

Love or Legalism?

When we insist men must adhere strictly to the commandments of God, is it love or legalism?

Men say it is legalism. They say, "We should obey a Savior, not a system." Or, "Give me the man, not a plan." Their idea is that to admit the existence of a law by which man must live in order to be right with God, is legalism.

God, however, calls this love. The Spirit said, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome*" (1 John 5:3). Jesus said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). Keeping the commandments of God is an expression of love, not legalism. To insist others do the same is love for God and man, not legalism in a system or plan.

The Holy Spirit was sent to reveal all truth (John 16:13). Why would anyone think the truth was revealed so men could be cavalier toward it? It was revealed so men could obey it and be set free (John 8:32). Paul wrote, "*But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered*" (Romans 6:17). This does not destroy a relationship with the Savior, for it is His system -- the gospel (Hebrews 5:9).

- by Steven F. Deaton

Man's Duty to "Prove All Things"

Men are prone to go to extremes. This has always been true. Paul seems to have been guarding against this tendency when he wrote, "*Despise not prophesyings; prove all things; hold fast that which is good*" (1 Thessalonians 5:20-21). In his day, there were those who claimed to "prophesy" by the Spirit, and did; and there were those who claimed to "prophesy" by the Spirit and did not. The result was that, at least, some "despised" all "prophesyings" by reason of the false claims of the pretenders. Such a wholesale rejection of all "prophesyings" was unreasonable and unsafe. It was wrong. It is not right either to reject the true because some is false or to accept the false because some is true. Paul indicated the safe course: "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*" If there had been no evil mixed with the good, the admonition to "*prove all things*" and to "*hold fast that which is good*" would not have been necessary.

What is the meaning of the word "prove?" It signifies to try, to put to the test. The word is employed elsewhere in the New Testament in this sense (Luke 14:19). It means that we should examine everything we hear before we receive it or reject it, as the case may be. At this point, Adam Clarke said, "Whatever ye hear in these 'prophesyings' or preachings, examine by the words of Christ, and by the doctrines which, from time to time, we have delivered unto you in our preaching and writings. Try the spirits — the different teachers — by the word of God."

In the words of the prophet, "*To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them*" (Isaiah 8:20). The conduct of the Bereans was in keeping with the spirit of the command under consideration, for we read, "*Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of the mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so*" (Acts 17:11 ASV). The people of Berea put what they heard to the test, using the scriptures as their standard of examination. They acted rightly and wisely.

Why will people not do the same today? It is common for the message of a modern preacher to be accepted without thought, testing or investigation by those who are his friends religiously, and just as common for the same message to be rejected, without consideration, by his prejudiced religious enemies. These two unreasonable extremes are two of the most unmitigated curses of Christendom.

Let it be observed that this passage which *allows the right* also *enjoins the duty* of proving, testing, and investigating what is heard. It does not permit one to be an indifferent and passive listener. This some seem to prefer. They attend the services, not to be taught, not to bring into use any faculty of discernment or testing, but to be impressed, and that without effort on their part.

"*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*" (1 John 4:1 ASV). All professed Christians

should endeavor to become "fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

- by **B. C. Goodpasture**

Paying Your Bills

In our 'easy credit' times, many people are having issues with buying things they can't afford and ultimately failing to pay for the things they have purchased. Surveys indicate that the average American household has over \$15,000 in credit card debt. That represents a good bit of buying without the ability to pay. And that leads to the rapid increase in bankruptcies being reported. One out of every 55 households in America has filed for bankruptcy.

What's a Christian to do? There are several important things to consider:

1) Remember that everything we have is from God. We are simply stewards of His blessings, and should use all for His glory. "Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth God" (Jer. 9:24). "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18).

2) Be carefully on guard against materialism and covetousness. Jesus warned, "How hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:24). The desire to be rich leads to temptation and destruction (1 Tim. 6:9). Jesus advised that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Lk. 12:15).

3) Prudent saving is commended in the Scriptures. "There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up" (Prov. 21:20).

4) Know that God expects and demands that we pay our bills. "The wicked borroweth and payeth not again" (Ps. 37:21). "Owe no man anything, but to love one another" (Rom. 13:8).

Wise planning and careful spending are essential, not just for financial security, but also for spiritual safety. Right priorities will keep us on track in both realms. Think!

- by **Greg Gwin**