

Accepting Human Philosophy and Wisdom as Authority

Introduction; Man considers himself to be wise.

- A. Every age and nation has had its wise men and philosophers.
1. They are advisers to kings and rulers and leaders of industry and commerce. They tell people how to live and how to be happy. We see many examples of this in scripture.
 2. *Prov 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed.*
 3. *Acts 17:17-18 Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there. 18 Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babbling man want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.*
 4. *Exod 7:11 But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.*
 5. We also have our wise men and philosophers today. Some advise the President and other politicians. Some teach at colleges and universities. Some write books and others are on radio and TV. They tell us how to think, who to vote for and how to live.
 6. Many are not really wise. They teach their wisdom, but it is flawed. It is lacking because they rely only on their observation of life and thinking and not on the word of God.
 7. *Prov 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."*
- B. Many in religion claim to be wise.
1. There are the leaders of large churches and denominations. They write books and hold seminars on how to have better churches, better lives, better marriages, how to do more personal work and so forth.
 2. Some of these do good work. They let God's word and Bible principles mold their philosophy and teaching. They base their wisdom on what God's word teaches.
 3. Yet many use their own wisdom. They reject God's way when they think they have a better idea.
 4. In their wisdom they change the organization of the church, the worship of the church, the plan of salvation and many other things that God has spoken very clearly on.
 5. Their goal is to do things bigger and better and have success that the world can see. They do things that can get physical results that impresses worldly minded people.
- C. God's word has always condemned man's wisdom.
1. The world, and even God's people, have often used their own wisdom instead of God's. They follow their own ways instead of what is taught by God's prophets.
 2. *Jer 10:23-24 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. 24 O LORD, correct me, but with justice; Not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing.*
 3. *Prov 14:11-12 The house of the wicked will be overthrown, But the tent of the upright will flourish. 12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*
 4. Man's ways lead to his own destruction. We need to learn to depend on The Lord and do things His way.
- D. Many has often failed to respect God's authority.
1. The history of man and religion is one of man rejecting God's way to do things man's way. History also includes God rejecting men for doing so.
 2. *Mal 1:10 "Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," Says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands."*

3. *Mark 7:6-7 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*
4. *Col 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.*
5. The philosophies and traditions of men are common in religion. There are many of these that men accept. God's word consistently condemns them.

E. Today we will examine some of the Philosophies of man that many accept.

I. "IT WORKS..."

- A. This philosophy is based on the idea that, **'The end justifies the means.'**
1. Sometimes we may condemn someone for what they do in religion and they say, *"Well, it works for us."*
 2. The idea is that if it works, it must be OK. If it gets more people to come to church by serving coffee and cake or milk and cookies, then why not do it.
 3. If we can get folks to be more active by have social activities and sponsoring sports then, *"Why not? It works!"*
 4. If it fills the building or gets people more involved, then lets do it is the philosophy of many in religion. The end justifies the means. If instrumental music and bands entertain and make folks come more, then why not?
 5. **1 Samuel 15**; Saul, the first king of Israel, used this type of wisdom several time. He was popular with the people, but rejected by the Lord.
 - a. **Vs 1-9**; God's command was clear. It was easily understood. Yet Saul and the people spared king Agag to kill on public display and the best of the flock and cattle for sacrifice —and probably personal use too.
 - b. **Vs 13-15, 19-23**; Saul argued that he did what God wanted and it was the people who wanted to take Agag and the animals.
 - c. He did so to please the people. They were happier and more subjective. Yet Jehovah was not pleased.
 6. We could consider Saul's unlawful sacrifice in 1 Samuel 13 and many other examples where kings and priests and others tried to satisfy men and not God. They often displeased both God and man.
- B. We cannot do wrong to accomplish good.
1. Man says the end justifies the end. If it works it must be OK. However God never says that. Good cannot come from doing evil. Paul argues this several time in the book of Romans.
 2. *Rom 3:5-8 But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) 6 Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? 7 For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? 8 And why not say, "Let us do evil that good may come?"; as we are slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say. Their condemnation is just.*
 3. Some seem to have been justifying sin by saying that God's grace forgives sin. Therefore if we sin more we have more grace. The logical end of that is to purposely sin more so we can have more grace. Paul says, "No".
 4. *Rom 10:1-3 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*
 5. The Jews in the Gospels were very devout and religious. Yet Jesus Christ often condemned them. Paul tells us why —Jesus did too. They set up their own standard and did not always follow God's standard of righteousness.
- C. We must not use the logic of king Saul and do things in religion that people like. We must do what God likes.

II. "TRADITION..."

- A. **Sacred tradition** says that, *“It has been practiced for so long, it must be alright.”*
1. Tradition is somewhat like age. We tend to think that older folks are wiser. Some are but many aren't. Some traditions are alright but many aren't. Age alone does not make something right.
 2. Instrumental music has been around for over a thousand years in the Roman Catholic church. It has been used for several hundred years in Protestant churches. Yet it was not used at all in the N.T.
 3. *Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*
 4. Few question instrumental music in worship. Few question sprinkling and pouring for baptism either. While these have been practiced for over 1500 years, they have been common for only a thousand. Despite this they still were not part of the N.T.
 5. *1 Cor 15:3-4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,*
 6. *Rom 6:3-6 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*
 7. We must question all we do in religion. We must have book, chapter and verse for all we do. We must go back and establish the 1st Century, N.T. church. As Jesus died and was buried, we must die to sin and be buried too.
- B. We cannot follow tradition over God's word, no matter how old the tradition is.
1. Following ancient traditions is not new. In Jesus' day (almost 2000 years ago) the Jews had developed many traditions. Many of them were several hundred years old —some were older.
 2. **Mark 15:1-9**; The Jews tried to condemn Jesus and His disciples because they broke the traditions of the elders. Jesus turned this on them and showed how they broke the law of the Lord with their traditions.
 3. Many times men elevate their traditions over God's word. This makes man's ways better than God's ways. This is clearly wrong.
 4. The Bible is the standard. We must use it and it only for what we do in religion. When we follow the Bible we know we please God. When we follow men's traditions we please men.
 5. *Col 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*
- C. We must not follow men's traditions, no matter how long we've done them. We must follow the word of God given 2000 years ago.

III. "THE SILENCE OF THE BIBLE..."

- A. *“The Bible doesn't say not to,”* is justification for many things in religion.
1. Men argue the silence of the Bible gives consent for man to do whatever he wants to. Most give lip service to doing the, **“Thou shalt,”** and the, **“Thou shalt not.”** Yet they say we are not limited to only the, **“Thou shalt.”**
 2. This philosophy makes what God did not say just as important or valid as what He did say. Some then ask, *“Why should God say anything ?”*
 3. Why say to sing and make melody in our heart (Eph 5:19) if playing a musical instrument is OK? Why say to be buried with Christ in baptism if you can be just sprinkled or pour?
 4. *Lev 10:1-2 Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. 2 So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.*
 5. Nadab and Abihu died when they offered 'strange' or unauthorized fire on the altar of incense in the tabernacle. God said to use coals from the altar in front of the tabernacle —Lev 16:12, Exod 30:9, Num 16:46.
 6. Jehovah never said that they should **not** use fire or coals from another source. What real difference did it

- make? The difference was, “**God said...**”
7. When God tells us what He wants this does not allow us to substitute things that seem right to us. We must do His will His way.
 8. *Heb 7:12-14 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.*
 9. Moses said nothing about priests from Judah, either for or against. His silence was not justification for Jesus to serve as a priest under the law of Moses —nor kings Saul and Uzziah.
- B. We cannot let God’s silence have precedence over what God says in His word.
1. In the N.T. we see this in the Lord’s supper. Jesus Himself established it the night He was betrayed. It was very simple.
 2. *Matt 26:26-30 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” 30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*
 3. This is very simple and easily understood. Yet some tried to change things in the church at Corinth. They wanted to make it a common meal. They wanted to do it at different time and in little groups.
 4. **1 Corinthians 11:17-26**; Paul condemns what they do and goes back to what Jesus did. In verses **33 & 34** he draws some logical conclusion about the partaking. They needed to do things God’s way.
 5. *Deut 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*
 6. Why doesn’t God want us to do certain things or do things in a certain way? We do not know. We should not concern ourselves about these questions and about things that God has not revealed.
 7. It is the revealed things that are important. These are the things that concern us. These are the things that we should be busy with.
- C. We must not let men’s wisdom tell us we can practice things in religion based on God’s silence. We must do what He tells us to.

IV. “NUMBERS...”

- A. “*Surely so many people cannot be wrong,*” is a common argument.
1. “*Everybody can’t be wrong, can they?*” is an emotional question. Who wants to condemn the majority? Besides the term ‘everybody’ is not real. It is misleading.
 2. Sometimes in the church we want to, ‘*keep up with the Jones’s*’. We look at what the denominations are doing and decide we should try it too.
 3. In the ‘**institutional**’ and ‘**social gospel**’ questions of the 50’s and 60’s, many wanted the churches of Christ to build hospitals, and publishing houses and missionary associations to compete with the denominations.
 3. The history in the O.T. shows that the majority were usually wrong. God did condemn them. God’s word is not ‘majority-ruled’.
 - a. Gen 3; Everybody was cast out of Paradise. Even though there was just 2, they were all punished for sin —because they all did it.
 - b. Gen 6—8; Only Noah and 7 members of his family survived the flood. Everyone else was destroyed.
 - c. There were over 600,000 men of Israel who came out of Egypt. Only two, Joshua and Caleb could enter the promised land —Num 14:28-30.
 4. *Rom 9:27 Isaiah also cries out concerning Israel: “Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved.*
 5. Israel was a great nation in Isaiah’s day. Yet they were carried into captivity because of their sins. Isaiah said only a remnant would be saved and return.
- B. The majority has almost always been wrong in matters of religion.
1. Jesus taught that few would be saved both at the beginning and the end of His ministry. Matthew 7 is part of His, ‘Sermon on the Mount.’ It was one of His first sermons. Luke 13 is while He is on His way to Jerusalem to die.

2. *Matt 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."*
3. *Luke 13:23-24 Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, 24 Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."*
4. It is not just the world that is lost. It is also many believers who think they are saved. Jesus speaks of those who would stand before Him in judgment and be surprised they are cast into hell. We must think about this seriously.
5. *Matt 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"*

C. We must not let the practices of the majority influence us in what we do in service to God.

Conclusion: We like to trust in our own wisdom.

- A. All of these philosophies put more value on man's thoughts and desires than on what God says —see Jer. 10:23 & Prov. 14:12.
 1. The NT is our authority, & we must have NT law for every belief, teaching & practice, or give it up to be right with God.
 2. We must have book, chapter and verse for all we do in matter of religion, whether the worship and work of the church or the lifestyle we live as children of God.
- B. God says to believe, repent and be baptized to be become a Christian and be saved.
 1. We believe who Jesus is. He is God's Son who died on the cross for us. We repent of our sins and turn from them. We are buried with Him in a watery grave to rise a new creature.
 2. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
 3. If we can help you obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ today, please let us.