

The Voice Of Conscience Is Not The Voice Of God

It is not so that the “voice of conscience is the voice of God.” Conscience is often wrong, but God never is. This statement has so often been made that it has found itself in quotation marks in modern writings, and has probably come to be considered as Scripture by some.

The plain fact is that the voice of conscience is frequently the voice of the devil. When men follow their consciences, they differ as widely as the poles. Trying to go to heaven a hundred different ways and under every kind of name, they all declare that they are following the guidance of conscience. But there is only one way to heaven, “*and in none other is there salvation, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12 ASV).

Conscience says, “One way is as good as another,” but God says, “*Stand ye in the ways and see; and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls*” (Jer. 6:16 ASV). Conscience is wrong, but the Bible is right.

Conscience says, “Join the church of your choice.” God says, “*Yea, they have chosen their own ways and their soul delighteth in their abominations: I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them...*” (Isa. 66:3-4 ASV).

Conscience will agree that it is all right to wear names, choose churches and doctrines, and different kinds of worship and life, and that one’s choice is about all to be considered. God says, “*They did that which was evil in mine eyes, and chose that wherein I delighted not*” (Isa. 66:4 ASV).

Conscience subordinates the will and way of God and consults only the mind and preference of man. God never intended that man should use his conscience as a criterion in religion. Jesus Christ is our guide. “Unto him shall ye hearken.”

No inspired writer ever condoned this “church of your choice” idea or ever voiced one slight approval of the doctrine that one church is as safe as another. The doctrines of “many ways to heaven,” “nothing in a name,” and that everyone ought to join the church of his choice is a far cry from the voice of God. It is the plain voice of the devil.

Any conscience that will approve of wearing a name God has not given, in a church He has not planted, and of worshipping in a way He has not commanded leads a man to do that wherein God delights not.

There was a time when Paul thought the voice of conscience was the voice of God, and admitted that he had lived before God in all good conscience (Acts 23:1). After he learned better, he confessed that he was the chief of sinners while faithfully following the dictates of his own conscience (1 Tim. 1:15).

“Everybody is doing it, so I guess it is all right,” is the voice of conscience. A big crowd in religion cannot be wrong to such a mind. “I know I am saved because I feel perfectly satisfied,” is the way the conscience talks that has completely ignored the Word of God.

That kind of conscience approves the use of instrumental music in the worship and infant sprinkling in practice. It approves the use of an unscriptural name and church. It is the very instrument that got the Israelites in trouble with God. “*They hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward*” (Jer. 7:24 ASV). It is wiser to follow the Word of the living God than the fallible dictates of conscience. Which do you really follow?

Gayle Oler, Deceased



BELVEDERE BEACON
To see the light of the world? (Matthew 5:14)
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When Silence is Sin

In an age of “non-confrontation” is upon the church. It manifests itself in an overwhelming desire to be popular and well-liked, and certainly to avoid conflict at any cost. Because of this attitude, legions are the instances where error goes unchallenged and sin goes unchecked. It is certainly an easier, more comfortable strategy to just “be quiet” and liked by most all folks than to speak up and risk offending others who tolerate sin and are content with the status quo (as one gospel preacher put it that is Latin for “the mess we are in!”).

One secular writer's advice for life is, “*Never tell a man he is wrong.*” A whole bunch of brethren feel the same way. They do not want their “pet” sins exposed, and they do want to be made to feel good about their spiritual condition, even if they are led to possess only a false sense of security. The Holy Spirit told us that some would “turn away their ears from the truth” and would “heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Sadly, many preachers, elders, and teachers are willing to accommodate such weak and shallow brethren and hence, they avoid like the plague any matters that might “*ripple the water*” and cause some controversy. A large segment of brethren in congregations throughout the land support such spineless and impotent teaching by refusing to speak out when truth and souls are at stake.

What is your reaction when you see or hear sin rearing its ugly head? Do you practice the old adage, “*Silence is golden*” and walk away as if you are nothing more than an innocent observer? Paul compares the Christian life to a soldier in battle and as such, we are to “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Tim. 6:12). A loyal soldier does not merely watch the battle from afar off. I really do not believe that the majority of brethren would ever teach error, but the question of the day is, what will they do when others teach it? A lot of brethren would not even think of forsaking the assemblies, drinking, or dancing, but, will they speak out for righteousness in an age of worldliness and compromise or, will they timidly shrink back to the shadows?

I am thankful for the sterling examples of men like Elijah who, even though in the minority, was not afraid to stand up and speak up for what was right. On Mt. Carmel Elijah asked the Israelites, “*How long go ye limping between two sides? If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal be God, follow him.*” The response of the people is mirrored by a great number today; “*And the people answered him not a word*” (1 Kgs. 18:21).

Paul said he was “*set for the defense of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:16), and his strong desire was to make known the gospel with boldness (Eph. 6:19-20). Brethren, silence is not golden in the case under consideration - it is cowardice. The question of Exodus 32:26 comes to each of us: “*Who is on the Lord's side?*” Then, pick up the sword (Eph. 6:17) and join in the fray!

Lynn Parker
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DECEIVED

In the Wednesday night adult Bible Study, we had some discussion about being deceived. Sadly, too many, even Christians, are deceived, sometimes self – deceived. Note the following, adapted from an article that we have received:

A man is DECEIVED if he is a hearer and not a doer of the word – “*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*.” (James 1:22).

A man is DECEIVED if he says he has no sin – “*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*” (I John 1:8).

A man is DECEIVED when he thinks himself to be something when he is nothing – “*For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*” (Galatians 6:3).

A man is DECEIVED when he thinks himself to be wise with the wisdom of the world – “*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise*” (I Corinthians 3:18).

A man is DECEIVED by seeming to be religious when an unbridled tongue reveals his true condition – “*If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain*” (James 1:26).

A man is DECEIVED if he thinks he will sow and not reap what he sows – “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7).

A man is DECEIVED if he thinks the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom of God – “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind*” (I Corinthians 6:9).

Brethren, we need to always be on guard so that we will not be deceived by others but, above all, that we do not deceive ourselves for the consequences of that deception could mean that we will be lost. Thus, we need to be like the Bereans of long ago: “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). We have a personal responsibility to ensure that we are not deceived.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’s sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

Steven Wilson has been sick with strep throat and was unable to be out last week but should be out today.

Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt, Eula Baker, has pneumonia.

We will have our fellowship meal after the morning worship. Plan to stay and eat.

“Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? 5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. 7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways” (Haggai 1:3-7).

Let’s look at two phrases from this passage. First, “Is it time...” Most would probably agree that the church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is not growing as it did many years ago. In addition to slow grow (or no growth), we see the departure from the gospel to “another gospel, which is not another...” (Galatians 1:6-7). Brethren, “is it time” for us “to dwell in your (our) cieled houses”? Is it time to call it quits for awhile, and wait until another time, when another generation arises? Is it time just to focus on ourselves and let the world go by?

The church of the First Century suffered persecution. Apostles and saints alike, were persecuted, some being put in prison, some put to death, and their enemies “commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (Acts 4:18). Was “it time” for them to pack up their bags, go home, close the windows and drapes, and cower down in fear? Instead of retiring to their “ceiled houses”, they “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). We need to follow their example, of praying and doing, for they prayed for boldness to speak the word, and then spoke His word.

The second phrase is “Consider your ways.” The idea is that these were to consider their inward self, to examine themselves, in light of the present situation – they have ceiled houses and God’s house is in disrepair. Haggai’s message is “Do you think it proper to be in your secure houses, and that the Lord’s house is destroyed?” He encourages them to think about it!

Certainly we should be encouraged to think about ourselves. We need to think about the Lord’s church, about what we are doing to rekindle the growth of years past. Are we staying in our “ceiled houses”? Have we decided we will, “not to speak any more in the name of Jesus” before someone tells us or commands us not to do it?

Beloved, **IT IS TIME FOR US TO CONSIDER OUR WAYS!**

Beloved, Jesus said, “My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it” (Luke 8:21). May all of us “hear” and “do” God’s word.

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Jimmie Z. Gribble, Portsmouth, VA*