

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Righteous Submission vs Zealous Obedience to Principle

Righteous Submission vs Zealous Obedience to Principle - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2004/12/11 7:22

The following thoughts came to me after meditating upon Rom 10, particularly v1-4:

- 1 Brethren, my heart desire and prayer to God for Israel, is that they might be saved.
- 2 For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knoweldge
- 3 For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submi
- tted themselves to the righteousness of God.
- 4 For, Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness, unto every body that believeth.

To set the scene for my train of thought, I'll include a number of assumptions that can be made.

Paul, being a pharisee, knew what Isreal considered to be righteous.

Paul had not given up on Israel.

Israel, as a people, were particularly zealous for God.

Rather than trying to find the heart of God, they distilled all the statements of Moses and the Prophets into a detailed list of "dos and don'ts".

Christ's purpose is that people would cease to follow these letter of the Law, and being to operate out of a heart for God

This is really, baby christian stuff, however, it seems to me that often times, this truth is agreed to with mental assent, but not with lifestyles.

Let me explain. As finite beings, life seems impossible without knowing what we are doing at anytime. We need to know that our deeds are in agreement with a prescribed principle, rather than acting out of the nature that God has placed with in us, being cultivated through perpetual communion with God, emanating from regular and consistant quiet times with G od.

This "nessesity for principle" can appear to one to be righteousness, while to another, the absense of this "safety net" can appear to be a licence to commit any kind of immoral behaviour. Please understand that I am in no way trying to promote a kind of "until God 'convicts' you of a specific sin, you can disobey scripture". What I am essentially saying is that "obedience" that is spawned from a bregudged heart, is in fact disobedience.

A pass over the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 5-7), particularly the beatitudes (Mat 5:3-12), will reveal the priority of the heart attitude over the action. This is not to say that actions are irrelevant, but that internal agreement with God is of higher importance.

Consider Jesus explaining obedience of heart (particularly Mat 5:17,21-22,27-28). We can see this as a "raising of the bar" - It's not enough to control your actions, but you need to control your thoughts. Could it be, that like Israel listening to Moses, in coming to this assumption we are "establishing our own righteousness", rather than coming to a greater dimension of the knowledge of God?

I believe that Christ is saying to us, "The problem isn't that your killing and adultering, but that you want to be a murderer and adulterer." After all, you're not going to do something you really don't want to do. How many are fighting an urge to go out and buy drug and get high while reading this? The next question would be, how many of those that answered "No" to the last question, have ever had a desire to do drugs? Hopefully, the people who answer an ashamed "Yes" to the second question, answer an indignant "No!!" to the first.

For me, being a reformed addict, drugs are no longer an issue, and not their temptation is even on the proverbial menu of sins for my flesh to select. Sure it appears periodically as a "special of the day", but not with the regularity of things like lying, lustful thoughts, anger, and laziness, which are "specialties of the house". To be honest, the only struggle I have with drugs is fighting the urge to look down on addicts as second class citizens.

Does this mean that I desire to be angry, lustful...etc? Of course not, but reality is, I have not quite developed the desire with my behaviour that will lead to compulsive obedience in these areas. Does that give me licence to fulfill these lusts? Of course not. Am I ashamed of my "ever present sin"? Of course. Then why is it there? Mmmmm...can I answer that honestly. Probably not. Is it I don't pray enough? Is it that I don't spend enough time in the Word? These are "real life" issues to be confronted. Do I have the answers? To be honest, not really. I may be able to present a lot of hypotheticals, but answers...if I had them, I wouldn't have the problems.

Before people accuse me of absolving people from their God-given responsibility, let me point toward Eph 2:8-10.

8 For by grace are we saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

From this, we can see a progression.

Salvation is by grace alone.

The mechanism for receiving this grace is trusting God (faith) as the only one "rich enough" (Rom 10:12) offer this saving grace.

Even the actual faith isn't our doing, as it can only be given to us, as God Himself reveals His truth to us (Rom 10:17).

Because of all this, we can take no credit for our salvation as coming about by our own doing.

Once the salvation issue is settled, we display our salvation, by fulfilling His righteous requirements, and obeying His directions.

While this can sound like a "I have faith, you have works" kind of thing, the truth of the matter is, that "good works" are the only logical option for a person. After all, a man who has been made aware of the seriousness of his rebellion against God, by the convicting light of the Holy Spirit, could not in good conscience wilfully rebel against Him again (Mat 18:23-35). Surely it would break his heart at the very thought of disappointing his Saviour that "...loved (him) and gave himself for (him)" (Gal 2:20b).

My one and only point is that there is little point splitting hairs over details of our rebellion against Deity. In the end, it is all disobedience from dishonesty to genocide. Albeit, we commit our sins one at a time, so therefore we must confess them likewise. My heart in explaining the whole obedience to "Principle" vs "Deity", is that splitting hairs over the principles, will inevitably lead to excusing sin.

If we consider ourselves to be "spiritually and morally bankrupt", and that leading to our "mourning" over our personal lack, we will begin to comprehend "meekness", and develop a true "hunger and thirst for righteousness". If after all that, we are not "merciful" toward others, then perhaps the love of God isn't in us. This mercifulness that emanates from an earnest desire for righteousness, is true "purity of heart". Who else would be qualified to be a pure-motivated "peacemaker", between God and man? Who else will be able to "rejoice and be glad" in the midst of "persecution", but them that have "seen God"?

Am I declaring a "cheap grace" or "legalistic" message here? I'll leave that for you to decide.

Yours in Christ.

Re: Righteous Submission vs Zealous Obedience to Principle - posted by crsschk (), on: 2004/12/11 11:32

If I am following you here I would say the answer to that last question is neither, as it should be.

A new favorite word that has come about from reading much of Oswald Chambers of late is;

Disposition.

As in 'changed disposition'. In a sense it is not that we are adhering to principles and thus changing our character, but the opposite. That the principles adhere to a changed disposition.

The former is of the Pharisee and the religionists, mostly on the outside, on the surface, wouldn't say without any effect but largely driven by self-effort and along with the feeling of accomplishment which is an illusion. If we of ourselves were

able to pull ourselves up by the boot straps to accomplish the righteous requirements of the law, then Christ died for nothing.

As you stated,

Quote:
-----This is really, baby Christian stuff, however, it seems to me that often times, this truth is agreed to with mental assent, but not with lifestyles.

I couldn't agree more brother. It was probably one of the first startling revelations that didn't begin to come through for long after being lost in a world of modern day Christendom. It still seems that the core issue that should be made plain at the first, that you **must** be born **again** is skimmed over in a rush to produce 'converts' that are in actuality only giving a mental assessment to a set of principles that may or may not begin to alter our 'lifestyles'. Which is not what the Lord came to do.

It still seems that much of what goes on is a reverse and largely failing effort to work from the outside in. That's why hearing the use of 'accepting Christ' still makes me squeamish, the recent Tozer sermon on the use of this was well done I thought, (<https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/mydownloads/singlefile.php?lid648>) What Is It To Accept Jesus. It's not so much that it isn't true but that the connotations make it more or less like we are doing Him a favor.

What might many say if we were to couch this in more honest and truthful terms, that by 'accepting' you are in essence asking for the Lord to take a sword to every evil desire of our heart not just in this one moment of time but for the rest of your life? That from here on out you are no longer your 'own', that you have not only traded allegiance from 'your father the devil' to 'your Father who art in Heaven' but that you will go through the contortions of 'dying', mourning over the 'loss' of the sins that you used to have such a love/hate relationship with?

That every thought that springs forth is now exposed, before it ever reaches your lips. That in all honesty you are compelled to be in all honesty all the time. And even though the outcome is beyond words to express as the process unfolds, the question is, "Are you willing to 'accept' this?"

Quote:
-----My one and only point is that there is little point splitting hairs over details of our rebellion against Deity. In the end, it is all disobedience from dishonesty to genocide. Albeit, we commit our sins one at a time, so therefore we must confess them likewise. My heart in explaining the whole obedience to "Principle" vs "Deity", is that splitting hairs over the principles, will inevitably lead to excusing sin.

Without a doubt, while realizing that; *"Every kind of wrongdoing is sin, yet there are sins that do not lead to death."*(1Jo 5:17)...

Don't know how to go forward with this without making this rather long, but should backtrack a bit here and let Gill's commentary speak a little:

1Jo 5:16 - If anyone see his brother sin,.... Those who have such an interest at the throne of grace, and such boldness and freedom there, should make use of it for others, as well as themselves, and particularly for fallen believers; for a "brother"; not in a natural or civil sense, but in a spiritual sense, one that is judged to be born again, and belongs to the family and household of God, and is a member of a Gospel church; and so is under the watch, inspection, and care of the saints; and is observed to sin, as the best of men are not without it, nor the commission of it, in thought, word, or deed: and this sin of his is

a sin which is not unto death; every sin, even the least sin, is in its own nature mortal, or deserving of death; the proper wages of sin is death, yea, death eternal; yet none of the sins of God's elect are unto death, or issue in death, in fact; which is owing not to any different nature there is in their sins, or to their good works which counterbalance them; but to the grace of God, and to the blood and righteousness of Christ, by which they are pardoned and justified, and freed from obligation to punishment, or eternal death, the just demerits of them: but how should another man know that a brother's sin is not unto death, when it is of the same nature and kind with another man's? it is known by this, that he does not continue in it; he does not live in the constant commission of it; his life is not a course of iniquity; that sin he sins is not a governing one in him; though he falls into it, he rises up out of it through divine grace, and abides not in it; and he has a sense of it, and is sorry for it, after a godly sort, loaths it, and himself for it; is ashamed of it, ingenuously confesses it, and mourns over it and forsakes it: now when any strong believer or spiritual man sees or knows that a brother has sinned, and

this is his case,

he shall ask; he shall pray to God for him, that he would administer comfort to him, discover his love, and apply his pardoning grace to him, and indulge him with his presence and the light of his countenance:

and he shall give him life; that is, God shall give the sinning brother life; by which may be meant comfort, that which will revive his drooping spirits, and cause him to live cheerfully and comfortably, that so he may not be swallowed up with over much sorrow; or he shall grant a discovery of the pardon of his sin unto him, which will be as life from the dead, and will give him a comfortable hope of eternal life, of his right unto it, and meetness for it:

for them, or "to them"

that sin not unto death, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render it; for this phrase is only descriptive of the persons to whom life is given by God, upon the prayers of saints for them, and not that this life is given to him that prays, and by him to be given to the sinning person. The Vulgate Latin version renders the whole thus, "and life shall be given to him that sins not unto death"; which leaves the words without any difficulty: the Ethiopic version indeed renders it, "and he that prays shall quicken him that sins a sin not unto death"; and this sense some interpreters incline to, and would have with this text compared 1Ti_4:16.

There is a sin unto death; which is not only deserving of death, as every other sin is, but which certainly and inevitably issues in death in all that commit it, without exception; and that is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which is neither forgiven in this world nor in that to come, and therefore must be unto death; it is a sinning wilfully, not in a practical, but doctrinal way, after a man has received the knowledge of the truth; it is a wilful denial of the truth of the Gospel, particularly that peace, pardon, righteousness, eternal life, and salvation, are by Jesus Christ, contrary to the light of his mind, and this joined with malice and obstinacy; so that there is no more or other sacrifice for such a sin; there is nothing but a fearful looking for of wrath and fury to fall on such opposers of the way of life; and as the presumptuous sinners under Moses's law died without mercy, so must these despiteful ones under the Gospel; see Mat_12:31. Some think there is an allusion to one of the kinds of excommunication among the Jews, called "shammatha", the etymology of which, according to some Jewish writers, is *there is death* (t).

I do not say that he shall pray for it; the apostle does not expressly forbid to pray for the forgiveness of this sin, yet what he says amounts unto it; he gives no encouragement to it, or any hopes of succeeding, but rather the reverse; and indeed where this sin is known, or can be known, it is not to be prayed for, because it is irremissible; but as it is a most difficult point to know when a man has sinned it, the apostle expresses himself with great caution.

(t) T. Bab. Moed Katon, fol. 17. 1.

Certainly much of this is 'preaching to the choir', but you never know who may be traveling through these parts.

So to round this all out, think Aaron you are on the mark. It is, and always will be a issue of and an outworking of the heart, to, as you put it "operate out of a heart for God."

Impeccable Integrity

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light,...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

"If that means cleansing from all sin in conscious experience only, may God have mercy on us. A man who has been made obtuse by sin will say he is not conscious of sin. Cleansing from all sin by the blood of Jesus is far deeper than we can be conscious of; it is cleansing from all sin in the sight of God because the disposition of His Son is working out in every particular, not to our consciousness, but deeper than our consciousness. We are not cleansed more and more from all sin; if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we are cleansed from all sin. In our consciousness it works with a keen, poignant knowledge of what sin is. The great need today among those of us who profess sanctification is the patience and ability to work out the holiness of God in every detail of our lives. When we are first adjusted to God the Holy Spirit works on the big general lines; then He begins to educate us down to the scruple, He makes us sensitive over things we never before thought of. No matter what our experience may be we must beware of the curse of being stationary, we have to go on and on "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

If you have been making a great profession in your religious life but begin to find that the Holy Spirit is scrutinizing you, let His searchlight go straight down, and He will not only search you, He will put everything right that is wrong; He will make the past as though it had never been; He will "restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25); He will blot out the "handwriting of requirements" that is against you (Colossians 2:14); He will put His Spirit within you and cause you to walk in His ways; He will make you pure in the deepest recesses of your personality. Thank God, Jesus Christ's salvation is a flesh-and-blood reality!

Who is going to do all of this in us? The Lord Jesus Christ. Let Jesus Christ proclaim His gospel: we can have the very disposition of Jesus imparted to us, and if we have not got it we will have to tell God the reason why. We have to tell God we don't believe He can do it- there are details of our lives He cannot put right, back tracks He cannot clear up, ramifications of evil He cannot touch. Thank God that is a lie! He can. If God cannot do that, we have "followed cunningly devised fables" (2Peter 1:16). That is where the fight has to be fought- along the line of what Jesus Christ can do in the human soul. Unless God has searched us and cleansed us and filled us with the Holy Spirit so that we are undeserving of censure in His sight, the Atonement has not been applied to our personal experience.

Are we willing to let God scrutinize us, or are we doing that worst of all things, trying to justify ourselves? People say if they are living up to all the light they have, meaning the light of conscience, they are all right. We may be consciously free of sin, but we are not justified on that account; we may be walking in the light of conscience, but we are not justified on that account either (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:3-4); we are only justified in the sight of God through the Atonement at work in our inner lives. God grant we may let His searching scrutiny go right through us until there is nothing He has not searched. We are far too big for ourselves, infinitely too big. The majority of us try to put ourselves in a bandbox, but we cannot cabin and confine our lives. There is a purpose in every life that is in God's keeping, of which we know little but which He will fulfill if we let Him rightly relate us to Himself."

Oswald Chambers
"The Servant As His Lord"

And for a change, no apologies for the length...:-)