

WHEN GOD DOESN'T LISTEN FRANCIS CHAN 10/9/10

In our study of 1 John, we learned that God is serious about our holiness. John writes that if we don't obey His commands, we are a liar. We don't hate someone if we love God. We are now going to begin the book of Luke and need to take a fresh look at the words of Jesus to be sure we are not infusing our understanding with the preconceptions of our church upbringing or society.

Take the words of Jesus literally-maybe He really means what He says. What did He say? When I look at the church in America, most of us won't participate until everything's just right. We need to fear God no matter what the cost.

When praying, our prayers are not just conversational, as we are frequently taught. Ecclesiastes 5:1 states "Be careful about going to the Temple. It is better to go there to learn than to offer sacrifices like foolish people who don't know right from wrong." Solomon writes to listen first, speak second. Fearing God is pretty intense.

James writes in James 1:6⁶ "But when you pray, you must believe and not doubt at all. Whoever doubts is like a wave in the sea that is driven and blown about by the wind."

We must have unwavering commitment to obey when God speaks. Don't be selfish.

Someone listens to you up there. He will answer "beyond all you can ask or imagine."

There are several parameters we must remember about the connection between prayer and God's holiness. God tells His people in Isaiah 58 that He is not hearing their prayer and fasting because: "The truth is that at the same time you fast, you pursue your own interests and oppress your workers.⁴ Your fasting makes you violent, and you quarrel and fight. Do you think this kind of fasting will make me listen to your prayers?⁵ When you fast, you make yourselves suffer; you bow your heads low like a blade of grass and spread out sackcloth and ashes to lie on. Is that what you call fasting? Do you think I will be pleased with that?" (vs. 4-5)

In Joshua 7, the nation is defeated at Ai because of the single sin of an Israelite named Achan who stole a Babylonian garment. The whole family and all their possessions were stoned and buried. In Acts 5:1-10, God struck Ananias and Sapphira dead because they lied about their offering to the church. In Genesis, God punished man's sins Himself by the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah. In Joshua, God asked Joshua to carry out His justice.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, Paul instructs the church leaders to turn over the sinning man to Satan to be buffeted as a consequence of his sin to turn him to repent. Paul also taught us to judge within the church concerning sinning elders. Romans 1 describes God “turning over” man to a reprobate lifestyle for continuing in sin and unbelief.

Jesus says in Matthew 18:15 we are to go to someone in sin and privately tell him his fault in confidence. The issue is repentance and restoration in each case. As believers we are responsible for each other’s holiness and the purity of God’s church. First we look at our own lives, then we pray earnestly for our brothers and sisters in Christ.