

# The Best Intentions

By Seth Barger

My dad once told me this story. Many years ago a hard freeze left all the church's water pipes frozen. Knowing services were the next morning, my dad took a blowtorch out to the church building and set about thawing the pipes. He would work outside for a while, then go inside and check to see if the water was flowing. After hours of work with no noticeable change in the pipes, he was puzzled. Why wasn't the water flowing yet?

It was because he was heating the gas lines! Fortunately, no one was injured. He certainly had the best intentions, though.

A lot of individuals today, including some Christians, do a lot of things in the name of the LORD, but not all of these things are the LORD'S will. They may mean well, but if it isn't done according to the will of God, does it produce anything of value? Christ said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'LORD, LORD,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (**Matthew 7:21**) Could he be referring to those who only pretend to serve God? Possibly. He goes on to say, "Many will say to me in that day, 'LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (**Matthew 7:22-23**)

He doesn't cut them any slack! But why not? They did great things in the name of Christ! Why would the LORD cast off those who think that they serve Him faithfully? To find out why, let's look at some other examples of people who tried to serve God, but didn't do it His way:

1. Paul spoke about the Jews' "zeal for God" in **Romans 10:1-3**. "...seeking to establish their own righteousness, [they] have not submitted to the righteousness of God." They tried to serve God, but in their own way.
2. Simon the sorcerer wanted to *purchase* the gift of God so that he could bestow the Holy Spirit to others through the laying on of hands (**Acts 8:18-19**), but Peter rebuked him, saying, "your heart is not right in the sight of the LORD" (**Acts 8:21**).
3. When Saul kept the best of the animals to sacrifice to God after the defeat of the Amalekites instead of destroying them all as God commanded, Samuel rebuked him and God deposed him (**I Samuel 15**). Saul had not "performed the commandment of the LORD," even though his intentions were good. As Samuel said, "to obey is better than sacrifice" (**I Samuel 15:22**).

My dad tried and tried to restore the water to the building, but he was going about it in the wrong way. Heating those gas lines would never restore the water, even though his intentions were good. Similarly, those who try to serve God in a way other than He intends will not be effective.

Our works are an expression of our faith (**James 2:18**). If our works stem from God's word, then our faith is in God. If our works stem from our own will, then our faith is in ourselves. Therefore, we should strive to make sure our works are of God and not of ourselves.

Other examples for consideration: Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10:1-3**); Moses at Kadesh (**Numbers 20:7-12**); Saul's sacrifice (**I Samuel 13:8-13**).