

God vs Man

I have been asked to do a series of lessons on the contrast between what is seen in so many of the various church groups of today, including many who wear the name Church of Christ, and what is seen in the scriptures concerning the New Testament Church, after which we work to pattern ourselves. Any comparison of what is being done in the name of the Worship of God of a necessity must start with a discussion of authority. In...

Col 3:17

1

17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

That is a very specific statement that God through Paul makes to all Christians. In the preceding verses which lead up to this statement we see...

Col 3:12-15

2

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; **13** bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. **14** Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. **15** Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

In our actions in the world, in our actions toward each other, and most assuredly in our actions towards God, those actions must be guided by His authority. Whatever we do...

3

“In Word or Deed”

We must be led by the authority of God in everything we do, including our worship. I almost said especially in our worship, but that isn't accurate. There is no one area in which we must be more careful to follow His authority than any other. All areas are equally important from what we say to the world to how we practice our worship to God. I picked some thoughts from a few commentaries...

Colossians 3:17

Adam Clarke's Commentary

4

[Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus] Begin with him, and end with him; invoke his name, and pray for his direction and support, in all that you do; and thus every work will be crowned with all requisite success. Doing everything in the name of God, and referring everything to his glory, is as rational as it is pious. Could it be ever supposed that any person would begin a bad work in God's name?

Barnes' Notes

5

Do it all because he requires and commands it, and with a desire to honor him. His authority should be the warrant; his glory the aim of all our actions and words

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown 6

As disciples called by His name as His; seeking so to act as to gain His approval

There is a common thread in what these men see in the passage which I think is accurate. The idea of “Word and Deed” speaks to every action, every word, every thought that we engage in and must be in accordance with the authority of God. Barnes brings out the idea that it is a response to God’s commands and requisites to the end that our obedience honors God. That is what JFB talks about, “Seeking to gain His approval.”

Commentaries are nothing more than the thoughts of men, no more or less valid than yours or mine. The point of looking at these excerpts is to help us develop our own thoughts and understanding of what God is telling us. I think we can see that the idea of “doing all in His name” does indeed mean that in everything we do, physically, as a part of this world, and spiritually, in our relationship with God, we seek His authority and implement it.

This then leads us to a question, the first thought of this lesson, that needs to be answered...

7 1) Where do we find God’s authority?

We are to act by the authority of God, in His name, in all we do. In...

1 Peter 4:11 8

11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies;

Peter addresses the same thought here. Our speech, our service is to be as if it were God speaking or serving. Then in...

3 John 5-6 9

5 Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; **6** and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

John says we are to act faithfully in whatever we seek to accomplish. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God. Paul says it this way...

Col 3:22-25 10

23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

The things we do are to be for the glory of God through Christ. We are to speak the words of God and to serve for God. We are to act faithfully in what we do and how we treat others, we are to work for the Lord...

11 *“It is Christ whom we serve”*

The authority of God is found in the commandments and requisites that God has given us, His Word. If, then, we are to do all by His authority, we are to do all in accordance to the commandments and requisites of the Word of God. This brings us to our next point...

12 2) How is His authority to be applied

As we have seen in Col. 3; “Do all in the name of the Lord” and “Work heartily for the Lord”: and 1 Peter 4; “Speak the utterances of God.” There is an accepted obligation, what I mean by that is that it is a voluntary understood acceptance of the disciple of Christ to willingly do all that God has said. The Word of God does not leave room for man to practice what they like but to ignore the things they don’t. Christ says in...

John 15:13-14

13

13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I command you.

Christ says He died for His friends and then defines who His friends are;

14

14 You are My friends if you do what I command you.

He says much the same thing in John 14:15, but there He says...

15

15 “If you love me, you will keep my commandments”

The point is that our keeping of His commandments is the manifestation of our friendship and love for Him. When we begin to shortchange our response in friendship and love for Him by shortchanging our obedience to the Word, we show that it is our friendship and love for Him that we have chosen to shortchange. In...

James 2:10-11

16

10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. **11** For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

This passage is used to illustrate that obedience has to be complete to all that has been given. If we fail in one commandment, regardless of how small, we fail in all. But this passage says so much more, note...

James 2:12-13

17

12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. **13** For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

James points out that the application of keeping all that God has given us is seen in how we act and speak. Think about that for a moment. When we, whether by choice or falling prey to outside influence, fail to keep even one of what God has told us, we sin, and sin separates us from God. If we choose to ignore the commandment to partake of the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week, that is sin. If we choose to add to what God has commanded by adding musical instruments to our singing, we sin. If we fail to treat the world with love, we sin. Abiding by and living within the authority, the whole authority is the covenant that the disciple of God willingly accepts when they come to God through Christ.

This brings us to our last point...

18

3) To what end

19 **24** knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Paul tells us the reason we are to do all by the authority of God through Christ, so that we might gain the inheritance promised to all that do. He explains some of what that inheritance is in...

2 Cor 5:1-5 **20**

1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **2** For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, **3** inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. **4** For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. **5** Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

The Earthly tent under discussion here is our mortal, physical bodies and Paul says that there is for each and every one a body, the building from God, that will be eternal. Paul's point is that the true follower of God longs to be with Him eternally in the heavenly home that He has promised. Notice now what Paul has to say in the continuance of this passage...

2 Cor 5:6-10 **21**

6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— **7** for we walk by faith, not by sight— **8** we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. **9** Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. **10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Paul points to the fact that while we are here in the physical we are looking forward to the time when we will be clothed in the immortal. That's his point...

22 ***“For we walk by faith, not by sight”***

The follower of God doesn't depend on what is seen in this world for his motivation to be obedient, but rather looks to his faith and the confidence that faith has in God's promises to be the catalyst for his obedience. The true Christian finds all the motivation they need in the truth of God. That motivation is the desire to receive the inheritance of God found in heaven.

Why does the disciple do all that they do by the authority of God in the scriptures? They want to receive the promises of God. Since that is the agreement that we make, abiding by His authority that we might receive His promises, note what Peter says about our response in...

1 Peter 2:4-5 **23**

4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, **5** you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Peter is talking about the dynamic of coming to Christ as the living stone of foundation of the Church, and when man comes to Him in faith, we become living stones also, built on Him as the foundation, as a temple of the living God able to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Christ. What I find interesting is the obvious implication here that for our offerings to be acceptable they must be in accordance with that which builds us into spiritual stones built on Christ.

Heb 12:26-29

24

26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." **27** This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. **28** Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; **29** for our God is a consuming fire.

I would imagine that the principles we have been discussing in this lesson are both familiar and accepted to everyone here. What we are going to be looking at over the course of the next few lessons is the application of the principle...

25

"In Word or Deed"

In various and different things that can be seen in the worship of other religions and also in some congregations of the Lord's Church.

Prov 30:5-6

26

5 Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. **6** Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Eccl 3:14-15

27

14 I know that everything God does will remain forever; there is nothing to add to it and there is nothing to take from it, for God has so worked that men should fear Him. **15** That which is has been already and that which will be has already been, for God seeks what has passed by.

Matt 15:13

28

13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father did not plant shall be uprooted.

Mark 7:6-7

29

6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. **7** 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'

As this last passage indicates the principle of obedience to the authority of God is seen in the contrast of God's Law versus the thoughts of man.

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