

“If It Ain’t Broke, Don’t Fix It”

Introduction

1. Throughout the Bible there are numerous accounts where men chose to do things their own way rather than God’s way, at times believing that they were improving upon God’s pattern.
2. But over and over again God shows us the folly of trying to “fix” His word.
3. He has thoroughly proven that there is no better way than His way and that if we want salvation in Him we must respect that. One passage in which God makes this point is Isa. 55:7-9.
4. Sadly, however, in spite of all that the Bible says concerning this, there are many today who still try to “fix” God’s pattern.
5. But if we are to truly benefit from the wisdom and power of His word we must learn not to follow that path. We must learn from the scriptures to trust in God and to obey His commandments.

Discussion

I. The Pharisees and the “Traditions of the Fathers.”

A. “...Teaching as Doctrines the Commandments of Men” (Matt. 15:9).

1. This is a passage that is often used against the denominations and others who do not worship God according to truth.
2. It applied to Israel in the days of Isaiah, Jesus applied it to the scribes and Pharisees in His day, and it applies to men who try to add to God’s pattern today.

B. In order to better understand exactly how Jesus was using this passage, let us look at a bit of Jewish History.

1. In about B.C. 605 Israel had become so full of idolatry and immorality that God sent them into captivity for seventy years. Read Ezek. 36:16-20.
2. It was about 120 years before this that Isaiah made his prophecy concerning their vain worship (Isa. 29:13).
3. God prophesied through Ezekiel that those who came out of the captivity would have learned the danger of idolatry so thoroughly that never again would an idol be found among God’s people (Ezek. 36:24-25).
4. Therefore God purified His people. Their hearts were turned to Him and never again were idols found among them.
5. After the days of Malachi, about 400 years before Christ, God would cease to send prophets to Israel until John the Baptist.
6. We learn from secular historians that during this 400 year period the people had to struggle greatly in order to keep the pattern of true worship that they had finally come to value.
7. But during that time something started to develop among the people:
 - a. Some of the Jews began to interpret the law differently than others. They became so zealous for the law and for their philosophies that they began to divide into sects.
 - b. Like our democrats and republicans today, those sects were distinguished by their different interpretations of the law.
 - c. Those of us who have studied the New Testament will recognize the names of two of these sects which are the Pharisees and the Sadducees.
8. These sects, especially the Pharisees, wanted to take extra care to be sure that they did not fall into the same immorality that Israel practiced before the captivity.
 - a. Therefore they began to create stringent regulations that not only prevented one from breaking a commandment, but kept one from even coming close to breaking a commandment.

- b. These rules eventually became traditions and with time began to be revered by those who kept them.
 - c. Eventually they became known as “the traditions of the elders” which we read about in the gospels (Mark 7:1-5).
- C. Let us consider where their traditions led them.
- 1. To begin with their attitude was good and their zeal caused them to be careful to keep God’s commandments.
 - 2. But with time they wanted to do more. In their desire to fulfill God’s law they began to add things to His law and to their worship believing that it made them more righteous.
 - 3. With time and with each tradition they added onto God’s law eventually their traditions began to take preeminence over the commands of God.
 - 4. What *they thought was a good thing* actually led them farther and farther away from God.
 - 5. Therefore, by the time Jesus entered the scene, even though there were no longer any idols among the people, they had become so busy following their traditions that their hearts had turned away from God.
 - 6. It was for this reason that Jesus rebuked them in Matt. 15:3-6.
 - 7. This is the passage that leads us to the quotation we read earlier in Matt. 15:7-9
 - 8. Here Jesus goes on to quote Isaiah showing them that their worship had become vain (or worthless) because they taught their human traditions as if they were doctrines from God.
- D. Paul wrote of this character in Romans 10:1-3.
- 1. We learn from the Pharisees the danger of adding things to God’s pattern.
 - 2. But we should note that the Pharisees were not the only ones to do this.

II. Those Who Forsook God’s Pattern.

- A. In the days of Samuel the prophet Israel said, “*Make us a king like the other nations*” (1 Sam. 8:5).
- 1. From Moses until the days of Samuel God led Israel and caused them to be victorious in battle. He acted as their King.
 - 2. But after a while the people did not want to do things God’s way any more. Instead they wanted to be “*like the other nations.*”
 - 3. To most men it would seem like a good thing to have a king sitting on the throne. Israel thought so too.
 - 4. But it was not according to God’s pattern.
 - a. Israel had become so blinded by their own desires, wanting to do things that they thought were good, that they failed to see that the Almighty God was ruling over them.
 - b. When they asked for a king they were not rejecting Samuel as their leader, they were rejecting God. “*...they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them*” (1 Sam. 8:7)
 - c. Thus, in his rebuke, Samuel showed them that they were giving up the strongest leader they could have had because they thought their way was better (1 Sam. 12:6-12).
 - 5. As we read through the Old Testament we find that even though they thought they were doing something good, by going outside of God’s pattern they were in fact making themselves weaker. What was good according to the wisdom of men was not good according to God.
- B. In Gen. 4:3-5 we read of how Cain forsook God’s pattern when he offered a sacrifice and how he was rejected.
- C. Abraham and Sarah forsook God’s pattern when they decided to take matters into their own hands by using Hagar in order to bare Abraham a son (Gen. 16:1-4; 17:17-19) rather than trusting in the promises of God to give Sarah a son.

- D. David and the rest of the people forsook God's pattern when he had the ark of the covenant placed on a cart and pulled by oxen rather than having the Levites carry it according to the Law of Moses (2 Sam. 6:3-8; 1 Chron 15:2). What is the lesson we must learn from all of these examples?

III. What Seems Good to Us Is Not Always Good in the Sight of God.

- A. God has given us His revelation—His law which will judge us in the last day (John 12:48)—and that revelation is our pattern.
1. But when we go outside of that pattern, whether or not we think we are doing something good, we forsake God's law and we show a lack of faith in His wisdom.
 2. When we go outside of God's pattern just because we think something is good we are telling God that we think our way is better than His.
 3. We must allow this lesson to be firmly planted in our hearts if we are to abide in God:
 - a. Just because something seems good in our own opinion that does not mean God thinks it is good.
 - b. How can we know whether or not God thinks it is good?
 - c. God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). If it is not found in God's pattern—the Holy Scriptures—then that alone tells us that He does not think it is good.
 - d. It is by His wisdom that we are saved and it must be by His wisdom that we walk.
- B. God has shown us what is good.
1. Israel had departed from God's ways.
 2. In response the question of "What should we do?" Micah responded in Micah 6:8, "*He has shown you oh man what is good.*"
 3. God has shown us what is good through His revelation. We have no need to add to it or to take away from it.
 4. Will we walk humbly with our God? Will we allow ourselves to abide in His law?

Conclusion

1. The church is made up of people who are striving to serve Christ.
2. For this reason, let us take this lesson to heart, let us learn from the examples of the Pharisees and the others that there is nothing better than to do things God's way and to abide in His pattern in all that we do.
3. God's pattern is perfect. Therefore, as we strive to do the Lord's work, let us remember that *if it ain't broke, we must not try to fix it.*

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