

SCRIPTURE READING: Joshua 1:1-9.

INTRODUCTION: The word “conservative” has several very distinct meanings.

1. The first definition of “conservative” in The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition is, “1. Favoring traditional views and values; tending to oppose change.”
2. The second definition of “conservative” is, “Traditional or restrained in style: *a conservative dark suit*” (ibid.)
3. In this morning’s lesson, we are going to focus on the third definition of “conservative.” “3. Moderate; cautious” (ibid.) “Moderate” means “1. Being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme” (ibid.) “Cautious” means “1. Showing or practicing caution; careful” (ibid.) “Caution” is “1. a. Careful forethought to avoid danger of harm. b. Close attention or vigilance to minimize risk” (ibid.) In contrast, the third definition of “liberal” is “3. Not strict or literal; loose or approximate: *a liberal translation*” (ibid.)

DISCUSSION:

1. **Does God want us to be conservative in the interpretation and application of scripture?**

- A. Well, it depends on what we mean by conservative.
- B. When Jesus was on earth, He was not conservative by the first definition of the word. In the first century, many traditional views and values were not God’s views and values. Thus, Jesus did not oppose changing traditional views and values. Quite the opposite, He was a radical reformer bent on turning the religious world of His day upside down.
- C. However, if we have the third definition of “conservative” in mind, then the answer is definitely yes. God absolutely wants us to be conservative, moderate, cautious in the interpretation and application of scripture.
 - 1) Deuteronomy 5:1, “The statutes and the ordinances ... learn them and observe them carefully.”
 - 2) Deuteronomy 11:32, “You shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments.”
 - 3) Deuteronomy 12:32, “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.” *God does not want us to bind what He has not bound or loose what He has not loosed. Metaphorically speaking, He doesn’t want us to get the porridge too hot or too cold. He wants us to get it just right. To do this we must be conservative, moderate, cautious, careful.*
 - 4) Deuteronomy 26:16, “You shall be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.”
 - 5) Joshua 1:7, “Be careful to do according to all the law ... do not turn from it to the right or to the left.” *Being moderate in the third definition of “conservative” is not striking a balance between conservatism and liberalism. Being moderate is being conservative. It is staying on the right path, avoiding the ditches of sin on either side of the highway of holiness. Acts 27:13.*
 - 6) 2 Chronicles 19:7, “Be very careful what you do, for the LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness.”
 - 7) Proverbs 14:16, “A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless.”
 - 8) Proverbs 19:16, “He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is careless of conduct will die.”
 - 9) Ezekiel 36:27, “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”
 - 10) Luke 8:18, “Take care how you listen.”
 - 11) 1 Corinthians 3:10, “Each man must be careful how he builds.”
 - 12) Ephesians 5:15-17, “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”
 - 13) 1 Thessalonians 5:21, “Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”
 - 14) 2 Timothy 2:15, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.”
 - 15) Revelation 22:18-19, “I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of

life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.”

- 16) Etc.
2. **How conservative, moderate, cautious does God want us to be in the interpretation and application of scripture?** As careful as we'd be with an infectious disease (Deuteronomy 24:8); as careful as we'd look if we thought someone had taken our living baby and given us a dead baby (1 Kings 3:21); as careful as Herod wanted the magi to be when they were searching for the baby Jesus (Matthew 2:8); and as careful as we'd be if we were looking for a large amount of lost money (Luke 15:8).
 3. **Why does God want us to be conservative, moderate, cautious in the interpretation and application of scripture?**
 - A. 1 John 4:6, “God is love.”
 - B. Deuteronomy 12:28, “Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.”
 - C. Joshua 1:7, “Be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go.”
 - D. Deuteronomy 32:46-47, “Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law. For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life.”
 - E. Deuteronomy 28:58-59, “If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses.”
 - F. Hebrews 10:26-31, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.’ And again, ‘THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

APPLICATIONS:

1. **Accept what the Bible clearly says about being conservative, moderate, cautious in the interpretation and application of scripture.**
2. **Be strong and very courageous.** Joshua 1:6-7, 9. It is not easy being conservative in the interpretation and application of scripture. Most religious people are not strict in their interpretation and application of scripture. They are loose. God makes it very clear that we must stand with Him against liberal interpretations and applications of scripture. 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 12, 13, 14-17; 4:1-5; Galatians 1:6-10; 2 John 9-11.
3. **Trust God.** Being conservative in the interpretation and application of scripture is isolating, heartbreaking, etc. Consider the prophet Jeremiah. (*We are going to study Jeremiah 24 tonight. Please read the whole chapter this afternoon. It's only 10 verses long*). Resisting the temptation to compromise demands an ever deepening confidence that God knows what's truly best. Isaiah 55:6-13.
4. **Be humble.** The only conservatism that matters is in the eyes of the only beholder that matters and that's God. Everybody thinks they are on the highway of holiness successfully avoiding errors to the right or the left. It's not bad to think this. We just have to remember that thinking this doesn't make it so. We have to allow for the possibility that we are wrong and that we need to change. 1 Thessalonians 5:21.
5. **Study.** Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 31:12; Joshua 1:8.
6. **Watch the company we keep.** 1 Corinthians 15:33.
7. **Appreciate that it's all or nothing.** James 2:10. The battle for truth is won or lost at the initial point of departure.
8. **Be patient.**