

Sorry, But that's Not Your Seat

Introduction:

- I. Every once in a while people sit in the wrong the seat. Have you ever gotten on a airplane and made your way to your appointed seat only to find someone seating there? Sometimes, whether it is on an airplane or at a ball park or some other public event where you have assigned seats, people will read their ticket wrong and accidentally sit in the wrong seat. Somebody will have to say to that person, "Sorry, but that's not your seat."
- II. Unfortunately, sometimes people sit in the wrong seat spiritually. In fact, sometimes, believe it or not, man tries to sit in God's seat and share His authority. Listen to the judgment that was pronounced upon the prince of Tyre (**Ez. 28:1-2**). Let's look at those who are sitting in the wrong seat.

Lesson:

I. **Those Who Try To Read the Hearts of Others.**

We serve a God Who is powerful in every way. But one demonstration of the power of God is His ability to read the hearts of men. Listen to me: we can't fool God because He sees not only what we do but He sees the thoughts behind the transactions, the motives behind the measures and attitudes behind the actions. In other words, God knows not only what we do, but why we do it. He knows not only what we say but why we say it. You see, God is able to look into the heart.

1 Sam 16:7

But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

Now, man doesn't see as God sees. Man can't look into the hearts of others. We can't read minds or decipher motives because that is beyond our capability. And if you ever find yourself trying to do such a thing you need to remember that's not your seat. You better re-examine your ticket because the seat where the hearts of men can be read is already occupied by God and His throne is a one-seater. "Oh, but I know that brother or sister. I know why they said this or why they are doing that." Sorry, but that's not your seat! Stop trying to judge the hearts of others. The only heart you can be sure about is your own. Worry about your own heart and leave the rest to God.

One area where this can be demonstrated is the area of forgiveness. When someone sins against us we at times have trouble forgiving(**Eph.**

4:31-32; Matt. 6:12-15). Let's take a moment or two to study the words of Christ in **Lk. 17:3.**

“Take heed to yourselves.” I just said worry about your own heart. This is what Jesus is saying here on forgiving others. Listen to me: forgiving is not about the other person; it's not about the one who needs forgiving, it's about you. Let me say that again. Forgiving is not about the one who needs forgiving, it's about you. It does matter what the other person has done, or how many times he or she has done it. It doesn't matter how much pain you have been caused or how much suffering you've had to endure. When someone repents and asks us to forgive them, we must do it, and if we unwilling to do what God commands of us, we have bigger problems than what the other person has done. *Take heed unto yourself.*

“If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him.” Jesus never advocated the ignoring of sin. What we learn by the words of Jesus is that sin must be confronted. There is nothing spiritual about not confronting the person who sins against you. We can talk ourselves into believing that we are taking the “high road” by not saying anything to those who sin against us and just automatically forgiving them. But forgiving without repentance is unscriptural. God doesn't do it and He doesn't expect us to do it, in fact Jesus forbids us from doing it. Why is rebuking so important here? It's important because without the rebuking, the sinner may never repent and repentance is required, not only for the sinner to receive your forgiveness, but more importantly, it's required in order to receive God's forgiveness.

“Well,” you say “I don't like confrontations.” “I don't want to rebuke anybody. That's just not my nature. I think I'll just ignore it and go on about my business.” Sorry, but that's not your seat! You don't have the authority to make that decision. We must do what Jesus tells us to do whether we are comfortable with it or not. When someone sins against us, we must give in to the divine directive and act accordingly. Jesus said rebuke him.

“And if he repent, forgive him.” What is forgiveness? One way to get an idea of what forgiveness is, is to see how the word is translated in other places. The Greek word is ἀφίημι (a-fee-ā-mee) and it is translated in different passages as, “*send away, yield up, lay aside, let alone,*” etc. This is exactly what forgiveness is only it is accomplished mentally, i.e., with the heart. When you forgive you intellectually lay aside all resentment and anger and bitterness toward the one who has offended you. You “let it go.” And let me tell you something about the anger and resentment that comes with being offended, it gains momentum as time goes on. It's like the snowball traveling down the hill, it gets bigger and bigger and travels faster and faster the further it goes. When it comes to the negative

feelings of anger and bitterness that come from being sinned against the only way you can stop the momentum is by letting it go (*e.g., of letting go of the rope of the church bell; to start the bell you have to tug to get it started, but once it starts ringing you merely have to pull the rope a little to keep the momentum going. If you want it to stop, you have to let go*).

And let me say one more thing about forgiving. Forgiving others is something you do on purpose. It is not an emotional act, it is an intellectual pursuit. It is something you make up in your mind to do.

Illus

Clara Barton, founder of the Red Cross, was asked if she remembered an especially cruel thing done to her years before. When she seemed not to recall it, a friend asked, "Don't you remember?" "No," she said, "I distinctly remember forgetting it."

Alright, now let's get back to our original point. It is right here where some say, "Jesus said they had to repent, and the person who sinned against me hasn't repented." Let me ask you, has he/she said they repented? "Yes, but I know he really hasn't." Sorry, but you're now trying to seat in someone else's sit. You're trying to sit in God's sit because He is the only One Who can read hearts! "I know I can't read hearts, but this person has done this to me before." So what! How many times have you sinned against God and He has forgiven you? Have you ever committed the same sin twice? The fact is it doesn't matter how many times a person has sinned against you, even if it is the same sin. If they claim repentance, at that moment you must forgive (**Lk. 17:4**). I know this is hard, but it is still God's law. It was hard even for the apostles to accept (**Lk. 17:5**), but they recognized that it was still necessary.

II. Those Who Judge Others Without All the Facts.

Not only do some try to judge the hearts of others, but sometimes people judge the circumstances or situations of others without knowing all the facts. In Jn. 7:24 Jesus said, "**Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.**" This is easy to do and dare I say that we have all been guilty of this at times. Listen: this is why God is the Judge of men and not us—God knows all the facts. But since we don't, we better stay out of God's seat.

Illus: Girl Cried

I was attending a junior stock show when a grand-champion lamb, owned by a little girl, was being auctioned. As the bids reached five dollars per pound, the little girl, standing beside the lamb in the arena, began to cry. At ten dollars, the tears were streaming down her face and she clasped her arms tightly around the lamb's neck. The higher the bids rose, the more she cried. Finally, a local businessman bought the lamb for more than \$1000, but then announced that he was donating it to the little girl. The crowd applauded and cheered.

Months later, I was judging some statewide essays when I came across one from a girl who told about the time her grand-champion lamb had been auctioned. 'The prices began to get so high during the bidding,' she wrote, 'that I started to cry from happiness.' She continued with: 'The man who bought the lamb for so much more than I ever dreamed I would get returned the lamb to me, and when I got home, Daddy barbecued the lamb, and it was really delicious.'

Things aren't always as they appear, are they. We have to be careful, especially in our judgments of other people, that we have all the facts before we draw our conclusions. And sometimes we don't have access to those facts and so we must just leave it in God's hands and not draw any conclusions.

Have you ever concluded just by the appearance of a person that they aren't worthy of hearing the gospel? Somebody who maybe is not dressed the way you think they should be or who has obvious signs of worldliness? Listen: you're in the wrong seat! We don't have the right to conclude that about a person. Everybody deserves to hear the gospel at least once. Jesus said, ***"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"*** (Mark 16:15). Now, once a person hears and rejects the gospel that's a different story. In regard to that situation, Jesus said, ***"Give not that which is holy into the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine..."*** But what we must not do is judge according to appearance.

Let me ask you another question. How do you view a brother or sister in Christ who is caught in sin? I'm not talking about an assumption or hearsay or rumors, I'm talking about a situation where a brother has sinned against God and it has been discovered, uncovered and exposed to all? How do you now view that brother? Let me just remind you of this: even in that situation we may not know everything involved. Listen to me: when we see a brother or sister in sin, there are three things we do not know: First, we do not know how hard he or she tried not to sin. Don't assume that the brother just lackadaisically and without thought or care sinned against God. We don't know. Don't assume that the brother or sister was an easy target for the devil. We don't know. That's not our seat! The second thing we do not know is the power and the intensity of the temptation that assailed him or her. We just don't know. And that leads to the third thing we don't know. We do not know what we would have done in the same circumstances. Now am I saying that these things might excuse the sinner? No! Sin condemns regardless of the circumstances, but condemning is God's business. That's not our seat. Paul said, ***"Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us"*** (Rom 8:34). Isn't that something?

While we are trying to sit in God's seat, the One who really has the power and authority to condemn is busy trying to help.

All I'm saying in all this is that we need to check out attitude towards those who stumble. Yes there are times that we must judge, that is we must pronounce to those who sin the consequences of their sin as revealed in scripture, but we do it with compassion and consideration. And if we don't, we have our own problem. Listen to Jesus once again:

Matt 7:2

For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ESV

Gal 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

III. Those Who Introduce New Things into the Lord's Church.

We like to hear of new things. We like to introduce new things. We like to talk about new things. New things can sometimes energize and revitalize us. New things can sometimes stimulate and rejuvenate us. Some people just can't wait to be told something new (**Acts 17:16-21**). Some people are still like the Athenians. Some members of the church are like them. Some preachers are like them. But let me tell you something: when it comes down to the Lord's church, new is not better, it's worse. You can't improve on that which is perfect, and everything the Lord does is already perfect. The Lord's church is perfect! I'm not talking about the people, I'm talking about the pattern. Listen to me now: the organization of the church is perfect. The work of the church is perfect. The church has a perfect Savior and His name is Jesus. The church has a perfect Guide and He is called the Holy Spirit. The church has a perfect message and it's known as the gospel of Christ. There isn't anything about the church that needs updated, renovated or redecorated. Everything is just right the way it is.

Someone says, "That may have been true a 100 years ago, but we need to keep up with the times." Sorry, but that's not your seat! "Oh preacher you don't understand. We don't want to totally change things, we just want to contemporize a little to reach a new generation." Well you don't have the authority to do that and neither do I. To have the right to change things we would have to be sitting on God's throne, but that's not our seat. Let's look at some examples of those who try to occupy the throne of God.

A. The introduction of musical instruments.

When you think of the gospel, you think of Jesus Christ and Him crucified and you should. But it is important to know that the gospel of Christ involves more than just the story of Jesus and the sacrifice that He made for us, it involves instructions for our living as well. The gospel reveals Jesus as being not only the Savior, but also the Sovereign of the church. He, in other words, has all authority and that authority is expressed to us by way of the gospel. The gospel, ladies and gentlemen, is the law of Christ (**Rom. 8:2**). Now laws are meant to be obeyed, aren't they? Listen to the definition of law giving by Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: "**a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority.**" Who is the controlling authority in the church? It's the one sitting on the throne and that's not us is it. Jesus is the controlling authority. He has set forth the rule of conduct that we must followed. Now, what has He prescribed in the law?

1 Cor 14:15

What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.

Eph 5:19

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Col 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Heb 2:12

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

Through His Word, God has commanded and authorized vocal singing. Since God specified the kind of music He wanted in the New Testament church, all other types are unauthorized (**e.g. of the ark**). Yet we find almost all denominational churches playing instruments instead of just singing. Why? Because they are trying to sit in God's seat, and many of them don't even know it. It's like the fellow on the plane. He doesn't know he's sitting in the wrong seat, but he still is. He may not know it until someone taps him on the shoulder and says, "Sorry, but that's not your seat." Listen to me: if you are visiting with us and you attend a church that uses musical instruments, I'm tapping you on the shoulder right now because you're sitting in the wrong seat, and your not just sitting in anyone's seat; you're sitting in God's seat. You see only God can

decide how we ought to worship Him. Only God knows what He wants and what He doesn't want. And the only way we can know is if He tells us. And He hasn't told us anything about the musical instrument. "Well we are just going to use them anyway." Alright, but your sitting in the wrong seat and one of these days God is going to remove you. Listen to me: better that you get up and remove yourself than to make God move you in His own time.

B. The introduction of women pastors.

In 1853 Antoinette Brown Blackwell became the first ordained minister in an United States denomination. Since that time modern denominations have given in to the pressures of society and political correctness and have gradually, one denomination at a time, accepted the ordination of women as preachers, pastors and presbyteries.

Curtis Freeman, director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke Divinity School, said that women *"are called and can serve."* Sorry Mr. Freeman but that's not your seat. You don't get to decide who is called and who can serve. Only God can decide that.

The First Baptist Church of Decatur, AL says, *"We accept women and men as equally called of God for ministry as laity and clergy."* First it should be pointed out that the Bible doesn't make the laity/clergy distinction that is so popular among denominational churches. But we understand what this church is saying don't we. They are affirming their acceptance of women as pastors, but listen to me, that's not their seat. Only God can decide what is acceptable and what is not.

Anita Bell, Pastor in the PCUSA, says, *"Thus, when we minimize the ordained leadership of our women, we weaken the whole of the body."*

Sorry, Miss Bell but you're sitting in the wrong seat. No one has the right or authority, let alone the intellectual dexterous to tell God that His ways weaken the body of Christ. All of these individuals, denominational churches and religious counsels are sitting in the wrong seat because they are trying to introduce something new to the church. And make no mistake about it women pastors, preachers and presbyteries is something new to the religious world and there's no authority for it in the New Testament. Where in the New Testament is there authority to be found for women pastors?

1 Tim 3:1-2

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

So, where is the example? “Well the reason there’s not women pastors in the N.T. is because of the culture of that day.” Wrong! The reason there were no women pastors in that day was because the Holy Spirit forbade it.

1 Tim 2:11-12

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

To do anything but follow the Word of God on this issue is to attempt to sit in God’s seat. And I wish that denominational churches were the only ones trying to sit in God’s seat. The truth, however, is that there are many local churches of Christ trying to do the same thing.

C. The introduction of the social gospel.

Many local churches have digressed to the point where they now think the gospel isn’t enough to win souls. Many have been influence by denominationalism to such extent that they now act like, talk like and dress up like denominational churches with all of their fun and frolic, recreation and entertainment in an attempt to appeal to the carnal side of man. Some local churches now have gymnasiums and fellowship halls, day care centers and exercise facilities and anything else you can think of that appeals to the flesh. And they have all these things without one shred of scriptural authority. The Okolona church of Christ right here in Louisville serves as an example of this.

Okolona Church of Christ is starting an American Heritage Girls troop this fall. Meetings will be every other Tuesday, at 6:30 pm, downstairs in the ECE area. AHG is a Christ-centered scouting program for girls ages 5-18 that emphasizes leadership, patriotism, and community service as girls earn badges in areas of interest as diverse as Outdoor Skills, The Arts, and Science and Technology. Come and be a part of this exciting new program!

They have changed the work of the church from spiritual to social. Why? Because that is what they want to do. Someone needs to tap them on the shoulder and say, “Sorry, but that’s not your seat.” They don’t have the authority to use the Lord’s money to establish a girls troop program. Surely they have misread their ticket and sat in the wrong seat and now they think they can introduce any new thing they want to into the Lord’s church. But listen to me, they can’t do it. The only thing they have accomplished is the setting up of a man-made organization that has lost all affiliation with Jesus. You see, that’s what happens when we try to play

God and sit in His seat and make new legislation for the church. We cease to be the church of the Lord.

Conclusion:

We all need to check our ticket sometimes, don't we. The throne of God is a place of power and a position of predominance and only God can sit there. If we ever try to sit in the chair of God, someone needs to tell us, "Sorry, but that's not your seat." Let's know our place and position in life and stay there.