

## Does God Approve?

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If I were discussing any Bible subject with a person in an effort to determine what is the proper action to take and should discover that he is not concerned with whether or not God approves of such an action, I would stop that discussion. The reason is simple. If there is no standard by which to measure anything, there is no value in discussing whether it should or should not be anything.

If a person indicates that he is concerned about God's approval, the next step is to discover how he decides if God approves or disapproves of something. If his standard of measurement is how he feels in his heart, we stop the discussion, for not only is there no way for me to determine how he feels in his heart, he may not feel the same way from one moment to the next. If he concludes that the way to decide what God wants in a matter is by an examination of God's word, then we ask, "What shall we look for in God's word to determine that?" If he admits that God's specific command that a thing be done is one way we may be assured that God approves of it, we continue talking. If he admits that we do not have to find a specific command provided there is an approved example shown to be approved by the inspired record, we continue talking. If he admits that even if we cannot find a specific example, if it is necessarily implied that God approved, then we continue. If he thinks there is some other way to find out if God approves, we try to find out what it is. After more than 50 years of discussion, we have not found any that we can test and be sure they are valid.

To illustrate how this works, let us first consider the subject of baptism for the remission of sins. One may raise the question, "Does God approve of sprinkling, pouring or immersion?" We look in vain for a command, example or situation where it is necessarily implied that he does. We find that they needed much water (John 3:23). They went down into the water or came up out of the water (Mk. 1:10). They were buried by baptism (Rom. 6:4). For a person who cares about what God approves, that is sufficient.

We then may raise the question, "Does God approve of any immersion that is not for the remission of sins?" There are an increasing number today who are teaching that it does not matter. Let us examine the subject the same way. Do we find a command for any person to be baptized that does not know he is lost and needs to be saved? Starting with the Great Commission and checking every case of conversion or any reference thereto, we find none. Look at every example of conversion and ask if any of them had any doubt that he was lost and needed to obey the gospel in order to be saved. Pentecost and Paul's conversion are probably the plainest, but even a fair examination of the Ethiopian eunuch cannot lead one to assume that he thought he was saved before he obeyed the gospel, after Philip had preached it to him. After the church was established, we find no command, example or any statement that would lead to any kind of implication, much less a necessary one, that any person ever assumed he was saved before he was baptized.

Now let us take the subject of when we should partake of the Lord's Supper. There are those who claim membership in the Lord's church who are today suggesting that since the Lord's Supper is for the purpose of calling our attention to the sacrifice of Christ for us, and we can properly remember the Lord's death at any time, then we can properly take the Lord's Supper at any time.

Let us examine the question in this fashion: Does the Lord approve of us taking the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week? If we have already established one of the means for finding out what pleases the Lord is an approved example, then we settle that matter by reading Acts 20:7. Is there any command that would lead us to be sure that the Lord approves of it on any other day? The answer is, "No." We have heard of those who try to avoid the issue by saying, "That is not a command." Admitted, but it is an inspired example of an apostle doing what Jesus had told them to do. Of course, if one takes the position, "He did not say not to take it some other day," the world would not contain the books that could be written about the things he did not say not to do. It is interesting and sad to note that such a puerile argument is not used about anything else under the sun except with regard to what pleases God. No father would listen to that kind of reasoning from a child he sent to get groceries, and who decided to get a dozen things that suited him rather than, or in addition to what he was told to get. No person would use that kind of logic (?) with regard to taking a prescription from his doctor.

Second, we look for an approved example of the early Christians taking the Lord's Supper on any other day except the first day of each week. We find none, either in the Bible or in the earliest writings of the so-called "church fathers."

Third, is there any place where it is necessarily implied that they did such with the approval of God? The answer is, "No." Of course, if a person is not satisfied with what he is sure meets the approval of God, and would rather do whatever pleases him, we can proceed no further with any profit. This does not involve the idea that we must pass final judgment on anyone, and determine that anyone who does not know that all he does is approved of God is going to be lost in hell. We simply raise the question, "Why would any sensible person want to do and teach that which he cannot prove that God approves of, when it is just as easy to do what he knows to be right?"

We realize that there are those connected with the church that would call that legalism or some other opprobrious term. We have noted that when a person is more interested in pursuing his own agenda than he is in making sure he learns more truth or is pleasing God, he may have a tendency to resort to labels and name calling. When it seems evident that we are casting pearls before swine, and their primary concern is to turn around and rend you, we proceed no longer with the discussion. We urge you to try to make sure you are approved of God, not only in what you believe, but in what you practice, and how you behave.