**Thinking You Are Offering God Service**

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Jesus warned the eleven: “I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me” (Jn. 16:1-3). This is an eye-opening statement to me. Jesus told His apostles that there were some people who were quite zealous and adamant about their beliefs, yet they were wrong! Jesus warned of folks killing the apostles, and in so doing, thinking they were serving God! How wrong can people get?

Execution for preaching Christ was not limited to the apostles. In his younger days, Saul of Tarsus consented to the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1). In later years, he said, “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth…. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities” (Acts 26:9-11). How could someone brought up at the feet of Gamaliel and “educated … according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers”; a man “zealous for God” (Acts 22:3), do these things? I think a key point in Paul’s case was his admission in Acts 26:9. Somewhere in his life he went off-track, and began acting selfishly rather than selflessly following the pure will of God!

How do I know this is what happened? It is because if he had followed the will of God, he would have accepted Christ rather than rejected Him! Jesus said, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad” (Jn. 8:56)! Moses wrote about Christ also (Jn. 5:46)! Therefore, if he (or any of the Jews who had rejected Christ and Christians in the first century) was following the pure will of God, he would have listened to the words of Abraham and Moses, and would have accepted Christ. Those who accepted the truth from the inspired words of Abraham, Moses, and other prophets followed Christ! Yet, because folks like Saul and others were following the whims and wishes of men, they were taught to kill Christ and Christians, and in so doing, they would “offer God service.” How tragic!

What can we learn from this? We can learn that just because I think something is “good” or “holy” or “righteous” does not make it so. The inspired word of God equips us for “**every** good work” (II Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, if what I am doing does not have authority from the Scriptures, it is not a good work! It is time we examined our lives (II Cor. 13:5) and made sure what we are doing is what has been authorized by God in His Scriptures. If we find we are following the will of man instead of God, then we need to repent, or be guilty of the same thing those Jews were guilty of in the first century. Specifically, doing something sinful, and saying it is “offering service to God.”

Woe to people who exchange their “think-so’s” for God’s word and then claim they are following the Lord (Isa. 5:20)! If we are guilty of this, beware, for we fool ourselves into thinking we are “doing God service” when in actuality, we are harming the Lord’s cause. We end up working for Satan by default, and destroying the very thing we claim to be building. *“Test everything, hold fast what is good”* (I Thess. 5:21). Follow God’s will only, and forsake man’s will. Let us not be guilty of sinning while claiming we are “doing God service”!

*-- You are invited to visit with the Caneyville church of Christ. Times of services: Sun.: 10:00 am, 10:45 am, 5:00 pm; Wed.: 7:00 pm. Website: http://caneyvillechurchofchrist.com Tune in to our radio program on 99.9 FM at 1:00 pm and 1570 AM at 8:30 am, Mon-Fri. Questions? Call: (270) 589-4167*