

The RICHIES

OF GRACE

"hath appeared to all men." Titus 2:11

Robert W. Reed
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Pragmatism

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil."

Proverbs 3:5-7

+ Principle or Pragmatism +

Pragmatism is seen in every aspect of our society today from our personal life to our family, church, business, and politics. Pragmatism is a philosophy of life which determines right and wrong based on the outcome of a situation. In other words, what ever works is good and right. This way of thinking is totally contrary to Biblical principles. The saints of God are to determine truth based on Holy Scripture and not by consequences or visible results. Life is filled with many decisions. The question we must ask ourselves: Will our decisions be directed by the principles of God's Word or by pragmatism?

"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Proverbs 16:25

"Our Lord attracted sinners because He was different."

- Martyn Lloyd Jones



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***"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
Acts 16:31***

This article will show the difference between pragmatism and principle: that is, truth from error in our thinking and decision making.

THE MEANING OF PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism is a new name for an old way of thinking: that is, disobedience to God's Word. It is a philosophy which says that results are the criteria by which we determine whether something is good or bad. This means that truth is determined by consequences. The Webster's College Dictionary defines pragmatism as following: "Character or conduct that emphasizes practical results or concerns rather than theory or principle." In other words, the end justifies the means, or to quote another author, "Pragmatism means to take action based upon what seems to work."

Many today say if there are visible results, then God's blessings must be upon it. Our actions should never be dictated by what we think, feel, know, or see, but by the Bible. Our motto as a Christian is not, "if it works do it, or if there is a will there is a way", but "**thus saith the Lord**". Pragmatism should not be a guiding philosophy of life, theology, or ministry. We must seek the Lord (**Isaiah 6**) and remember that His thoughts and ways are much higher than ours (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). Let His Word be our guide for faith and practice.

THE DANGER OF PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism leads to disobedience and gives a faulty understanding of what constitutes success. There are many Biblical examples of success. There are many examples of pragmatism: may we learn from history (**Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:1-13**). These examples include saints and sinners who succumb to this way of thinking. Abraham and Sarah were great lovers of God and yet struggled with pragmatism at times; for instance, in **Genesis 12:10** Abraham's decision to go into Egypt because of a famine. He put his wife in jeopardy and was reproved by a pagan king. Again, in **Genesis 16**, both Abraham and Sarah came up with a plan to help God provide the promised seed, impatience led to pragmatism which resulted in disobedience.

Pragmatism is seen in Rebekah's life, in **Genesis 27**, when she came up with a plan for Jacob to receive the blessing from Isaac, his father, rather than Esau. The end results of her decision brought more division in her family. God had already said who would receive the blessing in **Genesis 25:23**. Also, King Saul was pragmatic in his

decision as to what obedience meant in **I Samuel 15:22-23**. When David brought the ark to its rightful place, Israel copied the Philistines in how to carry it and God killed Uzzah. When they were obedient to God's Word they were blessed (**I Chronicles 13 and 14**). In **II Kings 16:1-9**, Asa, the king of Judah, used human reasoning to defeat his enemy, but God's judgment was upon him. There is not enough space to record all the examples in Scripture, but may we take heed from these and not make the same mistakes.

THE CURE FOR PRAGMATISM

"**Thus saith the Lord**", as our philosophy of life is the only cure for pragmatism. The priorities of the early church is the solution to pragmatism, **Acts 2:42**, "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" The success of ministry must be based upon Holy Scripture and not what works or does not work. Many churches today are pragmatic in theology and methods. They resemble the world instead of being different. Their ministry is centered around entertainment, contemporary music, drama, programs, recreations, etc. In other words, whatever brings in the crowds must be good. Many churches sound like an advertisement agency instead of a place of worship. In Rick Warren's book, The Purpose Driven Church, he says that Saddle Back is a contemporary music church that uses the style of music that the majority of people listen to on the radio. He also admits that this music helped grow the church. Let us keep in mind that the music that most listen to today is ungodly and satanic. Rock and roll has invaded many churches because of its beat and the pleasing of the flesh in a sensual way. Pragmatism has become the norm for most, but it is abhorred by God (**Exodus 23:2**).

CONCLUSION

The principles of God's Word must dictate our every decision, and success must be determined by our Lord and not by the results. Let us take heed to the examples given to us in the Bible, for even good and godly people can become pragmatic at times which result in serious consequences. Fear God, keep His commandments, follow His ways and stay in fellowship with Him. Pragmatism rejects absolute truth and emphasizes practice over principle. May God help every Christian to abhor this evil and never replace theology with methodology. May we cling to the truth and never cut corners off the gospel of Jesus Christ.