



But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. – Matthew 15:9

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Given the Scenario, What Would You Do?

Merry Christmas to you and my apologies for not writing in so long. I'll just say that it's been a difficult year. I hope your Christmas is the best one yet and that next year will be an improvement over this year, however I'm not holding my breath on that one. I'm hoping that we are now experiencing actions that are separating the proverbial sheep from the goats. God may be showing us what life with the deceiver in charge is like and our decision whom we will follow will be made publicly known by how we react to the turbulence that surrounds us. My hope and prayer is that He'll end this nightmare we live in but not until there is nobody left that will accept the truth about his character.

There is an old teaching in the church I no longer belong to. That church is a Sabbath-keeping organization, meaning they worship on Saturday rather than Sunday. One of their beliefs is that the mark of the beast is forced Sunday worship. If you quit worshiping on Saturday and begin worshiping on Sunday then you've received the mark of the beast.

Several weeks ago I found a text that disproved that. The text clearly states what the mark of the beast is and it isn't Sunday observance. Now I'm sure you're interested to know what I've found but that isn't what this blurb is about.

This particular church teaches that just before Jesus returns people who are worshiping on Saturday will be persecuted. Some people will run and hide themselves in caves where they can't be found in order to escape this persecution. Others will be placed in jail, many left to rot.

The pastor (or whomever) poses this scenario: Use your imagination and think what it will be like at the end of time. Suppose you've been captured and jailed

because of your Sabbath-keeping. You've been told repeatedly that you need to recant or there will be consequences.

What are you going to do? The church encourages that you stand your ground no matter what. If you choose to recant then that is a denial of Jesus and you will end up burning in hell. You must stand firm, no matter what.

Day after day you are told to recant. Each time you refuse. Each time the threats become stronger but still you must refuse. One day your jailer comes, opens your cell door, then escorts you outside where you can now see your young child tied to a stake. There is kindling and wood underneath your child. Again you're told to recant, and if you don't your child will be burnt to death.

What are you to do? The answer they give is that you need to call out to your child and tell him that the experience won't last long. Jesus won't allow him to feel any pain. He'll simply go to sleep and when he wakes up you'll be there for him and you can both go to heaven to be with Jesus. And then you stand there and watch as they torch your child.

Somehow, we're supposed to take great comfort in the outcome of this particular scenario. But how?

Recently I was reminded of this old scenario that is supposed to bring encouragement. As I heard it again it struck me just how selfish it is. Think about it. Are we to truly allow someone else to die when it is within our power to save them, and if we chose to let them die then we will live? Are we going to let someone else die so that we can live?

If we're that selfish and remain in that state then we will lose our lives anyway. Jesus told us to love each other and allowing someone who is innocent to die when we can rescue them is not an act of love. Especially if we act to save ourselves.

When Adam and Eve sinned they became infected with the disease of selfishness. They became self-focused. Their priority was to protect and save themselves. Adam blamed Eve, "It wasn't me, it was that woman you gave me," while Eve blamed God, "The serpent gave it to me and I ate it. Why did you make the serpent?"

So what should we do if we were to find ourselves in that scenario? Personally, I hope I would recant. It doesn't matter how old my child is, I would have to give up my chance at eternal life rather than to be an accessory to his murder. By

refusing to act to rescue my innocent and helpless child, I have made myself as guilty of his murder as the one who lit the torch. My action would have shown that I loved myself more than I loved my child.

God knows our hearts. He knows if our action to recant would be an act to save ourselves or to save our child. And He's big enough to be able to handle the problem. Ultimately, trust God with the outcome.

When I wrote this I was reminded of a situation a county clerk placed herself in when she refused to sign the papers that granted a marriage license to couples who were the same gender. She responded the way her church had programmed her and acted to save herself with total disregard to those she was harming. How did she harm? She did harm to those who were seeking a license as well as all the on-lookers by presenting a picture of a God that will zap you if you goof.

God does not act to prevent same-sex marriages. If he did he would be taking from us our freedom of choice and that is something he values so highly he allowed himself to be tortured and murdered by hanging on a cross rather than to rescue himself. And since God doesn't act to stop what we perceive as evil behavior in others, why should we act to try and stop them? When we do that we don't reform the other person, instead we incite rebellion.

God is not unsympathetic. He understands when we are placed in situations that are contrary to what we feel is right but are compelled to act despite our personal objections. He looks at our heart and sees our motives better than we do. What he wants is for us to forget about ourselves and show his love to others by acting in love to the very people that we have issues with.

May God bless you this coming year and may his return to collect his bride be upon us.

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