

## **Article: The Sin of Lying in God's Name**

On more than one occasion, I have encountered someone who is very intent on keeping God's Law yet came across to others as harsh, unloving, critical, and rude. Because such people want very much to believe that they are righteous, they often wind up being critical of others while blinding themselves to their own sins. They usually have certain rules that they follow while ignoring or justifying sins that they do not think are important. At the same time, there are those who go to the opposite extreme of tolerating open and manifest sin in the name of love while being critical of anyone who openly condemns such sin. In either case, it is hard to help or counsel such people because they tend to become angry when shown their faults.

That being said, one area of sin that is usually ignored is speaking falsely in God's name. Some may get angry because they do not want to believe that they are guilty of that sin. Others may condemn what is said to them because someone's approach does not fit their ideas of tolerance. However, what I am going to say needs to be said because falsehood and deception are tools of the devil, and they hinder the work of the Gospel.

### The Sin of Adding to God's Word

One of the most obvious ways people add to God's Word is by claiming they have a new revelation. Such claims are common among the cults. I have heard Christians say, "God told me" to do this or that. Now, while such claims may come across as pious, they open people up to satanic influence. Many years ago, I heard a Christian preacher say, "God told me that Jesus would return in 2000." It is obvious that he was lying in God's name.

In some churches, people are being taught that God will speak to them through feelings and impressions and that they must "obey" what "He says," or He may punish them. However, that is a lie! Those who teach that would place people back under the Law, with this one difference, they have replaced the written Law with an unwritten law. In either case, the curse Paul warned about in his Letter to the Galatians still applies (Galatians 1:6-9).

Other ways in which people add to God's Word have to do with reading ideas into the text of Scripture, coming up with explanations that are not in Scripture, teaching their own interpretations and conclusions as the Word of God, and claiming that the words mean something other than what they say. As a result, they cannot tell the difference between what the Bible plainly says and what they think it means.

### The Sin of Subtracting from God's Word

When people add an idea to God's Word, it usually winds up contradicting what the Bible says elsewhere. It goes the other way, too. Sometimes, teachers contradict what Christ plainly says in His Word. When this is pointed out to them, they should submit to Christ by giving up any ideas that contradict what He said. However, they are usually so blinded by self-righteousness that they explain away what Christ has said rather than give up their own pet ideas. And by explaining away the words of Christ, they become guilty of taking away from the Word of God, as well as rebellion against God (Psalm 107:11). Let me give one example: 1 John 2:1-2 says, "*We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*" However, those who deny that Christ died for the sins of all men subtract from Scripture by explaining that passage away. Moreover, by explaining it away, they make it of no effect, at least for those who are deceived by them (Mark 7:13).

Those who add to God's Word and those who subtract from it are lying in God's name because they either claim that He said what He did not say or deny that He said what He said.

### The Sin of Self-deification

Deep down, the motivation of those who add to and take from God's Word is always the desire to make themselves God. When they add to God's Word, they try to make themselves God by teaching their word as God's Word. When they take away from God's Word, they are attempting to make themselves God by overruling what He has said, as if they are the real authority (Genesis 3:1).

Sometimes, they use Scripture to manipulate people by telling them that they have to dress a certain way, wear their hair a certain way, or only marry people of the same race. At other times, they twist Scripture to support the bogus claim that church members must obey the pastor or that ordained pastors are the only ones who can understand Scripture. Instead of leading people to turn from man's word to God's Word, they teach their opinions and private interpretations as if the ministry existed to exalt them rather than Christ and provide them with a forum for advancing their opinions. In any case, they are trying to make themselves into God by exalting themselves over others. And, when they twist Scripture to do this, they wind up lying in God's name.

## The Sin of Professing Oneself to be Wise

Although the entire body of doctrine (all of the teachings necessary to work of the ministry and the salvation of souls) is stated in Scripture in words so clear that they need no interpretation, sin often blinds people to what the Bible plainly says. At the same time, Satan uses the many passages of Scripture that are difficult to understand to lead people away from what the Bible says. One way he does this is by having them profess themselves to be wise, profess to know more than they possibly could know, claim to have the answers to questions that the Bible does not answer, and, in general, confuse the distinction between man's word and God's Word.

No one denies that many things in Scripture are hard to understand or that the Bible leaves us with many unanswered questions. However, the Biblical approach to these difficulties is to humbly admit our ignorance and concentrate on those teachings that are so clearly set forth in the words of Scripture that they need no interpretation.

Whenever we go beyond the plain teaching of God's Word, whether regarding Bible prophesy or any other topic, if we add to or take from what the Bible says, we have departed from the Word of God and are lying in God's name.

If we are to be faithful to God, we must first learn to be our own worst critic. We must be intent on finding and eliminating our own mistakes before anyone else does and before teaching them to others. The clear passages of Scripture, the doctrinal truths so plainly stated that they need no interpretation, are the standard by which every opinion is to be judged (Isaiah 8:20).

All who refuse to conform their thinking to God's Word should be regarded as troublemakers and rebels against God (Psalm 107:11, Romans 12:2, 2 Corinthians 10:5).