

The danger of
having another
opinion apart from
what God has
written in the
context of His word
is it will cause His
disciples to stumble
on the narrow path
as they walk with
Him.

Compiled by
Robert C May
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cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

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A Difference of opinion

‘For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS”’ (1 Cor 3:19) ‘There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.’ (Prov 14:12) ‘Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.’

1 Cor1:25

As we walk on earth and we are confronted with a situation we are unable to understand or manage by ourselves concerning a legal matter or a health issue we go and see a lawyer or a doctor. If we are not happy with their advice we can always go and get a second opinion.

But God is not like a doctor or lawyer that we can dismiss as not capable to give us the right way to precede. God is the way, the truth and the life. He is exalted above the heaven and the earth which He created with the breath of His mount. He is the beginning and the end of all things. There is nothing that is not in His sight or under His power. If we decide we want a second opinion, whether our won or someone else’s, we have dethroned

God. He is then no longer our God; we have in fact cast Him down from His heavenly throne and placed ourselves or someone else upon His throne.

If we don't like what God has written in His Bible we have decided we know better. If we are unwilling to obey what He says, we have taken His place and we have exalted ourselves over Him. We are therefore condemned to receive His judgement and be cast into the lake of eternal fire.

Man is not like God

All man has which he can claim as his own in his natural condition is his human reasoning. But unknown to him not all of this reasoning is exclusively his because he is influenced from outside of himself to draw his conclusions, be it either for good or for bad. And in his own elevated reasoning he somehow equates his ability to reason to be somehow equal with the reasoning of God.

This is because one of the great deceptions of Satan in the world, is that he has convinced men they are entitled to their own opinion and don't have to accept what God has said. However He

doesn't explain that having this opinion as a principle of life, will result in the holder being excluded from the presence of God now, and on the day of judgement. Satan encourages everyone to have their rights acknowledged, and to insist on their personal opinion.

It is true that God has given man a free will, but this should mean he will chose to be faithful to God in the exercise of that will. However, as a result of Satan's influence the world at large is adamant that everyone is entitled to their own opinion regardless of what God has said.

The hand behind the puppet strings influencing man's independent thinking belongs to Satan and his nature is deceitfully malicious. He is constantly opposing God, God's people, and His truth. (Job 1:7 John 8:44, 2 Cor 11:3) Satan is alert and proficient in the art of tempting mankind, and he delights in wilful deception. (Rev 12:9) His dishonest nature stands in bold contrast to the truth for which Christ stands. John 14:6

Satan began this lie of independence being a good thing in the Garden of Eden. (Gen 3:4-5) As the great deceiver of mankind, Satan is an expert at

falsifying truth. (2 Cor 11:13-15) Satan's intent is to provoke error so that men cannot gain the fullness of the truth of God.

As part of his opposition to Christ as Lord and Saviour, Satan delights in people having an adherence to a religious opinion contrary to the true church teaching outlined in the Bible. He encourages all God's people in deviating from the truth and practice of Christianity as taught by Jesus. So the Lord prayed, "*I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.*"

John 17:15

Satan knows well enough that the Church is weakened by people accepting opinions or teachings at variance with what Jesus taught. That's why Jesus said "*If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.*"

John 8:31-32

The quickest way to develop another opinion is to take what the Lord has written out of the context in which He wrote it so that it no longer means what He intended but become the means of causing His disciples to stumble.

How can we recognise false teaching?

In 2 Peter 2:1 Peter writes, “*There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.*” From this verse, we see that false teaching leading to heresy is anything that denies the teaching of Jesus.

In 1 Cor 11:19, Paul takes the church to task for accepting false teaching that led to factions in the body. We see that 2 Pet 2 and 1 Cor 11 both touch on aspects of what amounts to heresy in the church which deny the teaching God has given, and divide the body He has created. Both of these issues are dangerous and destructive actions that are soundly rebuked by Scripture.

1 John 4:1-6; 1 Tim 1:3-6; 2 Tim 1:13-14

Using a little wisdom in our deliberation, we will understand that not every disagreement in the church is the result of heretical false teaching. Having a different opinion on the minor points of scripture is not necessarily wrong, but when the opinion is divisive or maintained in defiance of clear biblical teaching, it becomes heretical. As

long a discussion between contrasting viewpoints does not lead to division in the body of Christ it can be helpful in coming to the truth as written.

However, the deity of Christ, salvation through faith, and the need for obedient repentance are not negotiable. But some secondary issues in God's Word leave room for differences of opinion. Some common disagreements relating to end-times prophecy, gifts of the Spirit, methods of baptism, and church organisation are not to be taken as heretical. While there is only one accurate interpretation of everything in the Bible, we as human beings often lack the personal ability to discern that one interpretation can be faulty, and it may be ours.

At the same time, while having another opinion may be a serious denial of the need for faith and the divinity of Christ, it may also be as simple as denying the need to die to self in order to take up our cross daily if we are to follow Jesus. It may also deny the need to enter by the narrow gate as we separate ourselves from the world. This independent opinion may also reject the need to be a servant of all the brethren.

In all these things, this other opinion will bypass the need for absolute obedience to all that Jesus taught; distorting the gospel by saying, “All we need to do is believe He died for us so we can go to heaven.”

Instead of calling us to reject the world and the things of the world as covetous, and to be content with what we have, (Phil 4:11-13) having another opinion may instead say we can be saved and still have it all. Instead of us doing the will of God, it may suggest God will do whatever we ask because He has given us the keys of heaven. Instead of the need to die with Christ in order to live, we can live prosperously in the world before we die.

As a consequence these opinions don't see that the Kingdom come on earth is God's righteousness and truth made alive in us as we surrender our life into His hands. We need to remember His kingdom come is not a physical kingdom bought down to earth where there is no lack or illness.

Rom 14:17

The only way a man can overcome the problem of these conclusions which come from the exercise of pride, is to lay it aside in deference to God. But

laying aside that which he has given birth to a man in his mind, for him is the same as arranging his death, for his reasoning is all he has and understands. To lay his opinion aside is to accept his death to any independent opinions, reasoning or ideas. However, this is exactly what is needed if man is to gain a life and a peace he doesn't have and therefore doesn't know. This act of laying aside his human reasoning will open him up to the knowledge of God.

It is the nature of natural man to insist on relying on his own reasoning to work things out because he lives as if God doesn't exist. Natural man doesn't realise the self at the centre of this reasoning is the problem in the first place, for the creature cannot usurp the Creator. Man needs to be convicted of his own sinfulness in denying God his humble allegiance, for in this failure of obedience he falls far short of the glory of God in claiming for himself that which belongs to God alone.

Man must take an honest look at himself and see that life based on his own ideas shows his reasoning does not give him all the peace and love

only God can give. Man must see that he is bound to his self-interest, and his self-interests are not those which are in accord with the revealed will of God who loves everyone unconditionally. It is only when he can see his failings and determines to lay his own point of view aside that he can be free from the tyranny of his own mind to begin to understand the mind of God.

Man's reasoning has bad consequences

One consequence of man choosing to go his own way is the lack of love and care for all the people of the world. This lack of love has meant that many people have suffered and still suffer servitude and a lack of personal freedom to live in peace. This self-centred reasoning has also meant that many have been denied the voice of justice; many are unable to protest their situation so that injustice may be addressed. God works for our dignity, and man, more often than not, denies others the dignity God has given.

One aspect of this reasoning self is that for many long years, women and the uneducated were said to have no valid opinion of their own, as they were deemed to be under the shadow of their husbands

or because they had a lack of education and understanding.

The real cause of a lack of justice and equity is the fallen nature of man and his prideful reasoning, and this state of humanity means that whatever gains are made, the base cause for man's problems are not addressed because man does not address his rebellion against a holy God. Man's thought process is impaired because he lives in the darkness of self-interest rather than having the light only God gives as we abide in Him. The thoughts of God alone carry the reward of freedom in Christ.

Therefore improvements in gender equality and education does not mean that people today actually think through the issues pertaining to the subject matter under consideration in a way that ensures all the pros and cons of each point of view are considered according to the will of God. For it seems that the right to an opinion is more important than gaining the knowledge and the integrity to enable a well thought through opinion to be established in the first place.

This is apparent when many are questioned about the reasons for coming to the conclusion they have claimed, to find they often have no ethical answer to put forward for their decision, and resist further investigation on the basis that it is all too confusing.

Sometimes men are seduced by the scope of their own intellect, never realising for a moment that since they have been created by God they cannot pre-empt or equal the mind of their Creator. For it has been declared by God that men do what is right in their own eyes, for they are not interested in doing what is right in the eyes of God. *“Every man's way is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.”*

So the real issue in the world for men or woman is their right to an opinion, whether they have been developed logically and ethically, or whether they have just been accepted according to their feeling and what they want at the time. Their real problem is the declaration of the right of independence.

The declaration of the right to have an opinion on any subject is taken to be a valid position in the

world where God is not considered in the lives of man so that we should consider His ways.

When we regard man and his relative position before God we are faced with an eternal struggle for man's independence from God; and this independence by its very nature separates man from God and the wisdom and light He alone gives, so man in all his pride claims the authority of God for himself.

God has not left us without knowledge

While God has given everyone a free will, this freedom of choice needs to be used wisely, and this means applying the knowledge and wisdom God has revealed to us in His creation, through worldly events, through His recorded word, and through men who God has sent to speak His messages of life to the world.

The only reason people are going to spend an eternity in hell is that they insist on having a personal opinion which is contrary to God's.

When these same good people pray "His will be done in heaven and on earth" they forget that for God's will to be done they need to obey Him and

give their will to honour His alone. Adam and Eve decided on a different opinion to God's, and we, as their human children continue that same practice every day when we have our opinion. The only possibility for freedom is a new birth initiated by God which requires the death of the old life of self-reasoning.

Having a different opinion, or insisting on our own opinion, is in fact rebelling against God and His work of saving us from sin and death. Every sinful act on earth has come upon us with great suffering because people have insisted on living according to their personal opinion. Everyone who has a different opinion or a different idea about how things should be and how problems should be resolved does so according to self-interest.

Some of these ideas may have had a positive result in some ways but many have brought death and destruction on the masses. Where good has resulted it is only because some of God's goodness has filtered down and entered the mind of men, and when evil has resulted it is because Satan has had his way through deception and lies to entice men to develop their own reasoning.

Some people have opinions that are more extreme than others, but every idea of man that does not surrender itself to God is sinful, even if it appears to be good at the time, consequently it has its origin in the devils darkness. And this is still true when men have good thoughts and claim those thoughts as coming from their own initiative.

Godly obedience can only begin when we die to our own opinion and live for Him and His determinations. Accepting His opinion is to acknowledge our sinfulness and seek His kingdom to reign in us. It is the humble acceptance of His opinion that enables us to walk in His light which makes us holy as He is holy. It is His holiness in us that enables us to walk with Him.

God is light, if we agree with Him and obey Him we will walk in the light, to do otherwise is to walk in the darkness and struggle all the days of our lives. We must therefore listen only to God. Eve listened to Satan and found a different opinion to God. Adam listened to Eve, and in accepting Eve's opinion he disobeyed God and the whole of humanity fell into sin. We are children of our father Adam unless we die to this madness and

accept God's mercy and grace of a new life in the Light.

To want a different opinion to God is to disbelieve God. It is showing a lack of faith and trust in Him to do what He said He would do. It is to rebel against His holy word and install our own ideas in place of His. Declaring our independent opinion to be valid is the same as putting ourselves on His throne in an act of utter denial of His right to rule. This declaration of our right to oppose God is the end of us if we aspire to any life in the Spirit with God. Our declaration of rights results in eternal death, not eternal life. For without faith we cannot please God. To have a different opinion is to make the big mistake of deciding that our reasoning as men is equal to or exceeds that of God; how ridiculous this notion is, but how common is this idea amongst men.

God's solution is Jesus Christ

'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came

into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.’ John 1:1-4

Jesus came to save us from sin and death. When He came He said He had no other opinion apart from God’s. He said He didn’t speak on His own initiative, but only said what He heard from the Father. This is just another way in which Jesus is our example of how to live with God.

Our personal opinions will distance us from God and His grace and exclude us from His Kingdom because there can only be one way in heaven, there can only be His one opinion. As a small child cannot think as his father, neither can we think as God unless we surrender to His will and allow the Holy Spirit to renew our minds.

God’s solution to man’s sinful self-opinion is that men need to die to that selfish idea in order to be born again through Christ into a new life in the light of God’s opinion. When we are born again we then need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds so that we discard everything which remains in us which is contrary to the mind of God. God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. Natural man is lost in darkness and in him

there is no good at all, because he opposes God in his thinking and therefore in his actions. For as you think, you are.

When Jesus came to earth to save us from our sin of rebellion and our different opinion, He died to any other opinion of how men could be saved, and willingly went to the cross so that we might be forgiven and live to God and cherish His opinion forever. Had He insisted on His right as part of the Trinity to have His own opinion, we would not be able to be saved from our own sinful opinions.

In order for us to receive the salvation Jesus brings we need to believe in Him and not in ourselves or our opinion of what is necessary to be set free from sin to live with God. Therefore believing is more than just agreeing to some ideas or a process. Effectual believing requires us to act on those things we see are needed, and this '*acting on*' what we believe is called faith.

Our death to our self-will allows us to be born again by the power of His Holy Spirit. Our obedience to God and all His opinions guarantees the Holy Spirit will fill us with the true knowledge of God's will and of His Son. The Holy Spirit can

then teach us and lead us into all truth because we have given up all our own human ideas so we can have no other opinion but His. To seek our own opinion is to grieve the Spirit and fall from grace.

Faith is our belief in action when we do all Jesus has commanded us. This action is not independent action or thought so that Jesus would say He never knew us; this faith in action is in accordance with Him and the knowledge of God He freely gives to those who love Him. This faith is in fellowship with Him, it is in relationship with Him, so we act in unity with Him working through us and in us in accordance with His will.

If we love Him we will obediently act on His commandments; that is, we will do what He asks us to do because we love Him. We will love Him more than ourselves and our own opinion. We will love Him more than our families or our work. We will love Him more than our hobbies and our sporting endeavours. We will love Him more than our beds and our creature comforts. We will love Him more than whatever else at any time may come before Him, because it would be as an idol to us because we give it a place before Him.

Faith is doing those things which are on the mind of God on any issue in which we are involved. To live by faith is to be renewed in the spirit of our minds so that our thoughts come around to being His thoughts. As we think so we are; therefore a life of faith means we align ourselves with God and who He is and what He thinks. Faith puts Him and His ways before anything else.

If God is love, then there is no place for us to act unlovingly. As God is light, there is no place for darkness in our thoughts or actions either. As God is merciful there is no place for us to be unmerciful. As God is selfless, there is no place for our selfishness. As God is just, there is no place for injustice.

If we are to act on what He has decided, we need to know what is on His mind. God makes sure we have all we need in this because He gives us His word in the Bible; and He gives us His Spirit to teach us and to lead us into all truth. Therefore if we want to know more about Jesus because we love Him, we will want to read what He has written for our benefit as those who are called to share in His life. If we don't know our Bibles we

will not know much of importance about Him and what's on His mind. If we love Him we will read His word, we will spend time with those who also love Him so we will have a shared experience of His life.

True knowledge of Jesus is given to those who obey Him so that the Holy Spirit can take what is written and plant it into the heart. True knowledge of God only comes from the Spirit to those who follow Jesus so that we may walk with Him and live according to His will. On the other hand Jesus said to them, "*You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.*" Luke 16:15

'Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.'

Phil 2:5-8

At the end of the Book of Revelation concerning Jesus Christ and His message to the Churches, we read this warning. *‘I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.’*

Rev 22:18-19

The principle here is that Jesus is Lord and His message is forever. Anyone who has another opinion will lose his place in the book of life. These same truths are equally applicable to the whole of the word of God, since God is the same yesterday and forever. So this should be a reminder to us that He is our God and we are His servants on earth to do His bidding and to live by His word if we are to live in peace and walk with God.

Therefore, we are to have no other opinion other than what God has revealed to us through His Son, and that which the Spirit of God instils in the heart of those who love Jesus our Lord. Abide in Me

“Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. “Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!”

Matt 18:3-7