

Smorgasbord Religion

Introduction

James 2:10-11

1. **When God instructed Saul to destroy the Amalekites, Saul chose to do most of what he was commanded.**
 - A. **But the presumptuous attitude which caused him to set aside any of what God said was described by God as rebellion.**
1 Samuel 15:1-3, 7-9, 13-23
 - 1) **Saul was practicing what we today might call a smorgasbord religion.**
 - a) **Where we take one thing and leave another on the basis of what happens to please us at the moment.**
2. **We might also call this kind of obedience “selective service” to God.**
3. **But we are not at liberty to “pick and choose” which parts of God’s will we prefer to obey.**
4. **This is clearly taught in James 2:10-11.**

The Emphasis of James 2:10

1. The passage does not teach that no matter how devoted one is to the Lord — no matter how diligently one strives to obey the Lord — that one inadvertent transgression makes one as unrighteous in God’s eyes as the worst sinner.

A. A clear distinction is made in the New Testament between those who are honestly trying to serve God and those who are not.

Romans 6:16-18

B. None were perfect in the church in Sardis, but the Lord distinguished between those who had “defiled their garments” and those who had not.

Revelation 3:4-5 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

2. The passage does teach that God gave all of His will — and we do not have the prerogative of disregarding any of it arbitrarily.

1) The problem is that of being “above the law,” being a judge of the law rather than one who is to be judged by the law.

James 2:12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

James 4:11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.

3. **Perhaps we think that obedience in most things will compensate for disregard in a few.**
 - A. **But no amount of “good works” will compensate for a lawless attitude.**
Matthew 7:21-23

4. **We sometimes pass the instructions of God through some type of “filter” and throw away anything that does not make it through.**
 - A. **Some of our filters are: preference, convenience, our own understanding.....**
 - B. **Any filter may clog up so that nothing will get through!**

5. **Consider Noah (Genesis 6:14-22)**
 - A. **He was commanded to build the ark:**
 - 1) **Of gopher wood.**
 - 2) **With 3 decks having compartments.**
 - 3) **With pitch inside and out.**
 - 4) **300 x 50 x 30 cubits.**
 - 5) **With a window and a door.**
 - B. **Noah did “according to all that God commanded him” (6:22), but suppose for a moment if he had “filtered” God’s instructions?**
 - C. **If he had kept 80% of God’s instructions, would that have compensated for his disregard of the remaining 20%?**

6. **We cannot build up “extra credit” with God by obeying some of what He commands right now so that we can later disregard His will when we wish.**

7. **If we set aside God's will when it conflicts with our own, then we are not "obeying" God even when we do what He has said — we are doing what He says because it is our will.**
8. **In truth, to disregard any part of God's will, as if we were not obligated to keep that part, is to be a "transgressor of the law."
James 2:11**

The Principle of Unqualified Obedience to God

1. **We are asked to have an attitude of unqualified, unreserved, no-strings-attached submission to all of God's will for us.
Mark 12:30**
2. **Amaziah was said to have done "what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a loyal heart" (2 Chronicles. 25:2).**
 - A. **The word "loyal" translates *shalem* = finished, perfect.**
 - B. **"not with a perfect heart" (KJV), "not with a blameless heart" (RSV), "not wholeheartedly" (NIV), "not with an undivided mind" (Moffatt).**
3. **It is possible to have this kind of devotion. In contrast to Amaziah, who had less than a wholehearted commitment to God's will, consider:**
 - A. **Joshua and Caleb
Numbers 32:11-12**
 - B. **Josiah
2 Kings 23:25**
4. **This is a part of what it means to be "pure in heart" to be single-minded in our devotion to God and in our determination to do His will.**

Some Practical Applications of the Principle

1. **Do we refuse to participate in some of the things God has commanded to be done in our public worship?**

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

2. **Do we excuse ourselves from some aspects of the work of the local congregation?**

- A. **Do we think we can disregard evangelism? Edification? Benevolence?**

- B. **What about the various "support" activities that are required to make possible the worship and work of the congregation?**

3. **Do we submit to civil authority (Romans 13:1-7) and authority in the family (Ephesians 5:22-24; 6:1-3), but disregard the authority God has instituted in the local congregation?**

4. **Are we selective about which sins we will avoid?**

Romans 1:29-31

Galatians 5:19-21

- A. **Do we make exceptions for ourselves, or believe that the "sins" which we commit are more "respectable" than others'?**

- B. **Regarding some sins as less offensive than others is the very point of the context of James 2:10-11**

James 2:10-11

Conclusion

1. **Obedience to God is not a partial endeavor — the gospel aims to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).**
2. **We cannot disregard any of God’s will without disregarding God Himself!**
3. **We must live “as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12).**
4. **We must truly “love the Lord (our) God with all (our) heart, with all (our) soul, and with all (our) mind.”**
 - A. **When we do, then we will be determined to do everything that He has instructed for us to do without wavering.**
 - 1) **A love of God and a desire to be with Him eternally should motivate us to fully do His will.**

Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

