

church of Christ at Greenwood

371 West Main Street
Greenwood, Indiana 46142
317.888.8288
churchofchristatgreenwood.org

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Who Do You Trust?

Roger Blackwelder

It is with great sadness that I report I will be unable to perform my preaching duties for the next 12 to 18 months. When the time came to file my taxes for last year, I went to a very charismatic tax preparer who promised to save me hundreds of dollars. He found deductions I had never heard of and got me the largest refund I have ever received. I couldn't have been any happier with his services...until I was audited.

When the IRS appeared, he disappeared. He didn't answer his telephone, so I drove by his place of business, a small office in a strip-mall, only to discover the office closed, evidently for good.

It seems the deductions I had never heard of before were also deductions the IRS had never heard of before. This tax preparer's creative accounting led me straight up the river without a paddle.

Now the IRS wants to hold me responsible. I told them repeatedly that I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't do anything except trust this shady tax man. The reply from the IRS was simply that because it was my taxes and my signature on the form, I was responsible, even if it was someone else who had led me astray. On the bright side, I will have 12 to 18 months in a minimum security facility to find myself a new tax man. Hopefully, I will be able to find one a bit more trustworthy.

The story I have just told is fictitious in that it has not happened to me, but it is certainly a true story for some. In 1956, the comic greats Abbott and Costello were forced to sell their houses and assets, including their film rights because their accountant's accounting didn't live up to IRS standards. They placed their trust in the wrong person and suffered nasty consequences.

During His ministry, Jesus warned of misplacing our trust. He asked, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke 6:39). Even if our leaders are good, exemplary men, the burden of responsibility for our souls rests with us. Thus Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

Honestly, I find the IRS tax codes incomprehensible. God's word, however, was written with the common man in mind. "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). Trust in God's word, not in men. Prepare your own return, and you will not be disappointed.