

Going To Extremes...

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Introduction

Men often go to extremes in religion. The prophet Amos warned the nation of Israel of the approaching day of the Lord. It would be a day of dark judgment and destruction (Amos 5:18-20). The prophet's language suggests one calamity after another. The passage pictures one who flees from danger and falls into the arms of another. In fact, the R.B. Philips translation describes Israel as being "like a man running from a lion only to be clutched by a bear." One extreme often leads to another.

Amos 5:18-20 ... 18 Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord, For what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness and not light; 19 As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. 20 Will not the day of the Lord be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it? (NASB95)

Works Only... Faith Only

Men have often gone to extremes on the relationship between faith and works. Consider the example of Martin Luther. In rejecting the Catholic doctrine of salvation by works, he went to the opposite extreme and affirmed salvation by faith alone. Where is the truth on this issue? Quite obviously, we are saved by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:4-7). Works of human merit, the works of men, and works of the law can not save. Yet, man must respond to God's grace in faithful obedience (Matthew 7:21-23; Hebrews 5:8-9).

Ephesians 2:8-10 ... 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (NASB95)

Titus 3:4-7 ... 4 But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (NASB95)

Matthew 7:21-23 ... 21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in

Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ (NASB95)

Hebrews 5:8-9 ... 8 Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. 9 And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, (NASB95)

Baptism Unessential... Baptism Only

Men have often gone to extremes on the subject of baptism. The denominational world generally teaches that baptism is not essential to salvation. Their position is clearly wrong (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). However, some brethren leave the mistaken impression that baptism is all that is necessary. They are completely inactive in the Lord’s service, but think their salvation is assured because they were baptized. As an older preacher once said, “They believe in the 3-Ds: Drip, Dried and Done.” Christianity is a lifelong commitment that demands our all (2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Revelation 2:10).

Acts 22:16 ... 16 ‘Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.’ (NASB95)

1 Peter 3:21 ... 21 Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (NASB95)

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 ... 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6 and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. (NASB95)

Revelation 2:10 ... 10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (NASB95)

Division... Pseudo-Unity

Men have often gone to extremes regarding the problem of religious division. The saying, “Attend the church of your choice” implies that denominational division is beneficial because it offers men more options. Nevertheless, division is condemned and unity is commended in the Bible (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; John 17:20-21). Others follow the path of “unity in diversity.” However, this is not Bible unity. True unity can be accomplished only when we accept God’s Word as our standard of authority (1 Peter 4:11; Colossians 3:17).

1 Corinthians 1:10-13 ... 10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. 12 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (NASB95)

John 17:20-21 ... 20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. (NASB95)

1 Peter 4:11 ... 11 Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (NASB95)

Colossians 3:17 ... 17 Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (NASB95)

Poor Singing... Instrumental Music

Men have often going to extremes on the subject of singing. Singing is an important part of Christian worship (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16). However, singing is sometimes not as good as it could be or should be – slow, flat, off key, etc. However, such problems are no excuse for bringing in an instrument. Review the circumstances that lead to the introduction of the organ into the worship of the church in the mid-1800's. Instrumental music is not authorized, and we must respect the silence of the Scriptures (Deuteronomy 4:2; 2 John 1:9).

Ephesians 5:18-19 ... 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; (NASB95)

Colossians 3:16 ... 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (NASB95)

Deuteronomy 4:2 ... 2 "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. (NASB95)

2 John 9 ... 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. (NASB95)

Cold Formality... Irreverence

Men have often gone to extremes when it comes to worship. On one hand, worship can become dull and dead. On the other hand, worship is sometimes wildly emotional. We need to develop a proper attitude in worship. Awe and reverence (Habakkuk 2:20; Hebrews 12:28) must be coupled with joy and thanksgiving (Psalms 122:1; John 4:23-24).

Habakkuk 2:20 ... 20 "But the Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him." (NASB95)

Hebrews 12:28-29 ... 28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; 29 for our God is a consuming fire. (NASB95)

Psalms 122:1 ... 1 A Song of Ascents, of David. I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." (NASB95)

John 4:23-24 ... 23 "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. 24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (NASB95)

Conclusion

Let us stand fast upon the truth of God's word without turning to the right or to the left (Deuteronomy 5:31-33; Joshua 1:7-9). Avoiding strange doctrines that engender strife (1 Timothy 1:3-7), let us walk the straight and narrow pathway that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14).

Deuteronomy 5:31-33 ... 31 'But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess.' 32 "So you shall observe to do just as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. 33 "You shall walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess. (NASB95)

Joshua 1:7-9 ... 7 "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. 8 "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. 9 "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (NASB95)

1 Timothy 1:3-7 ... 3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, 4 nor to pay

attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. 5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. 6 For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, 7 wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions. (NASB95)

Matthew 7:13-14 ... 13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14 "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (NASB95)