

The Old Paths

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"It Sounds Right, But It's Wrong"

Jarrod Jacobs

Have you ever heard statements made which sounded right the first time you heard them, but upon further examination, you found that the statement was wrong? I think we all have had that experience at one time or another. Perhaps someone told you something, assuring you that it was "true" or "right," and it was only later that you learned that they were wrong. (Probably after you told someone else, too!) Oftentimes, friends are sincere and honest in what they say, but they are still wrong. Though what they say sounds right, and it came from one we consider to be a "reliable source," it didn't change the fact that the statement was false. Perhaps after being "burned" like this a few times, we have learned not to repeat everything we hear until we are assured that the statement is, in fact, true.

In spiritual matters, we must have that same discerning ear and eye. This is because sometimes folks repeat things they ought not. Perhaps a trusted preacher, or an esteemed "Bible student" teaches us something that sounds right, but in fact is wrong. This is scary, for such false statements will jeopardize our souls. Look to the statements below and see whether or not we have heard folks speak statements which sound right but are, in fact, wrong.

"We Do Many Things For Which We Have No Authority."

I have heard brethren say this on many occasions. When one stands before a group, or before a single person, and demands that they follow the Bible pattern, respecting the authority of the Lord (Col. 3:17), and demanding all things we do be based upon New Testament command, example, or necessary implication, someone invariably will say, "But, we do many things for which we have no authority." If this is true, friend, you need to repent!

Such a statement may sound good, or may seem to justify certain actions; but we need to realize such a statement opens a door to sin and error. Why does a statement like that carry any weight with people? I suggest it is because we have people who do not recognize that there is such a thing as generic (general) authority and specific authority.

God does not have to spell everything out specifically (nor has He) in order for something to be authorized. For instance, consider our use of songbooks, or the use of blackboards/projectors for sermons. How is it that such things are authorized of God? Can we find a specific word or phrase which refers to "songbooks" or "blackboards" in the Bible? No, but what we find is the authority for singing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19), as well as spreading the word (Mk. 16:15; II Tim. 4:2). In fulfilling the Lord's will for singing and teaching, songbooks and blackboards etc., aid us in fulfilling the Lord's command.

A similar line of reasoning can be used in reference to Noah. So far as we know, all God told Noah to do was to "make thee and ark of gopher

wood" (Gen. 6:14). How was he to make this? Could he use saws, hammers, measuring sticks, etc.? God never specifically mentioned such tools, did He? Yet, we understand that based upon authority inherent in the command, Noah could use the tools and means necessary for fulfilling the Lord's will.

Learning the difference between generic and specific authority demands systematic and careful study of the Scriptures, that is true. Yet, let us never say that we do many things without authority from Heaven. In making such a claim, we are admitting (bragging?) that we are in sin. Paul said, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). This is a command we must obey!

"Sunday Is The Christian Sabbath."

Have we heard people promote and press the point that says that Sunday is the "Christian Sabbath?" It may sound pious, but it is as wrong as it can be. While "Sabbath" is a term used in the Bible, it always refers to the seventh day of the week, and not the first! On our calendars, the seventh day of the week is Saturday, and the first day of the week is Sunday. When we study the Bible, we never read of the first day of the week called the "Sabbath," nor were the requirements of the Sabbath placed upon the first day of the week (i.e., no work, etc.).

Let us "speak as the oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11), and refer to the first day of the week in Bible terms. With a change of covenants (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-13) came a change of the law (Heb. 7:12), and even a change in the day God expected men to worship Him. The priesthood has changed (Heb. 7:12), the veil has been taken away (II Cor. 3:16), man's worship to God is not what was required under the Old Testament (Acts 2:42, 20:7; I Cor.

16:1-2), and men are not born into God's family the same way as in Old Testament days (Jn. 3:3, 5; Heb. 8:10-11; I Pet. 3:21). Why then would we want to call Sunday a "Christian Sabbath?" It makes no sense.

"Accept Jesus In Prayer As Your Personal Savior."

This phrase is often stated throughout our population. It sounds good, and seems to tug at the "heartstrings" of many; but it is wrong! In studying the Lord's plan for salvation, one will never find a single case where someone was told to pray to God in order to be saved and belong to the Lord.

Don't you imagine the apostles came across sick or invalid people just like we have today? Yet, even among the sick, no one was ever told simply to "accept" Jesus, or pray a prayer. They were all told the same thing, and that is that if one is to be saved, he must believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of his sin, confess Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized for the remission of sins (Jn. 8:24; Lk. 13:3; Matt. 10:32; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:36-38, 16:30-34, 22:16).

Jesus Himself taught that it is not enough to merely say the words "Lord" or "Jesus." It is not enough to give verbal assent. One must be obedient to the Lord's will. Jesus told the people gathered on the mountainside, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). Telling a lost soul to pray a prayer in order to be saved will do nothing but leave a lost soul lost.

"Trust In The Man Rather Than A Plan"

To begin, I find this a very flip-pant, and irreverent phrase, for Jesus is much more than a mere man, as the sentence suggests. He

was not a mere man on earth, but "God with us" (Matt. 1:23) and deserves the respect and reverence of God. While upon this earth, He was God-in-the-flesh.

But, how many times have we heard the phrase above? In more recent times, it has been modified to say people should trust in a "Savior rather than a system." Either way one says it, they are stating something that is patently false! In fact, when we read and study the New Testament, we find that we cannot separate the author from His plan! If you do not believe this, consider the following passages:

1) John 12:48 - "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

2) Mark 8:38 - "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (Also Lk. 9:26)

3) John 15:7 - "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

4) Acts 8:5 - Philip went to Samaria and "preached Christ unto them." In so doing he converted men and women, including Simon (v. 12-13). When the people at Jerusalem "heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Pe-

ter and John" (Acts 8:14).

5) While He was upon the earth, Jesus told the people that **His words** were "spirit" and "life" (Jn. 6:63). In this same context, Peter declared, "thou hast the words of eternal life" (Jn. 6:68).

We could give many more examples, but these ought to make it clear that one cannot exclude Christ from His plan! To say one wants one without the other is to say something completely foreign to the Scriptures.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, there are many other like phrases which sound good on the surface, but, in fact, are false! Let us have discerning minds, and a will to do the Lord's will so that we will not be fooled by Satan. Yes, it is Satan who is the author of such things. Satan knows how to trick folks into forsaking the Lord and sinning. He has been doing that since the beginning (Gen. 3:1-6). His tactics of using "smooth" words, and phrases which often sound good, are very effective, and have led many people astray. His subtle way of not attracting attention to himself, but stating things in such a way as to sound close, or near the truth, has been the downfall of many who listened to him rather than God.

These words often produce their desired effect, and many have forsaken the Lord and His ways for sinful behavior after hearing the Devil's words. Let us not fall for his lies, but be sober and vigilant!

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Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs

Phone: (270) 683-5386

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"Thus saith the LORD, 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)