

**Exceeding That Which is Written**  
by Hendrik Joubert

Consider the significance of finding warnings against false doctrines, teachers, prophets, apostles and even christes, in twenty-six of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Even casual search of the Old Testament will reveal that few (if any) books do not contain similar warnings. A timeless principle regarding pleasing God may be summed up with a simple statement by the Son of God when He reminds us of what God previously said through the prophet Isaiah: ***BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN. Matthew 15:9***

The simplicity of this principle is astounding and the consequences dreadful when men make the rules worship is rejected and worshipers remain condemned in their sin. The terrible outcome is illustrated in the following warning: ***"Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. <sup>22</sup> "Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" <sup>23</sup> "And then will declare to them, "I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS." Matthew 7:21-23***

It is obvious that the condemned sinner does not negotiate the terms for pardon; he has to accept the gracious terms offered by the God he offended. Salvation is by faith in God. Working on what God announced not only demonstrates a *lack of faith in Him*, but *also lack of respect for Him*. Although the New Testament is generally accepted as the covenant based upon faith, this is a timeless principle. Notice how clearly this is demonstrated in the days of Moses, the one to whom the Law is often credited as it was delivered through him. Early on during the journey with Israel the Lord instructs Moses: ***Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. Exodus 17:6.*** Years later we find a similar instruction, differing slightly in detail: ***Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink." Numbers 20:8***

Moses reverts back to the previous instruction, and strikes the rock again, twice. Notice the Lord's reply. ***"Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them." Numbers 20:12.*** Some object that it is not as much as doing differently, as having said ***"shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock? Numbers 20:10.*** Notice the first part of

the accusation: ***“Because you have not believed Me,…”*** What is it he did not believe, and how was it demonstrated? Did he not believe the Lord that water would come out? Did he have to do it by his own power? He never doubted anything the Lord said. It is his zeal for God and his frustration with the people that causes him to differ from what God told him. When we change what God has said for us to do it demonstrates an attitude of *“shall we tell you how to be saved”* even if we do not utter the words.

Consider for a moment the concept faith, and the idea of having faith in someone. When we trust the validity and truthfulness of what the person says, we will act accordingly. When we act differently the comment often is “why did you not do what I told you, do you not believe me?” The statement may even be stronger; “Do you not trust me?” When we work on what people tell us, we show a lack of faith in what they say, but also a lack of trust. We do not show them respect.

An obvious question now is; how may we make sure that we do what God has said? How may we ensure that we do not listen to a false teacher or follow a false doctrine? What is the standard by which we may judge what people say? So many claim the *anointing of the Lord*, suggesting that He communicates with them, yet they do not agree. Should God speak to me through His Spirit, and He speaks to you through His Spirit, should we not receive the same message?

Notice the following words by the apostle Paul, to a congregation of the Lord’s people who were exercising the gifts of the Spirit: ***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*** The standard should be obvious.