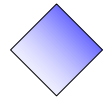


The Voice of Truth



November 17, 2013

Authority in Religion By Jimmy Pettigrew

Jesus Christ has ALL AUTHORITY. Moses prophesied, *“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall harken,”* (Deut. 18:15, 19). Peter applied this Mosaic prophecy to Jesus in Acts 3:19-26. God said, *“Hear him”* (Matt. 17:5)! Jesus said, *“All authority hath been given to me in heaven and on earth,”* (Matt. 28:18). This leaves no authority for me, John Calvin, Mary Baker Eddy, Martin Luther, Joseph Smith, John Wesley, a Pope, or anyone else. The question is, *“What did Jesus do with his authority?”*

Jesus placed His authority in His word, the word that He spoke. Christ said, *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day,”* (Jno. 12:48). If the word of Christ is that by which we are to be judged, then it behooves us to know what He said as compared to what others are saying. Also, if we are to be judged by His word, it makes no difference what WE SAY, what WE THINK, or how WE FEEL in religious matters. Christ’s authority was not placed in Men, Councils, Assemblies, Ecumenical Groups, Catechisms, Disciplines, Creeds, Manuals, or Confessions of Faith. Christ’s authority was placed only in His word.

Jesus’ all-authoritative word was given from His mouth to His apostles. In His prayer, Jesus said, *“For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me... I have given them thy word,”* (Jno. 17:8, 14, 18, 20). Christ promised the apostles help in remembering His word, saying, *“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you,”* (Jno. 14:25-26). Paul could not have declared *“the whole counsel of God”* unless he had received Christ’s word (Acts 20:27). Peter could only have received *“all things that pertain unto life and godliness”* and his knowledge of Christ through that word (2 Pet. 1:3). But,

what did the apostles do with that authoritative word?

Jesus commissioned His apostles to preach His word (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16). Their obedience to His command is shown in THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. Paul declared the word had been *“preached to every creature which is under heaven”* in his lifetime (Col. 1:23). Besides preaching the all-authoritative word of Christ, the apostles wrote it. In First Corinthians 15:1-4, Paul said he was making known, in a letter, the things which he first received. The Thessalonians were urged to *“stand fast”* and *“hold”* that which they had been taught, whether by word of mouth or by his first epistle to them (2 Thess. 2:15). Paul emphatically declared, *“The things that I WRITE unto you are the commandments of the Lord,”* (1 Cor. 14:37). Therefore, that which he wrote was the all-authoritative word he had received from Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The all-authoritative word of Christ was written for OUR benefit. Luke’s purpose for writing was, *“that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed,”* (Lk. 1:1-4). *“...these things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life in his name,”* was the purpose for writing the Gospel of John (Jno. 20:30-31). Paul’s purpose for writing was that, *“when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,”* (Eph. 3:4). Again, John wrote, *“These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full,”* and *“these things write I unto you, that ye sin not,”* (1 Jno. 1:4; 2:1). Are the words written by the inspired writers sufficient to guide us in religion?

John 20:30-31 tells us that it was written so we could believe and thereby be saved. John 2:1 tells us that it was written to keep us from sinning. It is through the written word of God that we have been *“given all things that pertain unto life and godliness,”* (2 Pet. 1:3). Paul’s statement, *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is*

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profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," **Second Timothy 3:16-17**, should prove that the WORD of the in-

spired writers is the sufficient guide for us today. If the all-authoritative word furnishes us with ALL THINGS, do we need the catechisms, creeds, dogmas, or manuals written by uninspired, fallible men? Certainly NOT! ♦

"BUY THE TRUTH AND SELL IT NOT"

By David J. Riggs

Satan has succeeded wonderfully in getting people to believe that the doctrine one believes has nothing to do with his eternal salvation. We often hear such statements as: "It is not doctrine that counts, but the way one lives," or "It matters not what one believes so long as he is sincere." Those who make such statements surely haven't analyzed them, and especially they haven't in the light of the holy Scriptures. The Bible clearly teaches that it does make a difference what one believes and practices.

LOVE THE TRUTH

We as Christians should give diligent study that we might be able to rightly divide the word of truth. We should not be foolish, but striving to understand what the will of the Lord is. In other words, we should be exercising our senses that we might be able to discern between good and evil, not being tossed to and fro and carried away with the error of men, but growing in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Acceptable righteousness can be found only in the revealed word of God, the gospel. Paul said, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed...*" (**Rom. 1:16-17**). Righteousness is certainly not to be found in man's own wisdom. Man commits a grave error when he establishes his own righteousness. Paul further said, "*For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*" (**Rom. 10:3**).

God's praise is given throughout the Bible to those who believe and know the truth and his condemnation is upon all who have no love for truth. "...*They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*" (**2 Thess. 2:9-12**). Thus, a love of truth is necessary in order to be saved.

UPHOLD THE TRUTH

If we will love the truth we will not only be willing to live in harmony with it, but we will be willing to uphold and defend it. The apostle Paul praised the Philippians because they were partakers with him in the defense of the gospel. "*Even as it is meet to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*" (**Phil. 1:7**). The word "defence" is the word "apologia" in the original and means "verbal defence, speech in defence" and involves "laboring to make good one's cause" (**Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon**, p. 65). Consequently, we should intensely struggle to maintain the purity of the faith. "*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life...*" (**1 Tim. 6:12**).

The apostle Paul repeatedly admonished us to strive to uphold and maintain the truth (**2 Tim. 1:13**). If one does not hold to the sound words, he becomes destitute of the truth (**1 Tim. 6:3-4**). Involved in the responsibility of upholding the truth is the condemning of falsehood. When we mention "condemning falsehood," immediately many want to object and complain. They tell us it is wrong to condemn other religions. "Judge not that ye be not judged," they say. They seem to think this means we can do no judging at all. This cannot be true, for Jesus also said, "*Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.*" (**John 7:24**).

There are types of judging which are wrong, e.g., we should not judge the secret motives of another's heart (**1 Cor. 4:5**). We shouldn't judge others more harshly or severely than ourselves (the one mentioned above). We shouldn't judge when we are guilty of the same error (**Rom. 2:1**). Furthermore, there are types of judging which are right and must be done. Jesus said, "*Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.*" (**Matt. 7:15-16**). **1 John 4:1** says, "*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into*

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the world." (See also **Rom. 16:17-18**). These and other passages demand a judging of teachers. We are obligated to judge righteous judgment so that we can identify wolves in sheep's clothing and apostate groups.

Christians are often labeled "un-Christian" when they try to reprove falsehood in the religions about them, even when they try to do it in the mildest way they know how. Surely no one can object to our using the Lord's method of combating error. Jesus said, "God said...but ye say." (**Matt. 15:4-5**). He put the teaching of God in such contrast with human error that it was impossible for his hearers to misunderstand or fail to see the truth. If we use the Lord's method on some present day religious practice, we would be no more unkind or un-Christian than was our Lord.

DO NOT FELLOWSHIP ERROR

The apostle Paul stated that error will eat as canker or gangrene. "And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymeneaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some." (**2 Tim. 2:17-18**). False doctrine grows worse and worse and eats away the soul as gangrene eats away the flesh. Those who put all emphasis on moral living and none on true doctrine would like to think that Paul had in mind some ugly immoral practice. However, in this instance he had reference to doctrine, i.e., "the resurrection is past already."

Notice also that both the teacher and the followers are rejected, i.e., "overthrow the faith of some." Hymeneaeus and Philetus were condemned and so were all who believed their doctrine. Jesus said, "If the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (**Matt. 15:14**). Paul warned of some who would "...Subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not." (**Titus 1:10-11**). (See also **2 Pet. 2:1-3**). Thus, any who are holding to error are condemned whether they be instigator, promoter, or follower.

People who recognize error in the church of which they belong have a great responsibility. **Eph. 5:11** says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." **Titus 1:13-14** says, "Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth." One cannot continue to have fellowship with those who are believing and practicing error. Instead, he has the responsibility to reprove and warn them. If one raises no voice of opposition, by silence he gives consent and thereby is also a partaker in iniquity.

How can one repent of an error while at the same time be a member of a church which believes and practices that error? For one to repent of an error, he must completely give up that error. As long as a person is a member of a church that has error, he is associated with error and is identified with error. Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." (**Matt. 15:13**). Those who are in a church that has error will be rooted up along with the others at the last day. Those who recognize error in the churches they are members of need to come out and be identified with the people of God.

It is important that we keep ourselves unspotted from the world, but it is equally important that we follow God's truth in our faith and practice. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (**John 4:24**). Abiding in the word of Jesus causes one to know the truth, and knowing and obeying the truth makes one free. Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (**John 8:31-32**). The Hebrew writer said, "...He became the author of eternal salvation unto all that obey him." (**Heb. 5:9**). Therefore, let us steadfastly love, uphold and defend the truth, and let us denounce, reject and shun all error. "Buy the truth and sell it not." (**Prov. 23:23**). Credit: <http://oakridgechurch.com/riggs> ♦

The Nature Of The Kingdom Of God

IS NOT

1. Of This World (**John 18:36**).
2. Eating and Drinking (**Rom. 14:17**).
3. In Word (**1 Cor. 4:20**).
4. With Observation (**Luke 17:20**).

IS

1. In Power (**1 Cor. 4:20**).
2. Righteousness (**Rom. 14:17**).
3. Peace (**Rom. 14:17**).
4. Joy (**Rom. 14:17**).
5. Within You (**Luke 17:21**).
6. Unshakable (**Heb. 12:28**). ♦

“Does It Matter What I Believe?”

By Jarrod Jacobs

Many ask this question in reference to religious matters. A large number of people in our society try to say that it does not matter what we believe so long as we are honest and sincere about religious issues. Is this true? Let us study the Bible and see the consequences of one reasoning that is does not matter what we believe so long as we are sincere.

If it does not matter what we believe just as long as we are sincere people, then why did Jesus condemn the Pharisees while He was on earth? Let us read **Matthew 15:9**. There Jesus said, *“In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”* Does this sound like Jesus does not care how we worship him? How is it possible to worship “in vain” if it doesn’t matter what we believe? Further, in **Matthew 22:29**, Jesus condemned the Sadducees, telling them, *“You are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”* How can Christ say that people are “wrong” if it does not matter what you and I believe on religious matters?

Let us look at an early teacher and preacher of the gospel: A man by the name of Stephen. This space will not allow us to print the entire text, but please read **Acts 7** so you can understand the entire context. Toward the end of **Acts 7**, Stephen condemns the Jews for refusing to believe that Jesus was the fulfillment of all Old Testament prophecies.

(v. 51-53). Please notice what happened, *“When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth ... They cast him out of the city and stoned him” (Acts 7:54, 58)*. Does this sound like the reaction of a people who heard a sermon suggesting that it doesn’t matter what we believe so long as we are sincere in what we do?

We could add to this study by relating the various reactions of people who heard the apostle Paul preach. The Bible shows us that he was run out of Antioch in Pisidia, stoned at Lystra, run out of Thessalonica, and Berea as well (**Acts 13:50, 14:19, 17:10, 13-14**). These are but a few examples, and more of Paul’s suffering is recorded for us in **II Corinthians 11:23-28**. Please note the responses to Paul and when they came. This is not the reaction of folks hearing, “I’m OK and you are OK,” or “It doesn’t matter what we believe”! Instead, we know he preached the gospel and the gospel only (**Gal. 1:6-12; Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 2:2, 5**)

My friend, what we believe matters! What we believe will determine whether we go to Heaven or Hell (**Jn. 8:24**)! This is how serious it is. When people declare that it does not matter what you believe as long as you are honest and sincere, they are saying something completely foreign to the Scriptures. *Credit: The Old Paths – 5/27/12 ♦*

*Truth is truth even if no one believes it.
Error is error if everyone believes it. ♦*

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com