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Personal Beliefs

Charles Pogue

It is very common today to hear someone say, “I was taught to make my own choices based on my personal beliefs.” Not many statements could more expressly state the turmoil our culture is in than that one. There are some things we can make decisions on based on our abilities and preferences. What job or profession I should enter, would be an example. With secular decisions such as that one, the statement is both understood and expected.

The problem is when people say they make their decisions based on personal beliefs they include what they believe about God, Jesus Christ, churches, and other beliefs having to do with religion. Spiritual things are not to be decided based on one’s personal beliefs, but on what the Bible says. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). We will not be judged based on our personal beliefs but by the words of Christ and of His Holy Spirit inspired apostles.

The people of Israel were described in the days of the judges to have the exact same mindset people have today. “In those days *there was* no king in Israel, *but* every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6). The king to which this verse refers is not a human king. Rather, the children of Israel rejected God as their king, ignored His commandments, and did what

they did based on their personal beliefs. The history recorded in the book of Judges informs us their personal beliefs led them to worship idols, engage in all manner of sin, and ignore the law of God.

People are the same way today. The Scripture says one must be baptized for the remission of sins to be saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; etc.). Based on their own religious beliefs, people reject what the Bible says, and declare, “No, I believe I am saved by faith alone.” We are saved by the grace of God, we are saved by faith, but by neither one or even both of those alone. We are also saved by obedience. That truth could not be stated more certainly than it is by 1 John 2:4: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

The Scripture says, there is one body, which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4). That church is recognized by its holding to the pattern in all things as given by the New Testament (Luke 10:16; Heb. 8:4-6; Col. 3:17). People say, “No, I feel like one church is as good as another.” God does not honor what you or I feel. All things having to do with life and godliness are revealed to us in the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). While we are on the subject of the Scripture, Jesus nailed the Old Law to His cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15). Attempting to bind or authorize any religious act today from the Old Testament is to abandon the law we are under; the royal law of King Jesus

(Jam. 2:8-13). That is the law by which we will be judged, not the law of choices based on our personal beliefs!

There is only one way from earth to heaven; the narrow way (Mat. 7:13-14). How narrow is the narrow way? Just as narrow as the Scripture. In the same passage, Jesus said most are on the broad way that leads to destruction. How broad is the broad way? Just as broad as the personal feelings of all different persons are!

Make your decisions based on what secular work you are going to be involved in, what town you are going live in, and whether to buy a house or rent one on your personal beliefs. All of those you are free to decide based on that criteria. When it comes to your soul, though, your personal beliefs matter not. What matters is what the Bible says!

Deceased

Gospel Meeting with Gilbert Gough

Lessons available on the website.

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Does God's Word Teach Anything About Cremation of the Body After Death?

Guy N. Woods

Cremation is the final disposition of a human body by reducing it to ashes with fire. Passages sometimes cited to oppose the practice are Amos 2:1 and 6:10, but a correct exegesis indicates that it was not the method of disposal of the bodies under condemnation but, in the first, the callous desecration of the body of the king of Edom by Moab, and, in the second, the deplorable conditions during the siege of Samaria. The burden of disposing of the dead fell directly upon members of the family; when a near relative came to claim the body, some other person cried out but asked that the name of Jehovah—under whose judgment they suffered—not be mentioned. So wicked were they; the name of Jehovah was objectionable!

From these instances, no proper conclusion may be drawn regarding the propriety of the dis-

posal of human bodies by cremation. This practice is not unknown in the sacred writings. Its occurrence, however, is rare and exceptional. The men of Jabesh-Gilead burned the bodies of King Saul and his sons to keep them out of the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 31:12), and some offenses were punished by burning (Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14). These and similar cases, provide no guidance in the normal disposition of those from whom life is gone, nor do ancient customs of the burying of the dead in the earth, in some countries well-nigh universal, establish a precedent for us today. In other nations and lands, cremation is the prevailing practice.

Some have assumed that the doctrine of the resurrection of the body has served to restrict the act in Christian lands, but if so, it is not a valid objection on this ground, as we shall later see.

More likely, it was avoided because of its widespread practice in non-Christian religions. Such objections would be more philosophical than Scriptural; an act may, to some, be repugnant on grounds other than Biblical ones.

Life is the union of body and spirit, and death is the condition resulting from their separation. Once the spirit has flown, the body is lifeless and begins its return to its original elements. Whether the return is the slow disintegration of the body through the processes of decay or is achieved in seconds by fire, the result is the same—the return of the body’s elements to their original state. In the resurrection, these “building blocks” will be reassembled. In either instance, the effort will be the same. Bodies that have returned to the dust long centuries ago do not today exist in bodily form anymore, and so do those immediately consumed by fire. In both instances, the elements are in the universe awaiting the call of Deity at the Last Great Day. Undoubtedly, the elements of

many bodies have become parts of trees, which in turn have been sawn into lumber and converted into timber, later to be burned. These, too, will be brought forth by the Divine Hand and reconstituted into the resurrection body. He, who by matchless power, spoke into existence the elements that make up our bodies, will have no difficulty bringing together these separated elements again when the spirits emerge from the Hadean realm to join them on Judgment Day.

We are taught in the New Testament, mainly by example, to exhibit proper respect for the dead and to deal with them in a dignified and respectful fashion. Cremation, as today practiced, in no way opposes these premises. We believe that the matter is an aesthetic problem, not a Biblical one and that it will be resolved on emotional and philosophical grounds rather than moral ones. It violates no New Testament principle.

Deceased

The first mention of *book* in the Bible is found in Genesis 5:1, “This is the book of the generations of Adam.” Similarly, the first mention of *book* in the New Testament is Matthew 1:1, “THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ.” These “books” are now incorporated into the Book and, in a striking way, emphasize the continuity of Old and New Testaments—the one dealing with the first Adam, the other with the last Adam. The final mentions of *book* also are very important, again dealing not with books that are temporal but with **books that are eternal**. In the Old Testament we have the beautiful promise of Malachi 3:16:

Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: And the LORD hearkened, and heard *it*,
And a book of remembrance was written before him For them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

The final mention of *book* in the Bible, on the other hand, is a sober warning not to tamper with the Book.

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:19).

Tip: Let us honor and respect the greatest book ever written, the Bible. Let us believe, guard, and follow it (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

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It is the command of Jesus that all men who believe in His principles and wish to see them established in the hearts and homes of men, must come out from the crowd, be baptized into His name, and march and fight together against the hierarchy of the night.

Author Unknown

Sick

Remember in your prayers:

Bill & Peggy Crowe

Nancy Travis

Linda Worley

Carla Burleson

Bill & Pam Busch

Linda Parks

Paul Brantley

Defender and Beacon

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Bible Classes for all ages — 7:00 p.m.

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