

Authority in Religion

Introduction:

1. **Standards and authorities are necessary in all walks of life.**
 - A. **Laws of the land (stop signs, speed limits).**
 - B. **Standards of weights and measures (construction).**
 - 1) **even in this some get it all mixed up “not how long, how high!”**
 - C. **Standards of time (service, work, school).**
2. **We all understand the need of such and realize that confusion would reign without them.**
 - A. **All expect others to know – why? To be unified!**
3. **We have a standard of authority in religion also.**
 - A. **But what is used as the standard in the realm of religion today?**
4. **Let’s consider a few that men use and see if any one of these can be relied upon.**

Shall We Rely upon the Religion of Our Fathers?

1. **Many in the world today would answer “YES” to this question.**
 - A. **They follow the religion of their parents. And even then, many times their parents are divided.**
 - B. **Even in the church – many come because of their parents.**
2. **Paul learned that the religion of his fathers was wrong and gave it up.**

Gal 1:13-14 *For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

3. **Peter told those to whom he wrote that they had been redeemed from their former way of life.**

1 Pet 1:18 *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your **aimless conduct received by tradition** from your fathers,*

4. **Stephen told the Jews of Jerusalem that they were wrong in following in the footsteps of their fathers.**

Acts 7:51-52 *"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,*

5. **Christ declares that any that would love their parents more than Him are not worthy to follow Him.**

Matthew 10:34-37

- A. **What does this mean? I better do what I know is right!**

Shall We Rely on Our Conscience as a Safe Guide in Religion?

1. Solomon warned:

Prov 16:25 *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*

2. Many people today would simply say “let your conscience be your guide.”

A. One might as well throw out the Bible!

B. But your conscience is only as good as what it has been fed.

PAUL - Before the Sanhedrin council:

Acts 23:1 *Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."*

1) But what was it that Paul did in good conscience?

Gal 1:13 *For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.*

3. Paul was honest and sincere when he led the persecution against the Lord's church.

A. In his defense against Agrippa Paul said:

Acts 26:9-11

B. If Paul could follow his conscience and be wrong, so can we.

Shall We Follow the Decision of the Majority?

1. **If we did so, then we might be Catholics, Mormons, or Idolaters.**
2. **There are many that like to be on the popular side and join themselves to the largest denomination in town.**
3. **Following the majority could be wrong and sinful. The majority will be lost.**
Matthew 7:13-14
4. **The way of God has never been popular with the majority of the world.**

Acts 4:19-20 *But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."*

A. Paul said:

Rom 8:31 *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

B. To make that statement we must first be willing to obey God.

Shall We Submit to the Creeds of Men in Religion?

- 1. Millions have done so in times past and are doing so today.**
- 2. Jeremiah warns that no man, no group of men, is wise enough to devise a plan of salvation.**

Jer 10:23 O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.

- 3. When one follows the doctrines and creeds of men, their religion is in vain.**

*Matt 15:8-9 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, **teaching as doctrines** the commandments of men.'* "

A. Paul says:

1 Cor 2:5 that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

- 4. Only the gospel is God's power to save; human creeds are divisive, deadly, and destructive.**

*Rom 1:16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel** of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes....*

*Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach **any other gospel** to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*

A. Only the gospel is God's power to save!

Shall We Accept Only the Bible as Our Authority in Religion?

1. The Bible is divine, written by God. No other book can claim this.

2 Pet 1:21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

2. Every good work of man that is pleasing to God is furnished by the Bible.

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

3. The Bible is our “road map” to heaven!

Acts 20:32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

4. The Bible is **the standard that will be used at the judgment!**

*John 12:48 "He who rejects Me, and **does not receive My words**, has that which judges him-- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*

