

You Can, But You Can't

We live in a time when people often say, *"I can do whatever I want."* In one sense, that's true. Especially in America, we've been afforded many freedoms. In religious practice, you can do a number of things. You **can** choose your habits, your priorities, and how you live in service to God. God created us with the ability to choose (Joshua 24:15).

You **can** ignore God's word, but you **can't** expect spiritual strength without it (Matthew 4:4). You **can** neglect worship, but you **can't** grow closer to God while drifting away from His people (Hebrews 10:24–25). You **can** live for the moment, but you **can't** escape eternity (Hebrews 9:27). You **can** sow to the flesh, but you **can't** reap peace and joy from it (Galatians 6:7–8).

You can believe any doctrine you choose, belong to the church of your choice, and worship God as you please. You have the right to make these choices, but you should understand, you can't please God while doing these things. *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son."* (2 John 9).

Satan has effectively convinced many that religion is determined by personal preference, not by God's will, and that self-satisfaction matters more than obedience to God. So, you can ignore God's warnings, refuse His blessings, and reject His great love, but you cannot go to heaven while doing so. *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"* (Matthew 7:21-23)

The bottom line is this; you **can't** save yourself, but you **can** come to Christ in obedient faith. You **can** repent, confess your faith in Christ, and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). You **can** walk in the light and live with hope (1 John 1:7). May we choose wisely, knowing that our choices determine our destination for eternity.

- by Josh McCord

Easy, Or Right?

If a friend or family member is known to drink alcoholic beverages and then drive his or her car, would you say anything about this, preventing a disaster? Or, would you keep silent for fear of hurting their feelings?

If a friend or family member is harming and abusing a child, would you speak up about it, or would you keep silent because you didn't want the trouble it could bring to you?

If a friend or family member is teaching false doctrine which results in someone being led away from the truth (and thus, lost eternally) would you keep silent because it is the easier thing to do, or would you confront the false teacher and try to correct him?

If a friend or family member is making a spiritual choice which leads him or her into unfaithfulness, would you say something about this, or would you keep quiet because you fear the wrath of the erring brother or sister?

"Easy" is seldom "right," is it?

- by Mark White

A Concerning Lack of Concern

A troubling trend of our time is the growing indifference among many brethren toward doctrinal soundness. They see it as important to some 'hardliners', but not really essential.

The New Testament paints a very different picture. Paul urged Timothy to "take heed to yourself and to the doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:16). Sound teaching was not a side issue; it was essential. Yet today, many seem content to ignore doctrine altogether. They openly associate with those who teach error, place membership in congregations that extend fellowship to false teachers, and refuse to speak plainly about matters that Scripture clearly addresses.

This casual attitude stands in sharp contrast to the warnings of Scripture. John wrote, *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God"* (2 John

9). He went on to say that extending fellowship to such a one is to “share in his evil deeds” (2 John 10–11). These are strong words, but they reflect the seriousness with which God views truth.

Many argue that calling out error is unloving or divisive. But biblical unity must be built on truth, not compromise. Paul warned the Romans to “mark those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them” (Romans 16:17). Avoidance, not endorsement, was the apostolic response to false teaching.

Perhaps most concerning is the refusal to condemn error even when it is clearly identified. The Ephesian brethren were commended because they “tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Revelation 2:2). In contrast, Israel of old was rebuked for failing to distinguish between the holy and the profane (Ezekiel 22:26). Silence in the face of error has never been viewed favorably by God.

We are witnessing serious signs of doctrinal drift. Lack of concern for truth is not a minor weakness - it is a dangerous condition. We need to care deeply about what God has revealed, to stand firmly for sound doctrine, and to honor the Lord by refusing fellowship where His truth is compromised (Jude 3).

- by Greg Gwin