

A Dangerous Philosophy: It is Easier to Ask Forgiveness than to Ask Permission

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Many in our society have bought into a dangerous philosophy that believes: It is easier to ask forgiveness than to ask permission. This clever, innocent sounding motto is the ultimate form of self-rationalization. It deceptively provides an individual permission to do what they know they are not supposed to do. For young people, it excuses them from seeking parental authority for something they know they would not be allowed to do. For the employees, this foolish motto allows them to break company rules with a clear conscience.

This motto is attributed to a woman named Grace Hopper, and surprisingly only dates back to 1987. However, this kind of thinking is actually nothing new. It has been around for thousands of years. Israel's King Saul is a good example of someone foolishly applying this philosophy. Saul was given very clear instructions about utterly destroying Amalek. He was not to spare anything or anyone (1 Sam. 15:1-3). However, look what happened:

But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

1 Samuel 15:9

Saul failed to fully obey the instruction of God. Apparently, he thought he had a better idea. It would appear that Saul might have been thinking, "It is easier to ask forgiveness than to ask permission." In so thinking, he was disobedient to God. For this, Saul would be rebuked by the prophet Samuel. After listening to Saul's excuses and self-rationalization:

Samuel said,

"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? **Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.** "For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He has also rejected you from being king."

1 Samuel 15:22-23 (Emphasis Mine)

Sadly, just like King Saul, God's children today still apply worldly philosophies such as the one we have been discussing. Today it is seen in the song leader who intentionally leads a song he knows the elders have asked not to be led. It is seen in the brother or sister doing something in the worship assembly they know the elders have asked not to be done. When we as Christians apply this motto in our life, as with Saul, we ought to expect a rebuke.

This deceptive and self-liberating permissive philosophy is seen when religious groups go beyond what is recorded in the word of God to do what they want to do. Paul told the Corinthians:

Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us **you may learn not to exceed what is written**, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other.

1 Corinthians 4:6 (Emphasis Mine)

Brethren, let us be careful to not adopt worldly ways of thinking and values. Let us seek to always be obedient to God in all things. Again, from the pen of inspired apostle Paul:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Colossians 2:8