

I Will Put My Laws Into Their Hearts

I don't believe we have any idea how much of a hold legalism has on us. Let me explain. I was the Boy's Dean at an Adventist Academy. When we would have staff meetings the majority of what we focused on was the kind of rules needed to keep the students in line and how to enforce them? We never talked about how we could bring them to the place where they would surrender to Christ and allowing Him to be the controlling power in their lives so the rules would be redundant. When I was in high school, I spent a year at a school where the principal threw out all the rules and put us under God and it ended up being the most spiritual year for everyone and definitely changed the direction of my life. Typically, I have found that the more conservative the school, the more rules they have and the more legalistic the individuals are. Some institutions have become so legalistic and controlling that if you decide to leave you are told that you will go to hell if you do.

If students appeared to be keeping the rules the staff would praise them and tell them how good they were and that if they kept up the good work, they'd surely go to heaven. But simply keeping rules saves no one. If one does not have a faith relationship with God, it is totally useless. It is legalism. Jesus told the people that "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22, 23 What? But weren't they keeping all the rules, and not only that, but doing lots of good works besides. Like I said, this is totally useless unless you have a faith relationship with God. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Romans 14:23 "Not just any relationship will do. It has to be a faith relationship where you are totally surrendered to God, acknowledging your total dependence, faith and trust in Him for everything - a surrender where you can give God permission to do whatever it takes to save you. That is the kind of surrendered relationship I am talking about - where you are open to God doing anything that is necessary to change you into the person He wants you to be, no matter how much it might hurt, no matter what He might ask you to do. Anything short of this will leave you in a lost condition. God demands your all, or you get nothing.

If God, through the Holy Spirit, is controlling one's life there is no need for rules, not even the Ten Commandments. That's right! Not even the Ten Commandments, to say nothing about all the rules that man comes up with to keep us straight. When did God give us the Ten Commandments in writing? Yes, it was in the wilderness after the Israelites were freed from Egypt. So how did those who lived during the thousands of years prior to that know how God wanted them to live? God has told us. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" Hebrews 10:16. If God's laws are in our hearts and minds we don't have to have any written laws. Our consciences and the Holy Spirit become our guides-- we don't need rules.

The Israelites were given a written law because they had wandered so far from God that they no longer had it written on their hearts. When God presented His law to them, what did they say? They said that they would keep them. How? In their own strength (legalism). And most of them and us have been trying to do the same thing ever since. How long did their obedience last? Well Moses was up in the mountain for 40 days and when he came back they were partying around a golden calf, and that wasn't the first day of partying. It took some time to make a golden calf as well. So, it wasn't very long.

I was born in 1950 and I went through our church school system except for the first grade. I can remember when the girls were told that it was immoral (a sin) if their dresses were higher than 4" below the knees when sitting. Dress standards in the world got shorter and shorter with time. Due to social pressure, the length that the girls in our schools were told was moral got shorter and shorter, as well, until the girls' skirts were 4" above the knee, last I heard. So, what did this tell the young people? It told them that God changes His requirements according to social pressure. Who talked to God and was informed by Him that 4" below the knees was moral in His sight? I believe that in God's sight the 4" below the knees was already immoral. I believe that, if anyone were to do the research, God's standards were even longer than that. What we are doing is teaching young people that God will change His standards if we push Him hard enough and that man can set the standards of morality and God will abide by them. This is Popery and look where it has gotten us. We wonder why people have no direction or moral values and why we have very few godly leaders. The vast majority are simply following men who are doing what is right in their own eyes, going by their own wisdom. The blind leading the blind.

We are to put people under God not under man. We are to educate them to understand that they are individually responsible to God, not man. God's standards never change. "For I am the LORD, I change not;" Malachi 3:6. We are to teach them that God will be their guide. He will write His laws on their hearts and minds and they are to listen, following the Holy Spirit and their consciences. The United States was founded by individuals who understood this principal of being under God. But the vast majority today choose to live in legalism. Legalism can't survive without rules, and lots of them. The Jews during Christ's time were prime examples of this. They had hundreds of rules just to help them keep the Sabbath. But they were lost in spite of it. It was those legalists who crucified Christ. Keeping rules will never save us. Making rules to keep us on the straight and narrow will never save us. It is only having a close faith relationship with God where He guides us, instructs us, and empowers us to do what He would have us do.

Who is to be in charge of our salvation? “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6 Who is to do the work? Christ in you, is your hope of glory. All you are asked to do is surrender to Him so He can do the work. Paul put it this way: “O you poor and silly and thoughtless and unreflecting and senseless Galatians! Who has fascinated or bewitched or cast a spell over you, unto whom--right before your very eyes--Jesus Christ (the Messiah) was openly and graphically set forth and portrayed as crucified? Let me ask you this one question: Did you receive the Holy Spirit as the result of obeying the Law and doing its works, or was it by hearing the message of the Gospel and believing it? Was it from observing a law of rituals or from a message of faith? Are you so foolish and so senseless and so silly? Having begun your new life spiritually with the Holy Spirit, are you now reaching perfection by dependence on the flesh? Galatians 3:1-3 Amplified Bible

Jesus has given us an instructor so we can know what is right and wrong. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:16, 17 “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” John 14:26. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to teach us His will. We don't need to go to man, in fact it is very dangerous to go to man to find out what God's will is for us. How do we know whether he is being led of God in what he is telling us to do? If we ever listen to a man we need to first go and check out what he is saying with God's Word before we even consider following it. It is far better for us to go to God's Word ourselves rather than going to man for our instruction.

I have heard it said that we need a balance. In other words, we need to have moral rules and also allow the Holy Spirit to guide, that there is a place for moral rules that man comes up with to guide us. Yes, one could argue that, but only if those rules are based of a plain “thus saith the Lord.” If the rules are simply based on a “thus saith a man,” they are wrong, and will only cause people to look to man as their moral guide and leader. But, I can find no place in God's Word where true Christians and legalism go together. There is no place for legalism in the Christian life. Legalism is working out our own salvation through our own strength and there is no place for that in the Christian life. God's Word and the principles found there are to be our guide, not man-made rules. And the sooner we understand this and teach this the sooner Jesus can come back. If we see someone going astray from a “thus saith the Lord” we may go to that individual, lead them to Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit to convict them of their wrong actions. We are not to make rules that will in turn compel them to do the right thing, as we see it, if they want to stay in our society. They may comply, but when they are no longer in our society they will most likely quit keeping our rules. So what have we accomplished for their salvation? Usually we find we've turned them away from God rather than leading them to Him.

The Laodicean Church was a church who was doing exactly this. They were making and keeping all the rules in their own strength and thought that they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing; and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Why? Because they thought that in keeping all the rules that they were in a saving relationship with God. But they only had a form of godliness, and were denying the power thereof.

When Jesus was here on earth how many rules did He give us to live by? How often did He teach on the Ten Commandments? When people asked Him about rules He simply referred them to the Ten Commandments but He never brought them up without first being asked about them. He simply taught principles of Christian living, He gave us no new rules. In fact He did everything in His power to tear down moral rules. He did this so much that he was accused of doing away with the Ten Commandments. On many occasions He purposely and publicly broke man-made moral rules to make a point. He had no use for man-made moral rules. In fact, that is one of the reasons the scribes and Pharisees hated Jesus so much and determined to have Him killed. On seven occasions he publicly broke their man-made Sabbath laws and brought their anger and hatred upon Himself. After Jesus went back to Heaven how many rules did His disciples make? I can find none. In fact, just like Jesus, they did away with many of the existing moral rules rather than making more. Even today Jesus is said to have done away with all the laws, even the Ten Commandments. They say that they were nailed to the cross. There should be no doubt, Jesus was not in favor of us making more moral rules to live by – the Ten Commandments are more than enough. What we should be doing instead of making more and more rules is teaching people how to relate to God and surrender to Him. He will then write His rules on their hearts and minds and there will be absolutely no need for written rules, not even the Ten Commandments. Remember, for thousands of years there were no written commandments. They were written in the hearts and minds of God's people and this is where they should be today.

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