

Authority in Religion

- Intro.
- 1) Disney's animated "Jungle Book" - "What do you want to do"?
 - 2) Here is a problem faced by every person who becomes a Christian -
"What am I supposed to do?"
 - 3) This problem is faced by the members of every congregation -
"What are we going to do?"
 - 4) We've got to be doing something - either individually or as a group.
 - a) There are all kinds of things we could do in the name of worship
 - b) There are all kinds of things we could do in the name of ministry
 - c) There are all kinds of programs, amusements, and talents ...
 - 5) But ... how will we determine what we will do here?

I. We Could Do What Our Parents Did

- A. Paul tried that.
 1. Gal 1:14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.
 2. He learned that "ancestral traditions" can be wrong.
- B. 1 Pet 1:18 you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers
(Some things we inherit from our forefathers are "futile.")
(Cutting off the end of the ham before cooking it.)
- C. Some things our "fathers" did were just plain wrong.
Acts 7:51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.
(“Brass Tacks”)
- D. Jesus expects us to what's right, regardless of what our parents did.
Matt 10:37 "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

II. We Could Do What Seems Right to Our Conscience ... But ...

- A. Prov 16:25 There is a way {which seems} right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Jer. 16:12; 17:9
- B. With a perfectly good conscience, Paul used to persecute the church.

Acts 23:1 And Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it;

and Acts 26:9-11 "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities."

C. Unless our conscience is educated in the Truth, it can be deadly wrong.

III. We Could Do What Everyone Else is Doing

A. Exod 23:2 "You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil ...

B. The unfortunate thing is that "the crowd" is usually wrong.
Matt 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."

C. It's a mistake to be a "man pleaser" rather than a "God pleaser."
Acts 4:19-20 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard."

D. Even if you have to stand all alone with God, you're in the real majority
Rom 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God {is} for us, who {is} against us?

IV. We Could Do What the Church's Creed Book Says (convenient – let someone else be responsible)

A. But ... we don't have a "Creed Book" here - except the Bible.

1. Creed books were written by men.

2. Mere mortal men decided:

a. which Bible teachings are important

b. how to interpret them

c. and what every congregation must do

3. But the worst thing - many teachings in creed books are not in the Bible at all.

- B. How confident can we be in the “doctrines” of men?
Jer 10:23 I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.

Matt 15:9 “But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.”

1 Cor 2:5 that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

Gal 1:8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

We have no creed book here – and we musn't ride the coat tails of publishers nor universities either. I appreciate teaching – but they're not the standard either.

V. We Could Do What We Learn in the Bible - for We Know this came from God

- A. 2 Pet 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.
- B. 2 Tim 3:16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
- C. Acts 20:32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build {you} up and to give {you} the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.
- D. John 12:49 "For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.

Concl. 1) We must not look to:
Parents - Conscience - Majority - Creeds of men for authority in religion.

2) We should seek a “thus saith the Lord” for the things we do.

3) We must continue to examine everything we do from the viewpoint of scriptural teaching.

We look for:

Divine commandments - God said to do it

Approved example - early church did it with apostolic approval

Necessary expedience - we do it to fulfill a command or example

4) This is the course we take in our quest to please our Heavenly Father.