

Part 9 – August 8, 2010

What? Specific Commandments? Why, You Legalist!

Intro

Now, what are we to DO? First, the foundation--the Gospel.

"THE BASIC FACTS OF THE GOSPEL-A SUMMARY"

- 1. Our need for the gospel: Because of our sin and rebellion against the Creator, we all stand alienated from a Holy God and are objects of His justified wrath.**
- 2. God's provision in the gospel: God in His great love sent His own divine Son to accomplish our salvation and to reconcile us to God. The message of the gospel includes:**
 - Jesus' incarnation (taking on Himself human flesh);
 - His sinless life, which met the demands of God's perfect law;
 - His substitutionary death on the Cross, which paid the penalty for man's sin and satisfied the righteous wrath of God;
 - His resurrection, which demonstrated God's satisfaction with His sacrifice;
 - His glorification and ascension to the right of the Father where He now reigns, interceding on behalf of the Church, and from which He will one day return to judge all people.
- 3. Our response to the gospel: "The gospel calls us to place our faith in Jesus, trusting in His work to save us from sin's dominion and penalty (ultimately, hell), and turning from sin to walk in obedience to Christ. The gospel assures us that all who do so are declared righteous before God, adopted into His family, given new spiritual life, and assured of eternal life in the presence of God forever." Kenneth Maresco, Sovereign Grace, 2001**

PREACH IT TO YOURSELF EVERY DAY!!

- Take one minute and write down four commitments you have made to God about your life and your manner of living:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____

Just how committed are you to God about these commitments? Does it bother you to think about, discuss, or share with others any of the specific commitments you have made? If so, why?

Psalm 119:106
1 Timothy 4:7-8
Romans 12:1

Commit Yourself To God

An athlete's commitment to the Olympic Games vs. Romans 12:1

"That is an amazing thing to me, that God could find anything we might do to be pleasing. But it is so! ... That God's will for me should be pleasing, pleasing to me—that I understand. How could it be otherwise if God is all-wise and all-good? He must will what is good for me. But that my offering of myself to Him should somehow also please Him when I know myself to be sinful and ignorant and half-hearted even in my best efforts—that is astonishing."

Boice, Romans, vol. 4, p. 1505

"God calls us to be faithful to our spouses--if we are married. Is it possible that we could commit to be faithful to our spouses--without committing ourselves to God? Yes, that is possible. Is it possible that we could commit to be faithful to God--without being faithful to our spouses? Obviously not. So why is that distinction important?"

Good, but inadequate, motives:

"Am I more concerned with seeking to put off sinful habits than I am to put on Christ-like character?"

"When we sin we are more vexed at the lowering of our self-esteem than we are grieved at God's dishonor. We are surprised and irritated at our own lack of self-control in subjecting ourselves to unworthy habits.... The first cause of this is self-love, which is unable to stand the disappointment of not seeing ourselves in time of trial come out beautiful, erect, and admirable." **Bridges**, quoting Faber, *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 147

Romans 6:13

"If you fill your mind only with the products of our secular culture, you will remain secular and sinful. If you fill your head with trashy novels, you will begin to live like the characters you read about. If you do nothing but watch television, you will begin to act like the scoundrels on television. On the other hand, if you feed your mind on the Bible and Christian books, train it by godly conversation, and discipline it to critique what you see and hear by applying biblical truths to the world's ideas, you will grow in godliness and become increasingly useful to God."

Boice, Romans, vol. 4, p. 1502

James 3:5-6
1 Thessalonians 4:10-12
Ephesians 4:28
Romans 10:14-15

"For every special secular function you attend, determine to attend a Christian function also. And when you attend a secular function, do so as a witness by word and action for the Lord Jesus Christ." **Boice**, at p. 1504

First, we must give ourselves!

"Our problem, of course, is that we do not want to give God ourselves. We will give Him things. It is relatively easy to give God money, though even here we are frequently far less than generous. We will even give God a certain amount of our time. We will volunteer for charitable work. But we will not give ourselves. Yet without ourselves these other "gifts" mean nothing to the Almighty.

You will begin to understand the Christian life only when you understand that God does not want your money or your time without yourself. You are the one for whom Jesus died. You are the one He loves. So when the Bible speaks of reasonable service, as it does here, it means that you are the one God wants. It is sad if you try to substitute things for that, the greatest gift."

Boice, Romans, vol. 4, p. 1516-17

Romans 12:1 "offer" = "a decisive, once-for-all dedication or commitment."

No Exceptions

"No secret sins that we want to keep to ourselves. No sinful habits that we are unwilling to give up, because that is "just me!" No exceptions."

Jonathan Edwards:

"Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die."

Possible Personal Responses:

- "That's impossible"
- "I don't want to make a commitment I don't think I can keep"

"Commitment means to clearly state, before God, our intentions towards Him and His ways"

"Have you ever prayed a prayer like this? 'Lord, let me make a difference for you that is utterly disproportionate to who I am'? That's the prayer I wrote in the margin of a book recently beside a quote from David Brainerd. You recall that Brainerd was a missionary to the New England Indians 250 years ago. He wrote:

Oh, that I might be a flaming fire in the service of the Lord. Here I am, Lord, send me; send me to the ends of the earth...send me from all that is called earthly comfort; send me even to death itself if it be but in Thy service and to promote Thy Kingdom.

Brainerd has made a difference for God utterly disproportionate to who he was. He was an obscure missionary in New England. He died at the age of twenty-nine. He was not well known. He was extremely vulnerable to depression. But his life has inspired the modern, Protestant missionary movement perhaps more than any other life since the apostles. Why?

One key reason is that he was so utterly *aflame for God*. *** [W]hat is the key to making a difference for God? Is it not truth-saturated, flaming zeal for God? Twice God asked Elijah in the cave [where he was hiding] on Mount Horeb, "What are you doing here?" And he answered both times, "I have been very zealous for the LORD of Hosts" (1 Kings 19:9-10, 13-14). Passion for the glory of the Lord is the key to making a difference all out of proportion to who we are. It is not the prerogative of old or young, intelligent or simple, men or women. This passion can flame up in the heart of any saint. Do we want it enough to seek it?"

Piper, A Godward Life, Book Two, pp.238-39

1 Peter 3:13-17

What Are Your Intentions?

"And if you will here stop, and ask yourself, why you are not as [holy] as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance, nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it.... This doctrine does not suppose, that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our own power to make ourselves perfect. It only supposes, that through the [lack] of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions, we fall into such irregularities of life, as by the ordinary means of grace, we should have power to avoid." **Bridges, The Discipline of Grace**, quoting William Law, p. 150

"If we don't intend to do something we are very unlikely to do it. If we do not purpose in our hearts to live God's way, it is doubtful we will do so. If we neglect the methods and the means God has given us to learn His will, be built up in faith, and be found faithful members of His church--with zeal and passion for God's purposes, we will most likely not live lives of holiness."

Search me, oh God, reveal my heart. Expose my sin that it may be confessed. Search me, oh God, unveil each thought, and leave no hidden motive unaddressed.

Discover every action born in pride. Show me the worldly ways / still embrace. May every anxious thought be brought to light, and each unspoken fear with faith replaced.

Search me, oh God, observe my life. Bring to my mind each idle word / speak. Search me, oh God, test my resolve, and alert me where you find it weak.

Reveal all weakened walls within my soul. Show me potential dangers unforeseen. Then clothe my conscience with your Holy Spirit, help me to guard it well and keep it clean.

Search me, oh God, that I may walk in peace, filled with the joy of knowing all is well, my heart surrendered and my conscience clean. So great a joy my tongue can scarcely tell, oh what a joy to know that all is well.

Keith Green, *Search Me Oh God*

"Put on Christ--Put off dead flesh"

"[T]he road I used to drive to our office is frequently crowded with tourists [in the Summer].... Being unfamiliar with the city and sometimes unsure of their directions, tourists often tend to drive more slowly than we 'locals.' It is easy in such a situation to become impatient with them and to show that impatience in the way we drive. Sometimes after I had 'whipped around' someone so I could get on to work, I found myself hoping that person did not then see me turning into the driveway of a Christian organization.

The truth is, though, God knows I am a Christian and He knows I work for a Christian organization. If I would be ashamed to have a tourist identify my impatient driving with a Christian, how much more should I be ashamed before God. After all, He is the one I have committed myself to, to seek to please in all my thoughts and words and actions. So our commitment to pursue holiness must embrace every area of life and must include both the significant and the seemingly insignificant things we do. It must be a commitment both to put off the way of life of the old self and to put on the virtues of the new self." Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 152

"Put on Christ in the workplace"

"Again, let a Tradesman but have this intention [to deal with sin in our lives], and it will make him a saint in his shop; his everyday business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by being done in obedience to His will and pleasure.... He will therefore consider, not what arts, or methods, or application will soonest make him richer and greater than his brothers, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure; but he will consider what arts, what methods, what application can make worldly business most acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of holiness, devotion, and piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman; he cannot stop short of these degrees of piety, whenever it is his intention to please God in all his actions, as the best and happiest thing in the

world." Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*, quoting Wm. Law, p. 155

Specific Commitments or Intentions

"Let's make it our purpose, this week, to make some specific commitments and consecrations to the Lord, some lack in thought word or deed that the Holy Spirit has called to our mind this morning."

"There are many occasions in our experience when we may very rightly, and with benefit, renew our covenant with God. After *recovery from sickness* when, like Hezekiah, we have had a new term of years added to our life, we may fitly do it. After any *deliverance from trouble*, when our joys bud forth anew, let's again visit the foot of the cross, and renew our consecration. Especially, let's do this after any *sin which has grieved the Holy Spirit*, or brought dishonor upon the cause of God; let's then look to that blood which can make us whiter than snow, and again offer ourselves to the Lord. We should not only let our troubles confirm our dedication to God, but *our prosperity* should do the same. If we ever meet with occasions which deserve to be called 'crowning mercies' then, surely, if He has crowned us, we ought also to crown our God; let's bring forth anew all the jewels of the divine regalia which have been stored in the jewel closet of our heart, and let our God sit upon the throne of our love, arrayed in royal apparel....Have we lately received some blessing which we hardly expected? Has the Lord put our feet in a large room? Can we sing of mercies multiplied? Then this is the day to put our hand upon the horns of the altar, and say, 'Bind me here, my God; bind me here with cords, even forever.' ... [L]et's offer renewed prayers that our old vows may not be dishonored. Let's this morning make a binding agreement with Him because of the pains of Jesus...."

Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, April 24m