DOING GOOD IN GOD’S WAY by Al Diestelkamp

Saul, king of Israel, was preparing to go to war with the Philistines (1 Sam. 13). He had previously been instructed to go to Gilgal and wait for Samuel to come to offer a burnt offering and a peace offering and to tell the king what to do (1 Sam. 10:8). When Samuel did not show up within the expected time, Saul decided to make the offering himself (13:9).

Saul had hardly finished the offering when Samuel showed up and asked, “What have you done?” (v.11). Saul explained that he feared the Philistines would come against him before he had made supplication to the Lord, so he felt “compelled” to act (v.12).

I don’t know about you, but that sounds like a reasonable explanation to me. After all, offering a burnt offering and making supplication to God were good things to do. But God was not pleased! Samuel said, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you” (v.13).

This story teaches me that just because I can’t see the harm in doing what seems good to me does not necessarily make it good in God’s eyes. I confess that I don’t always see the harm in some things that God has declared to be sinful. Nor do I always understand the reason for *how* God expects some things He requires to be done.

Whether I am seeking authority in my personal life or authority pertaining to the work and worship of the Lord’s churches, my opinions, feelings, or understanding of reasons behind God’s approval or disapproval cannot be a factor.

I’m fairly confident that most everyone among our readers will be in agreement with the application I am making regarding God’s sovereign right to define what is sinful regardless of what society thinks or whether or not we understand the reason behind His decisions. This puts us in direct opposition to how the world views what God has revealed, especially regarding moral issues such as the many forms of fornication, divorce, and the taking of innocent life.

However, there may be less unanimity with my application to what God authorizes (or doesn’t authorize) in the collective work and worship among local churches belonging to Christ. In every generation there have been some who have challenged some of what is taught as “unscriptural,” claiming them to be merely part of “our long-standing traditions.” They seek a loosening of what they call “traditions” that restrict what they personally feel we are at liberty or even “compelled” to do.

For example, local churches are being challenged by those who don’t agree with what many of us believe are biblical limitations on the use of church funds, including unlimited benevolence and use of church-owned buildings for social events. There are also those who advocate for the use of musical instruments in worship as well as an expanded role of women in leadership.

Questioning what is taught or practiced is not a problem as long as it is to initiate an honest study of the Scriptures to see how to “do good in God’s way” rather than to merely voice what we *think* or *feel* God would approve. Remember King Saul!