

DOES EVERY PERSON HAVE A RIGHT TO THEIR OWN BELIEFS?

INTRODUCTION

- A. A prevalent idea, and the "politically correct" view in our world today.
- B. Strictly "legally" speaking, we do have a freedom and a right to believe what we choose.
 - 1. Freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution & Bill of Rights.
 - 2. Ed Harrell quote "Most members of the Churches of Christ share the American heritage of freedom of religious expression and are fully committed to religious toleration. But I have my zealot side. Any man who believes that he can find literal truth in the Scriptures must also believe that those who do not find the same truth are wrong. What follows is that such people are sinful. The next logical conclusion is that they will go to hell. The most onerous charge leveled against those who are members of the Churches of Christ is that they are bigots. It is frequently assumed that they believe that all who do not accept the truths which they find in the Bible will be lost. All members of the Churches of Christ do not have such an attitude, but I do. This does not imply that I would restrict anyone's right to believe as he pleases; I hold no brief for persecution. The essence of the philosophy of toleration is a willingness to defend a man's right to free expression even when one has deep convictions to the contrary."

David Edwin Harrell "*Disciples and The Church Universal*"
Nashville: The Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1967, p. 35.

- C. Speaking "scripturally," our "rights" are seen in a different light!
 - 1. Josh 24:15.
 - 2. Jhn 14:15, 23; 15:10; Heb 5:8,9; 1Jhn 5:2-3; Rev 14:12-13.
- D. Those today who contend that we have the right to believe whatever we choose often have an "agenda."
 - 1. Effort to justify their own rejection of the N.T. teachings of Christ.
 - 2. Have already decided not to comply with His terms of pardon, wear His name, belong to His church, etc.

DISCUSSION:

I. Examples Of People In The Bible Who Did Not Have A Right To Their Own Belief:

- A. Cain Gen 4:3-5
 - 1. Abel offered "by faith" Heb 11:4
 - 2. Implies they were told how to offer.
 - 3. Cain rejected God's instructions, and was thus rejected by God.
 - 4. See 1Jhn 3:11-12.
- B. Nadab & Abihu Lev 10:1-2
 - 1. Offered "strange fire."
 - 2. They were commanded to offer "fire," but they offered the wrong kind!
 - 3. Illustration: God has specified the kind of music that He wants to be a part of the worship of the church.

- C. Naaman 2Kings 5:1-14
 - 1. Expected something spectacular angry at the simplicity of Elisha's instructions.
 - 2. Preferred his own river(s).
 - 3. Had to obey God's commands or remain a leper.
 - 4. Many today react to God's commands in the same way as Namaan -- anger, frustration, etc.
 - 5. Example ... be baptized!
 - 6. Sinner can no more be saved without baptism than Namaan could have been cleansed without dipping 7 times in the Jordan.

II. "Doesn't God Only Care About A Person's Attitude ... Honesty & Sincerity?"

- A. In material world is a thing always right or safe just because we honestly and sincerely believe it is?
 - 1. Financial world ... many people honestly & sincerely believe their investments are safe.
 - 2. Battles lost because Generals honestly & sincerely believed they had a good plan of attack or defense.
 - 3. Ship builders and owners honestly & sincerely believed the Titanic to be unsinkable.
 - 4. As reasonable to say "it doesn't matter what you eat or drink as long as you are honest & sincere."
 - a. What about poison?
 - b. Foods that are not good for you?
- B. Even in religion, possible to be honestly & sincerely mistaken Prov 14:12
 - 1. Young prophet 1Kings 13:1-24
 - 2. See also 2Thess 2:11-12.

III. If It Is Right To Believe Any Doctrine As Long As You Are Honest & Sincere, Then:

- A. Faith in Christ is non-essential!
 - 1. Honest Jews & Muslims.
 - 2. Neither believe in Christ Jhn 8:24
- B. You can "abide" in any doctrine! 2Jhn 9
- C. There is no basis for the "unity of the Spirit" of Eph 4 (v.3)
- D. The "will of God" is eliminated replaced by the will of man.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Christ, who has "all power," has the right to dictate terms of our belief! (See point I. C. above about Naaman).
- B. "Hearing" without obeying/doing, or substituting our own "wants" for the commands of God, will cause us to be rejected by God Matt 7:21ff

taken from a Hobbs tract, with some slight adjustments.
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