to call homosexuals to true repentance.

What shall we do then? How exactly is God calling us to repent from this our wickedness? How does He want us to deal with all the mixed up situations created by the vast number of divorces and remarriages occurring today?

Let me put it as simply as I can. If you are married today, and either you or your spouse has an ex-spouse who is still living, your current marriage is a continuing act of adultery against that person. True repentance means to get out of your adulterous relationship, ask the forgiveness of those you have wronged, and live in celibacy from this day forward. By taking this courageous step you will be lifting up a powerful testimony for truth and holiness and striking a mighty blow against the kingdom of Satan.

Most will react to this proposal by rejecting it immediately as utter nonsense. "How cruel and unloving you are," they will say. "A merciful God would never ask me to do such a thing." If that is how you respond, then I guess I must simply leave this issue between you and your God. Please keep in mind, though, that if this message I am writing is true, then it would have been cruel and unloving on my part not to have told you. Keep in mind also that God is a God of love, and if this really is what He is asking you to do, then it is for your eternal benefit and not for your harm.

Others will respond to this message by saying, "There is probably some truth to what you are saying, but I think there are some exceptions we need to consider." If this is your response, then I'm sure that this short message won't be enough to convince you otherwise. But let me ask you, before you travel down that road, to consider please where the "exception" road has taken us. It is by making exceptions that American Christians have eventually gotten to the place where Jesus might as well have said *nothing* about divorce and remarriage. There simply is no noticeable difference in practice between Christians and non-Christians.

So to those of you who have ears to hear, listen to the words of Jesus, read the words of His apostles, and respond in humility to what God is asking you to do, not for your happiness or for the happiness of those around you, but for the reputation of our God. We have brought awful blasphemy to His name by this wickedness of ours, and only radical repentance will do anything at all to restore to Him the glory He deserves.

If you are willing to consider that this might possibly be a message from God, and would like to take a more detailed look at the subject of divorce and remarriage, then I invite you to type the link below into your Internet browser and read for free the online book entitled Dear Pastor.*

*www.watchmangospelsigns.com/resources/Dear_Pastor.pdf

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.”

Although literal obedience to this kind of teaching appears unreasonable and unworkable, we find the 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).

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 an enemy attacks my family? May I not seize a weapon to defend them?” “But what if an enemy attacks my country? May I not 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 probably has 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 if Christians everywhere had 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 because most of the recruits in his army were people who claimed to be part of Christ’s body.

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 themselves from criminal activity.

What shall we do then? How should we repent from our disobedience to the commands of Christ in this area?

If you are member of the armed forces of an earthly nation, get out of that position regardless what it will cost you. Enlist

instead in the army of Jesus and begin to fight the good fight of faith, laying hold on eternal life. Pledge your allegiance to Christ's kingdom and commit to obeying its laws, even when they come into conflict with the laws of an earthly kingdom. Get rid of any carnal weapons that you own for self-defense, and pick up instead the true weapons of our warfare, weapons which are not carnal but mighty through God. Purpose in your heart that you will love and pray for your enemies rather than fight them, choosing to take wrong yourself rather than inflict injury on another person.

And through it all, don't forget these encouraging words from our brother Peter: "And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;" (1 Peter 3:13-14).

If you are open to consider that there may be some truth in this message, and if you would like to learn more about this command to love our enemies, please go to www.ScrollPublishing.com and order the book A Change of Allegiance by Dean Taylor. You may also type the link below into your Internet browser to listen to a free audio message from the author of this book.*

*www.charityministries.org/msg_detail.a5w?vlast_index=4051

Another powerful book that touches on all three of the subjects discussed here is The Kingdom that Turned the World Upside Down by David Bercot. Your view of Christianity will never be the same after reading it. It can also be purchased at www.ScrollPublishing.com.

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 why 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 for us simply to obey.

Yet most Christians in America act 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. In fact, Christians often 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 such as “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 astounded to discover that our Leader said anything at all against the accumulation of wealth.

What shall we do then? How will true repentance look for those of us who have broken these commands of Jesus?

Sell the possessions you have that you really don’t need, especially the investment type assets (treasures) that you have stored up on this earth. If there are taxes due as a result of these

sales, pay them. If there are debts connected to these assets, satisfy them. If you have restitution to make or other bills that are due, take care of those things as well.

Then take the money you have left and begin in the name of Jesus to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and spread the gospel, especially to those in third world countries. By doing so you will be laying up treasures in Heaven, “where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.”

If you are willing to consider that this might be a message from the Lord, and would like to take a more detailed look at Jesus' teaching on the subject of economics, then I invite you to type the link below into your Internet browser and read for free the book Through the Eye of a Needle. If you prefer to have a hard copy of this book, it can be purchased at www.ScrollPublishing.com.*

*www.watchmangospelsigns.com/resources/Through_the_Eye_of_a_Needle.pdf

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 all have 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 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.”?

Is there any price too great to pay for the church to be revived, for sinners to be saved, and for Christ to be glorified?

This has not been an easy message to write, and I'm sure it hasn't been an easy message for you to read. But today is not a day for

ease, but rather a day to humble our hearts before God. This life we are living is not a playground but a battlefield. Most of the people living on this earth (including many who call Jesus their lord) will end up in Hell rather than in Heaven, according to the words of our Savior. Time is short, eternity is near, and the need is desperate for men and women to become brave soldiers in the army of God.

I did not write this message for the fun of it, but because I desire to honor and obey my King. I believe God gave me this burden because it reflects His heart toward American Christians and because He desires that they all would hear this message while there is still time to respond to it.

Perhaps there actually are some of you who have not rejected this message immediately. Perhaps after reading it, you believe that it might in fact be a true reflection of God's heart. If so, I would encourage you to share it with the other Christians you know. Don't do it for my sake, however, because I'm sure it won't be any more fun sharing it with others than it was for you to read it yourself. Do it rather for the sake of Him Who died for you, as He gives you courage and guidance, that He alone may be glorified.

Feel free to pass this on by email, fax, Internet, or any other method that God lays on your heart. You may copy and distribute it as often as you wish, with or without charging for it, with or without my permission, and with or without my name attached.

For His Glory,
Roger Hertzler

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As Jesus looked out over the city of Jerusalem, He wept—and then offered them mercy. As He examined the church at Ephesus, He told them that they had lost their first love—but then offered them mercy. After warning the church at Laodicea that He was about to spew them out of His mouth for their lukewarmness, He then offered them mercy.

With each offer of mercy, however, He gave a condition: they had to repent. They had to undergo a fundamental change in mind and in action. Without this, He could not give them the mercy that He so desperately wanted to give them.

As Jesus looks at the American church today, what does He see? How does He diagnose our condition as He examines us with those piercing eyes full of love and truth? If you really want to know, then I invite you to please read on. Be warned, however, that it may cost you more than what you could ever imagine. Because true repentance, as it has always been, is a costly thing.

No matter how costly it may be to repent, however, there is something else that is even more costly. And that is to refuse to repent.