

Is it Legalism or Is It Holiness?



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The scriptures are **extremely** clear on the issue of living holy before God! In **I Pet. 1:15-16** we are told to be holy, as He is holy. In **Heb. 12:14** we are told that unless we live with holiness we shall not see God. The word holy and holiness appear in the **Holy** Bible, the 1611 KJV, over six hundred times. They must be very important words that need to be considered. Now, I would like to make this point abundantly clear! We are not made holy by our works no matter how well intended! We have been justified, cleansed of our sins and made holy by and through the grace, mercy and blood of Jesus Christ! (**Col 1:2, I Cor. 6:11, Eph 5:26**)

One of the most common statements I have had said to me when I preach or teach on holiness and obedience is that we are saved by grace through faith and that our holiness and righteousness isn't sufficient for salvation. Usually, this comment comes from the once saved, always saved crowd. Usually Baptists, who are "half" Calvinists. They seem to want to believe that an individual has to make a "choice" to be saved, but after that can't "choose" to turn away from God and go back into the world and lose their salvation, i.e., inheritance in Christ. Of course, this damnable doctrine of devil's flies in the face of the truth of the Word of God in many places! **Heb. 3:14, Heb. 10:26-27** and **Rev. 22:19** to name a few. To live holy before God and the unsaved simply means that we have a great desire to please Him in every way that we can through obedience to His Word.

Many will say, now preacher, you are putting us back under the law and you know that no man can keep the law for salvation! You have become a “legalist”! So says the unlearned who have been misled by false teachers and hypocrites! Christ clearly said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments! **John 14:15** As His body we are told to have good works before men. **Mt. 5:16** If we place our Faith in Him, the proof will be in our works! **James 2:14-26** makes this point very clearly! To say that you are saved by grace and you do not have the “evidence” of works through obedience to His commandments, you are deceiving yourselves! You obey the commandments of the one you love the most! (**Rom. 6:14-16, I John 2:5-6, John 14:23**) Works, obedience to God’s laws is so important that He took the time to list both the works of the flesh and of the Spirit in **Gal. 5:16-26**. We bare righteous fruit if we walk in His Spirit. Our love for God causes us to bare good fruit not by the “burden” of keeping His law, but rather by delighting in His Word and His commandments! (**Ps. 1:2, Ps. 40:8, Ps. 119:70, Romans 7:22**) The ten commandments are not mere suggestions and optional for the church to keep!

Let’s us clarify another objection that comes up many times when holiness and obedience are preached. **Col 2:14** says that Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, that was contrary to us and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross. So, the unlearned or self-centered Christian will say, “See preacher, Christ nailed the law to the cross”! No, **Col 2:14** does not say that! Read the next three verses and you plainly see these were “ordinances” and not laws that were being referred to! The two great commandments that Christ gave us in **Mt. 22:37-40** tell us how to fulfill the whole law!

The fact is, that ever since Eve’s being deceived by the serpent, (Satan) in the garden, mankind has had in their nature an innate spirit of rebellion and a desire to want to disobey authorities. Let me make clear that I am referring to

“righteous” authority. From the authority of God, to God’s delegated authority to parents, law enforcement, church leadership and civil government. Again, I want to emphasize that I am referring to “righteous” authority. Unrighteous authority has no authority! Only force! It is up to each individual to decide when obeying these tyrants is right or wrong. You may need to read Acts chapter 5 for guidance on when we can and should comply in each circumstance. But seeing as it has been in man’s fallen nature to not want to obey, many times even righteous authority, we need to discuss this issue briefly.

Being a pastor for over forty years I have had the honor to perform several marriages. While I can say that as best as I can recall, I have only had one instance when the bride had a problem with the word “obey” being part of her vows before God and man. But I can state empathically that the word “obey” is one of the most hated and ignored words spoken today! Even in the church! It seems it smacks of a “legalistic” point of view. To make this final point as briefly as possible, we can simply state, “That to not obey is to dis-obey! Most folks don’t realize that when we dis-obey, we are showing disrespect. Dis or diss is an actual word meaning “to disrespect, insult, taunt, malign, slap, slander, humiliate.” So every time we disobey God, parents or any other righteous authority, we are committing a horrible act to disgrace that authority! Bear in mind that rebellion is witchcraft and disobedience brings the wrath of God! (I Sam 15:23, Col 3:6)

It’s truly easy to understand. Holiness is not legalism! It is what a people that sincerely love God and are betrothed to His Son Jesus Christ are! That is obedient to His Law and not rebellious to His Word!

In Christ’s Service,

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