

RESPECTING THE AUTHORITY OF GOD

COMMON AUTHORITY MISCONCEPTIONS

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Introduction:

- A. Today I want to draw to a close a series of lessons we've been studying on authority...**
1. We've seen the importance of authority – We cannot be saved without respecting God's authority, it is the foundation of all of our lives, & it is the answer to religious division!
 2. We noticed how authority is established one of three ways throughout the Bible – By direct commands, approved examples, and necessary inferences
 3. We've seen the difference between aids & additions – Additions go beyond the command and/or change the command while aids simply assist in carrying out the command
- B. Let's conclude this series by looking at some common misconceptions people have in establishing authority... False standards by which men appeal as a basis for their beliefs!**
1. These may be positive in nature, in order to approve something, or negative in nature, in order to condemn something... Misconceptions abound in both realms
 2. We can clearly see these false lines of reasoning being used by those in the religious world around us on a regular basis, but as you'll see – we can be guilty of the same!

I. Some Common Standards Of Authority That Are False:

- A. One common, but false, standard people often appeal to is their feelings**
1. Consider some statements people make that demonstrate this standard:
 - a. I know I am saved because I feel it deep within my heart! It's a feeling inside me
 - b. Or as a popular song suggests, "If it makes you happy... it can't be that bad!"
 - c. It seems right to me... It just feels good to do it... It doesn't bother my conscience
 2. Consider some examples of people who "thought," but were dead wrong:
 - a. Naaman's great "THINKING" nearly cost him his life as he almost refused to obey Elisha's when they didn't match what he expected (**2 Kings 5:11**)
 - b. It was Saul who said he "THOUGHT" he must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, but he was still wrong! (**Acts 26:9**)
 3. Our feelings, better known as our conscience, is given by God to help keep us on the right path; however, our consciences can be wrong! (**1 Peter 3:16, 21**)
 - a. They can be wrong because we teach them wrong things! We're not born with a knowledge of all that's right & wrong... We learn & program our consciences!
 - b. They can be wrong because we have continuously done wrong and have not sought to correct them, killing our consciences and rendering them useless!
 - c. So it does not matter if you FEEL right or if you THINK you are okay... Those feelings do not determine the truth and what is righteous! False standards!
- B. Another standard that is used is what the majority is practicing and teaching**
1. It is clearly understood that the majority of the world will be lost; however, Jesus takes it a step further... The majority of those seemingly religious people will be lost! (**Matt 7:13-14**)
 - a. If people think my preaching is too narrow because it condemns others, even some in the religious world, then they haven't listened to the preaching of Jesus!
 - b. Jesus very plainly states most of the world would be lost! Only a few are saved!
 - c. This includes those who are religious but teach the wrong message (**vs. 15**) & those who do great religious works but not according to God's law (**vs. 21-23**)
 - d. Lessons: This means I should not look for the big numbers in a church to see if it's where I should belong or just to all the "programs" they have... But is their teaching the pure truth and do their works line up with God's word?
 2. The standard of the majority of the world is not our authority for morality! (**2 Cor 6:14-7:1**)
 - a. Being "HOLY" & "SEPARATE" begins by appealing to a different standard!
 - b. Some feel they can be just a little better than the world & feel "separate" – This makes the world our standard & not Christ! It's nothing short of self-deception
 3. Remember – It was the crowds who drown in the flood, the crowds to died in Sodom &

Gomorrah, the crowds who crucified Jesus, and the crowds who will go to Hell!

C. What another church or religious group practices is not a standard for authority:

1. This standard is often used in both direction – To approve and to condemn!
 - a. Some might say, “I know this is right because this church is doing it over there and they are a very faithful church & they have a good name in the brotherhood!”
 - b. Some may be heard saying, “We can’t do that here... I don’t know of any other church who does it that way! What will the other churches think about us?”
 - c. Or it could be, “That must be wrong because this religious group over there is doing it and we know they are denominational (or liberal)”
2. People often use “Flee every appearance of evil” in this context **(I Thess 5:22)**
 - a. This is from the KJV – The Greek word for “appearance” (eidos) simple means kind or form – It literally refers to every kind of form... not what looks questionable
 - b. It simply means, “Whenever evil appears, then flee it!” – Nothing more than that!
 - c. The desire to be “set apart” from other religious groups who aren’t following the Bible alone is a good desire... But it must end where the Bible begins & ends!
3. To call a practice unscriptural just cause another religious group does or does not do it causes us to no longer speak where the Bible speaks & be silent where it is silent!

D. Something does not become unscriptural because of what we may think it might lead to:

1. Some might be heard objecting to an activity, whether in our personal life or in how we carry out the work of the church based upon what it might lead to: **(I John 3:4)**
 - a. When scriptural proof is requested... none can be given for the immediate activity, but only for the sin they see down the road... Only when the line is crossed
 - b. Something is not wrong because of what it might lead to... It is wrong because it violates a command or principle from God’s word! Then it becomes sinful!
2. Let’s observe that there is an element of wisdom in this reasoning!
 - a. Sometimes we need to refrain from an activity that may be okay in nature because it bothers our conscience or causes another to stumble! **(Rom 14:15, 20, 23)**
 - b. In your life you may choose to avoid a certain activity, going to the theatres, going to certain places, or certain to music – Because you know YOUR weaknesses
 - c. A church may refrain from certain activities because they know THEY would have a tendency to cross the line into sin (like with the role of women)
 - d. This reasoning, however, must stop here! I cannot call something unscriptural that the Bible does not condemn just because I see some dangers in it!
3. The Pharisees used this as a standard in creating “Hedge Commands” **(Luke 14:13-17)**
 - a. These additional instructions were meant to keep people from even coming close to breaking the law of God – It’s like they built a hedge around God’s law
 - b. As Jesus exposed these as rules of men, sometimes breaking their boundaries, it created great friction because they saw them as equal to God’s law!
 - c. They had a law which stated you could only travel 2,000 cubits beyond your home on the Sabbath... God’s law never made such a restriction! It was man’s law!
4. Consider Jesus’ instructions concerning avoiding sin as an example **(Matthew 5:29-30)**
 - a. Is it wrong for me to have two feet, two hands, and two eyes? Of course not!
 - b. Jesus’ point is take any measure you have to take to avoid sin and going to Hell! This may call for removing things in your life that aren’t inherently sinful!
 - c. What if I had to pluck out my eyes in order to avoid lusting – Would I be correct in saying everyone walking around with two eyes was sinning? Of course not!

E. The traditions of men are not a standard of authority:

1. Sometimes people appeal to “the way things have always been done” as authoritative:
 - a. We certainly can clearly recognize this in Catholicism – They believe in the Bible PLUS their traditions as a standard for right & wrong... When discussing religious differences they’ll appeal to what “the church” has always taught
 - b. While most, if not all of us, see the problem with this – We can be guilty of the

- same if we won't try things NEW because it's not how we've always done it!
2. We should recognize there is wisdom in recognizing some traditions: **(1 Cor. 14:40)**
 - a. It is often the case that we do things a certain way for reason – Because somewhere along the line it was tested and proven to work most effectively!
 - b. Examples of traditions that just make sense are having announcements, having a song leader, an invitation song, bible classes, song books, church buildings
 - c. There are some who, if we chose to do it another way, would object since it's not how we've always done it – Not a matter of scriptural authority but tradition!
 - d. These are good & expedient ways of conducting things; yet, if another way is desired that works it is not wrong just because it breaks with traditional ways
 3. The Pharisees saw the traditions of their elders as authoritative **(Matthew 15:1-2)**
 - a. God's word said NOTHING about having to wash your hands before you eat... It was a rule that the elders had created... It was a tradition of men and that's it!
 - b. Now, certainly this tradition was a wise one! Who would deny that washing your hands before you eat is a bad thing? The problem was making it equal to law!
 - c. Jesus points the finger of blame back at them! They were SOOO concerned with the disciples breaking a tradition, and yet they BLATENTLY broke a CLEAR law of God! This matter of washing hands suddenly seemed as nothing!

F. Finally, what other people believe is groundless as a standard of authority:

1. This may come in the form of a firm faith in what one's parents taught **(Matt 10:34-37)**
 - a. Someone once said, "What momma whispers in the crib is believed to the grave"
 - b. When some learn the gospel of Christ they have a difficult time accepting & responding to it since they realize by doing so they condemn their parents!
 - c. The gospel of Christ will create division within a home! Not because there is a problem with the gospel, but because not everyone seeks to follow it!
 - d. To be a follower of Jesus, our love & devotion must be to Christ before parents!
2. This too comes in the form of an unhealthy respect for what men believe: **(1 Cor 1:11-13)**
 - a. There is certainly nothing wrong with having "favorite preachers" but this becomes dangerous, if not plain wrong, when we let them determine what we believe!
 - b. Frankly – It doesn't matter what Bill Hall or Paul Earnhardt teaches or believes on particular matters... It doesn't matter what Irven Lee, Granvil Tyler, or John T Lewis taught or believed... These are just men and are fallible!
 - c. When we appeal to what others think – be it a preacher, elder, commentator, or any others, basing our beliefs on what they say, we make MAN our standard!
3. We must recognize that men can be wrong, men can be very deceptive, and even those men who would appear strong can fall to sin! **(Acts 18:24-26; Phil 3:18-19)**

Conclusion: All of these are false standards of authority – They cannot be used to determine whether some is good or whether something is bad. Let us always do what we claim and stick to God's word as our basis for everything we approve or condemn! That is the infallible standard! **(2 Tim 3:16-17)**