

Living In The Name Of The Lord

Lesson 3: False Standards Of Authority



Discovering God's Word
Bible Study Series

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Lesson 3: False Standards Of Authority

Introduction

A. We have seen the authority God has given to Jesus, who is now King and Lord. As such, we must do everything in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17).

B. But, how do we know what is pleasing to God and what Jesus approves? How is it that God communicates His will to us today?

C. All Scripture is inspired (breathed out) by God Himself (2 Timothy 3:16-17). So, we should expect that these words contain truth that has been revealed by God (John 17:17).

Introduction

A. God has spoken today through Jesus. His words are recorded in the pages of the New Testament Scriptures.

B. If our desire is to please God, we must honor and submit to Jesus Christ as Lord and King. However, there are many different standards people use to determine what pleases Jesus.

C. Jesus teaches us to test everything, holding on to what is good and staying away from everything evil (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22).

1. A good example of people doing this is found in Acts 17:11 concerning the Bereans. Notice that they did not just believe whatever they were told or whatever they felt was the right thing. Instead, they tested what they were told, comparing it to the Scriptures.

2. Today, you must recognize that the Scriptures contain Jesus's words and determine what is right and wrong based on them!

D. Purpose: To learn that there are false standards people use to navigate life, identify what some of those false standards are, and consider how true faith recognizes the proper authority.

1. From Heaven Or People? (Matthew 21:23-27)

A. It is essential to question authority

1. Notice that Jesus did not rebuke them for asking about authority. In fact, Jesus responded by asking them a question about authority concerning the baptism of John.

2. There is a great deal of confusion and error in this world. To just go along with whatever anyone says or does is not wise and will not lead you to pleasing God!

- Many blindly follow others who claim to have authority. Yet, Jesus warned against this (Matthew 15:13-14).

3. The only way to avoid being misled is to question the authority by which things are done and taught.

B. Jesus recognized the need for authority

1. As we have seen, Jesus was committed to doing the Father's will. So, even though Jesus is the Son of God, He still realized the need to submit Himself to authority.

2. Jesus recognized the baptism of John as having authority from God, as Jesus was baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-17). If it had been a practice without authority from God, Jesus would not have done it!

C. There are two possible sources of authority

1. Jesus's question about John's baptism demonstrates that He believed authority could only come from two possible sources – either from people or from God!

2. People often authorize teachings, ideas, practices, beliefs, etc. That is, the approval for the thing comes from yourself or from some other person.

- The necessary inference Jesus leads us to is that this standard does not please God. God has said that we are unqualified and unable to determine what is right and wrong by ourselves (Isaiah 55:8-9; Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12).

3. A message from God (from Heaven) is the only sufficient standard of authority. As we saw in the previous lesson, it is Jesus's words that will judge us on the Last Day. No human standard will be the criteria for judgment.

D. How to tell if something is from Heaven or from people

1. You must test everything you believe, say, and do (1 Thessalonians 5:20-22). Why do you believe what you believe? Why say what you say? Why do you do what you do?

2. You must evaluate these things by the standard Jesus has revealed in the New Testament to find out whether those things have Jesus's approval (authorization) or not.

- Remember that God has commanded that whatever you do (in word or deed) must be done in the name of the Lord Jesus (Colossians 3:17).

3. If whatever you are doing or saying does not have Jesus's approval (through New Testament authority), it is of human origin. But, if what you are doing has Jesus's approval (through New Testament authority), it is from Heaven.

4. Let's consider an example to see this in practice concerning the words you to speak.

- Imagine someone comes to you (i.e. your spouse) and asks you for your opinion on something that is very personal to him/her. Because you don't want to hurt that person's feelings, you lie. Is this from Heaven or from people?
- Jesus has only authorized speaking truth (Ephesians 4:25). And, He has also forbidden lying. This lie, then, is of human origin. In fact, if you considered the reason why you believed it was right and acceptable to lie, you would only be able to give human reasons (i.e. you felt it was the right thing to do, other people lie in similar situations, it seemed better to you than hurting that person's feelings, etc.). Yet, none of this makes the lie acceptable to Jesus!

D. The old law vs. the new law

1. When evaluating the standard of authority we live by, we must have the proper understanding of how God wants us to treat the Old and New Testaments in the Bible.

2. Although the Old Testament is from God (it is God-inspired Scripture), both the Old and New Testaments teach that God's new law was intended to replace His old law.

- Hebrews 8:7-13 (which quotes from the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34) demonstrates that a new and better covenant was established in place of the first covenant. This first covenant is now obsolete (as it was growing old and was about to pass away when the prophecy was made in Jeremiah 31).
- Colossians 2:14 refers to the old law as a certificate of debt that has been erased and taken away, being nailed to Jesus's cross. Since it has been taken away, verse 16 demonstrates that no one can judge us by that old law today – regarding the daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly laws it contained! For, verse 17 shows that all those things were but a shadow of what was to come in Jesus Christ. Therefore, rather than continuing to live in the shadows, we must live in the full light of Christ!

3. We can (and should) continue to learn from the things that were written in the Old Testament Scriptures. They teach us many things

(i.e. about God, about sin, about faith) and prepare us for what we read in the New Testament (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). However, God has plainly taught that they are **not** the standard we live by today!

- When you are trying to determine whether something is approved by God, you cannot find your authority in the Old Testament law.

2. Evaluating Some False Standards

A. Human wisdom

1. Many will use human reasoning to determine what is right or wrong. They conclude right and wrong based on what seems right or wrong in their own thoughts.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Proverbs 14:12; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, 25).

- Example – People from the town of Nazareth rejected Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah because they knew He was a carpenter and knew His family (Mark 6:1-6). Certainly, their human wisdom did not result in pleasing God!

B. Your feelings

1. Many will use what they feel about things to determine what is right or wrong. If they feel that something is good and right, they conclude that it must be right.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Jeremiah 10:23; Jeremiah 17:9; Proverbs 28:26).

- Example – Many of the Jews zealously served God and felt they were doing the right thing in rejecting Jesus and continuing to live according to the Law of Moses (Romans 10:1-3). Certainly, their feelings did not result in pleasing God!

C. Your conscience

1. Many will use their consciences to determine what is right and wrong. If they can do something without the thing bothering their consciences, they conclude it is right.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 28:26).

- Example – Saul (later named Paul) had lived with a good conscience when he was killing Christians and rejecting Jesus because he had been taught that was the right thing to do (Acts

23:1; Acts 26:9-11). Certainly, his good conscience did not result in pleasing God!

D. Popular opinion

1. Many will use what other people say to determine what is right and wrong. If they believe enough other people approve it, they conclude that it must be right.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Exodus 23:2; Matthew 7:13-14).

- Example – When twelve Israelite men were sent to scout the Canaan land, ten brought back the report that they could not defeat the people of the land. The rest of the Israelites chose to listen to the ten rather than the two faithful spies, which resulted in that generation dying in the wilderness (Numbers 13-14; see 13:31-33). Certainly, agreeing with popular opinion did not result in pleasing God!

E. Human tradition

1. Many will use the way things have been done to determine what is right and wrong. If something fits with the way they are used to, they conclude it is right.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Colossians 2:8; Galatians 1:13-14).

- Example – Jesus condemned the Pharisees and scribes who abandoned God’s commandments to hold on to human traditions. Although they were religious, they held tighter to their own traditions than to God’s word (Mark 7:1-12). Certainly, keeping these human traditions did not result in pleasing God!

F. Human teaching

1. Many will follow what a religious teacher (i.e. the Pope, a pastor, a priest, etc.) or church teaches to determine what is right and wrong. Whatever the teacher or church says is viewed as being true and right.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Romans 16:17-18; Galatians 1:6-9).

- Example – The apostle John warned that anyone who does not remain in Christ’s teaching does not have God and that we must have no sharing in false teaching (2 John 1:9-11). Certainly, following a human teaching did not result in pleasing God!

G. A positive outcome

1. Many will determine what they do to be right or wrong based on what is accomplished. Anything that accomplishes good is identified as being good.

2. God has shown us that this is an unacceptable standard to use if we want to please Him (Romans 3:1-8; Romans 6:1-4).

- Example – King Saul was commanded to go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy them and everything they had. Yet, he spared King Agag and the best of what they had (including animals). He tried to justify his actions based on the intentions of sacrificing these things to God. Yet, God rejected him for his disobedience (1 Samuel 15, see vv. 21-23). Certainly, this positive outcome did not result in pleasing God!

3. True Faith Recognizes The Proper Authority

A. True faith comes through God's word

1. Faith is not presented in the Bible as being some mystical feeling that should govern our lives in subjective and uncertain ways. Instead, the Scriptures connect true faith with the message that concerns and comes from Jesus Christ (Romans 10:13-17; Acts 18:8).

2. Although many people are religious and have something they call "faith," we must recognize that a person will never arrive at true faith that pleases God by holding to standards of authority that originate with people rather than God! Rather, if you cannot do everything from the faith which comes from God's word in the Bible, it is sin (Romans 14:23)!

B. True faith includes humility

1. Whenever one relies upon the word of God and learns who God really is (including who Jesus is), the response should be to recognize how much greater God is than you or anyone else on this earth! Always remember there is no one greater than God (Isaiah 46:9-10).

2. No matter what you think, feel, or conclude based on any human standards, you must recognize that whatever God says is right and anything contrary is wrong (Proverbs 3:5-7). Only those who humble themselves before the Lord will be exalted (James 4:10)!

C. True faith involves obedience

1. While some insist that their faith pleases God whenever they do whatever they believe is right based on human standards of authority, God shows that true faith always acts in obedience to God's authority! For example, Jesus said that many who would profess faith in Him would be eternally condemned to Hell because of their disobedience (even though they did many things in His name, Matthew 7:21-23).

2. The Hebrews 11 examples of faith are all examples of faith obeying what God authorized (i.e. Noah, Abraham, the Israelites and the walls of Jericho, etc.). This, then, is the kind of true faith God requires to please and seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). For, true faith involves much more than a mental conviction or partial obedience (James 2:14-26). Rather, God requires the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5; Romans 6:17; Romans 16:26).

Conclusion

A. When you evaluate whatever you do, think, and say, you will either find that those things have been authorized by God or by human standards. And, these two sources of authority are not equal in any way.

B. You must be diligent to make sure that everything you do, think, and say has God's approval in the pages of the New Testament! This is the only way to develop true faith that pleases God in your life!

Study Questions

What are some different standards people use to determine right and wrong today? What is taught in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22?

1. From Heaven Or People? (Matthew 21:23-27)

Why is it essential to question authority?

How did Jesus recognize the need for authority?

What two sources did Jesus recognize authority could come through?

How can you tell if something is from Heaven or from people?

How does God want people to view the Old Testament today?

2. Evaluating Some False Standards

How do some establish authority by human wisdom? Does this please God?

How do some establish authority by your feelings? Does this please God?

How do some establish authority by your conscience? Does this please God?

How do some establish authority by popular opinion? Does this please God?

How do some establish authority by human tradition? Does this please God?

How do some establish authority by human teaching? Does this please God?

How do some establish authority by a positive outcome? Does this please God?

3. True Faith Recognizes The Proper Authority

What is the connection between true faith and God's word?

What is the connection between true faith and humility?

What is the connection between true faith and obedience?

