

Does Everyone Have A Right To Their Own Belief?

Introduction. Whenever you talk to people about the gospel, inevitably you encounter people who feel that they have the “right” to believe what they want. Legally speaking, we have a right to believe any doctrine. Americans live in a society which provides religious freedom to its citizens and this allows us to worship God in any manner we please. Members of denominations emphasize that each should be allowed to worship God in the manner in which they please and believe that God will accept the worship of those in each denomination.

The fact that our civil government provides for the practice of religious differences should not be understood, however, to mean that God will accept every religious practice and belief. Satan is the author of the concept that God will accept every belief and practice. God has never revealed that He will accept every man’s worship, just so long as that man is good, honest and sincere (Isaiah 8:20). Scripturally speaking, we do not have a right to believe anything religiously except the truth revealed in the Bible (John 8:32).

One of the most important points in religion is to be submissive to God’s will. We strive to please God, not commend and satisfy ourselves. The vital question should be: “Is God pleased and satisfied with our life, belief and religious practice?” The only way we can know what pleases God and His Son is by what is revealed in the Bible (2 Corinthians 10:18).

I. ***Those Who Did Not Have The Right To Their Own Belief***

A. Cain (Genesis 4:3-5).

1. Abel offered his sacrifice by faith (Hebrews 11:4). Faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Therefore, God taught Abel what kind of sacrifice to offer. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). Therefore, Cain had received the same instructions as Abel.
2. Although God had taught them how to worship and what kind of sacrifice to offer, Cain did not follow God’s instructions. He worshipped by opinion, according to his own idea. Abel worshipped by faith as God had commanded and gave the firstlings of the flock and the fat portion. Therefore, God accepted Abel’s sacrifice and rejected Cain’s. Cain did not have a right to his own belief.

B. Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2).

1. Nadab and Abihu made the mistake of offering God a strange fire. The text explains that it was fire that God had not commanded.

2. These men lost their lives because they were presumptuous with God. He rejected their worship, thereby demonstrating that not every kind of worship pleases God.
- C. Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:25-33).
1. This king instituted a system of worship in Bethel which caused him to sin against God because his worship was not according to the revelation which God had given through Moses.
 2. He departed from God's pattern of worship by changing the place where sacrifice could be offered, using idols, using priests who were not descendants of Aaron and changing the feast days. God rejected the worship which he instituted, demonstrating that Jeroboam did not have a right to his own belief.
- D. Naaman (2 Kings 5:10-14).
1. Naaman wanted to follow his own idea instead of Elisha, but he could not and be healed of his leprosy. The instructions were simple. He thought that the prophet would do something spectacular.
 2. He wanted to select his own river in which to dip, but he did not have that right. He had to either obey God's command or else remain a leper. Naaman did not have a right to his own belief.
- E. Paul (Acts 26:9-10; 23:1; 22:16).
1. Several years after the church was established, Paul thought that he had the right to be a Pharisee, oppose Christ and fight the gospel.
 2. Paul did not have a right to his own belief. Even though his conscience approved what he did, it did not make it right. Paul had to learn the truth and obey.

II. ***Jesus Is The Only One Who Has The Right***

- A. He is the one who has all authority (Matthew 28:18). We must believe and obey Him in order to be saved (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9). In fact, those who will be saved are only those who obey the Lord. If every person has a right to his own belief, then the will of God is ruled out, and the terms of pardon that were laid down by Christ can be ignored. If this were possible, it would make man his own savior.
- B. In Mark 9:7, after the account of the Transfiguration, God spoke to Peter, James and John and told them to "hear Him." The man who does not obey the Lord will not be saved, regardless of how sincere he might be (Acts 3:22-23).
- C. The man who is not content to abide within that revelation has departed from God and is outside the grace of God. Should someone tell you "Every man has a right to his own belief," ask yourself, "Does this man have the power to enforce what he has told me?" Will he have the power to save my soul from damnation? If not, I suggest that you

should listen to Him who has the power to save your soul from damnation (Matthew 10:28).

III. ***Some Areas In Which We Have No Personal Right To Our Own Belief***

A. What we think of Jesus.

1. If a man wants to go to heaven, he does not have the choice to reject Jesus (John 8:24; Mark 16:16).
2. The man who rejects that Jesus was born of a virgin, performed miracles, shed His blood on the cross as the atonement for sins and was raised from the dead cannot be saved -- regardless of how good, honest and sincere he might be.

B. To choose to which church we should belong.

1. Jesus did not establish many different churches. He promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18 -- "my church" is singular, not plural). All the saved were added to it by the Lord (Acts 2:46-47). Paul said that there is only one body (Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). In the first century, Paul emphasized that all men were reconciled to God in one body (Ephesians 2:14-16).
2. I do not have the right to establish a church other than the one Christ established. I can either be a member of the Lord's church or not be saved. Those who would tell you that you have the right to choose the church you want reject the Bible which says that all men are reconciled to God in one body.
3. Denominations of men are "plants" which the Lord will root up (Matthew 15:13-14). If I choose to be a member of a church which Jesus did not build, I will be lost eternally. Adam had no choice of a wife (Genesis 2:21-23). He had to either accept Eve or do without. Scripturally speaking, man has no right to a church of his choice.

C. To choose what name we shall wear in religion.

1. Some imply that one can choose whether to wear the name Lutheran, Methodist, Catholic, Baptist or some other name. Jesus did not so teach. The Lord promised to give His children a new name (Isaiah 62:2). The new name which He gave to His children was "Christian" (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).
2. This is the name which God's children should wear. Paul rejected the idea that men could wear another name and still be saved (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). If I choose to wear someone's name other than Christ's, the Lord will choose not to save me.

D. To determine what standard of holiness to follow.

1. Some imply that one's moral standards are a matter of personal preference. Some Christians choose to be "homosexual" and others choose to be "straight." Some Christians choose to drink and some

- choose to be "alcoholics." Every man is entitled to his own belief, we are told. Not so!
2. The Lord revealed the standard of holiness which men should follow, condemning the works of the flesh and stating that those who were guilty of such sins could not enter the kingdom of heaven (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Christians cannot choose to go to heaven practicing ungodliness (immodest dress, dancing, etc.), being homosexual, being social drinkers, etc.
- E. To determine how to worship God.
1. God has given men a pattern for worship. He has revealed that men should worship Him through singing (Ephesians 5:18-19), prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:17), observing the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-26), giving (1 Corinthians 16:1-2) and preaching apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42). Some have the idea that we can change the worship to make it more appealing to the public.
 2. Jesus said that worship must be "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Worship that rests on the traditions of men is vain (Matthew 15:8-9). Worship designed by the will of men displeases God (Colossians 2:21-23). Man does not have the right to choose the kind of worship which pleases him.
- F. To determine how we will be saved.
1. God has revealed the conditions which men must meet to be saved by the blood of Christ. Man does not have the right to lay down the conditions on which God will wash away his sins. The steps are as follows:
 - a) All must hear the gospel (John 6:44-45; Ephesians 1:13).
 - b) All must believe the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Mark 16:16).
 - c) All must repent (Luke 13:5; Acts 17:30).
 - d) All must confess (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:8-10; Matthew 16:16).
 - e) All must be baptized (Acts 2:38, 41; Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12).
 2. The Lord made the decision of how men would be saved. All must obey the true gospel (Galatians 1:8; 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:13). Those who are "saved" in some other way are not saved at all!

Conclusion. No one has ever been forced to serve God. We have always had the power of choice. Adam and Eve had the power to obey or disobey, and man still has the same power of choice. However, in religion man must surrender his will to God's will. The man who teaches us that "every man has a right to his own belief" is looking only at this world and one's civil

rights. Man does not have the right to his own belief in matters that pertain to the Lord.

While we can agree that our civil government does provide every man the right to his own religious convictions and practices, God is not obligated to accept every man's religious beliefs and practices. God has always required man to worship and serve Him as He directed. God is the one to be pleased, not ourselves (2 Corinthians 5:9).