

Call to Obedience #450
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Does Christianity Need Morality?

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In recent years we have been in a rapid decline of morality unlike any seen before in our American history. For example, the growing acceptance of our churches allowing cohabitation, same-sex marriages and LGBT lifestyles are only outward symptoms of a deeper disease within her. Hence, if an angel was to give a report to Heaven on the state of the Church in America, I believe he would say that America has produced a Christianity almost totally devoid of morality. I believe he would report that the typical American Christian thinks that the laws of God are negotiable, depending on where he lives, where he came from or his current circumstances. Of course when he thinks like this, he always comes out a winner, justifying himself in maintaining his current exceptions to the laws written in God's book and embedded in his heart.

Before I go on, let me describe the typical American Christian or the typical American churchgoer. However, first take notice that there are thousands of Christians in this country who are not typical, who have paid the price to be ardent followers of Jesus. They are the remnant of God and it is only because of them that America is still being blessed. So by "typical" I mean anyone who is less and gives less than these ardent ones who enthusiastically and passionately give their all. By the "typical" Christian, I mean the kind of churchgoer who never attends a prayer meeting nor has a prayer life of his own, who never wins a soul to Christ nor makes any serious effort to do so, or any Christian who does not want a preacher meddling with his worldly lifestyle and carnality. Of course, Jesus makes the distinction between these two groups much simpler. To Him, the remnant are sheep, all others are goats.

Having defined the typical American Christian, let me now define morality. What is it? I believe that morality is the science that distinguishes right from wrong or good from bad. It is worthy of the name "science" because it deals with precise boundaries. Anything with boundaries can be defined and therefore is worthy of the name "science," in this case *moral science*. And moral science or just plain *morality* is all about God ordained boundaries. Let us now look at how this all started.

When God created the universe, the whole business of boundaries began. The very first thing God did was to divide light from darkness and the waters from the land, each with their own boundaries. Then God created a paradise, a garden for man to live in with precise boundaries. As long as Adam and Eve moved about within those boundaries, they were dressed in light, meaning they visibly manifested the image of God in which they were created. Describing it another way, you could see Adam and

Eve in this garden, in perfect humanity, dressed in the holiness of God. But when they disobeyed, they instantly lost the glory, became naked of that glory and were driven out of the garden, losing their fellowship with God. Being practical about this, God also has boundaries for us as to where we are to live and go to church.

Second, going beyond the physical boundaries of where we are to live, we also learn from the first pages of the Bible that God gave man a moral apparatus providing him with internal boundaries, therewith showing him what is right and wrong. The major component of this moral apparatus is the conscience, the internal knowledge of moral principles. He knows, because he knows. This kind of knowledge is called “a priori” knowledge by philosophers, meaning it is knowledge that comes without observation. In this case, this knowledge comes directly from God and only from God. God put this knowledge into every man, making man an entirely different species than all others. Had man not received a conscience, he would have long ago destroyed himself. But the conscience causes him to be morally restrained. When he is about to do something evil, he becomes inwardly aware that his action is evil; he feels ashamed; he feels inwardly warned of the consequences of his actions, causing him to think twice before he proceeds.

Third, God also placed the Ten Commandments into each man’s heart as part of his moral apparatus. Yes, He also wrote them in stone with His own finger at Mount Sinai, but **He wrote them into man’s heart and conscience first, including all Gentiles.** Even the man living in the remotest jungles of the world has these laws in his heart. He already knows that it is wrong to steal, murder or commit adultery before the missionary gets there. So then, when the missionary gets to him, he does not tell him something new in reference to these laws, but he simply reinforces what the pagan already knows. For this reason no one is without excuse on that Great Judgment Day for having violated these Ten Commandments, as Paul said specifically referencing the Gentiles: ***Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel*** (Rom. 2:15-16 emphasis added).

Again, because of the seriousness of these laws, God wrote them into both the heart of man and his conscience. God did not write the 673 laws of Moses into a man’s heart and conscience—only the Ten Commandments. The 673 laws of Moses were temporary, the Ten Commandments are eternal. When the Apostle Paul says: *we are no longer under the law*, he refers to those laws of Moses. But he gives us no excuse to ever abandon the Ten Commandments. It is never right to murder, to commit adultery or to covet your neighbor’s goods, etc. With all this we can say that man has a moral compass whose magnetic North is ultimately always pointing to the righteousness of Christ. He was designed to follow this compass.

So, we are not free nor safe to live without the Ten Commandments for they have their place in convicting us of sin and sustaining us in righteousness. These laws tell us how to relate to God and man; they reflect the holiness of God; and you cannot have holiness without law.

Fourth, then under the new covenant, **rather than Jesus doing away with the Ten Commandments, He elevated them to a higher place by giving us the Sermon on the Mount.** Here Jesus equated hatred with murder and lust was given the same status as adultery (Matt. 5:22, 28) and mere compliance to the Ten Commandments was elevated to include a call for purity of heart: *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God* (Matt. 5:8).

God is the creator of boundaries. In addition to Scripture, He also sent the Holy Spirit to us so that by Him we all may know our boundaries more precisely (John 16:13). **So God created a world of boundaries for men so that He could have fellowship with them within His designated boundaries.** Outside of these boundaries, there is disappointment and death. Do not be a fool and jump the fence, my friend. Do not exit the paradise of His presence or you will die forever. Do not settle for a Christianity that has been purchased with a little bit of pocket change at a flea market or circus. There is no power in it. In Christianity, purity and power go together.

Now let us return to thinking about this moral apparatus that is within you. As I said before, it is very powerful and it never fails to point to the holiness of God. It never needs to be calibrated or adjusted. It stays the same in every millennium. It will not change with the change of times or cultural mores, with advances in science and industry. So you can never say, "Well, that was then, but now we live in a different world. That was in the days of Moses, but now we have to adjust the moral compass to fit our age." No, this cannot be said because God has not changed. The moral compass is a reflection of His will and holiness and it will not change. It is like the North Pole and the physical compass: despite all the changes in thousands of years, it is still pointing to its magnetic North. These two truths are absolutes. However, if you continue overriding your moral compass, you will eventually become insensitive to it and a spiritual hardness and stubbornness sets in. Paul talks about such people as: *...having their conscience seared with a hot iron* (1 Tim. 4:2). You can get to the point where you will cease to sense any conviction, where you can sin with impunity and that is indeed a dangerous place to be in. It is said of such people in Romans 1 that God gave them over to their wickedness, meaning God gave up on them. You can cross a line of no return. That was the case with king Saul and also with Judas.

Jesus wants morality. Every true man of God, every representative of God, will deal with sin in the church. All the prophets did and all the apostles did in their epistles: Peter, Paul, James, Jude and John. And they did not only deal with sin by itself but also with carnality, the root of sin. **We must not only be saved from sin but also from carnality.** The Apostle Paul worked so hard on this truth that, in the end,

most churches rejected him or ignored him to the point where he had to earn some of his bread by making tents. Men of God, do not be surprised if people drive you out of the pulpit. In fact, it happens again and again. Jesus talked about those prophets who spoke out against sin and they were rejected and killed. And of course, Jesus also became more and more unpopular with people and was killed after only three years of ministry. (That is about as many years as many true men of God last in most congregations.) Regardless of the cost, you must embrace morality. **You cannot go to heaven without it, neither can the people of your congregation.** Morality delivers you from sin and Self to a life of romance, thrills and adventure with Jesus, even when the going gets rough. And it will get rough at times.

Morality demands separation. Where there is no separation, there is neither morality nor power. Do you remember when Jesus went to heal a 12-year-old girl in the house of Jairus? The first thing He did was to put everybody out of the house who was not right with God: *But He put them all outside, took her by the hand and called, saying, "Little girl, arise"* (Luke 8:54 NKJV). **We keep people in that Jesus would put out. And we drive people out that Jesus would keep in.** This is one reason why there is no power in our churches. Do you know the Greek word for "church?" It is "ecclesia," meaning "called out ones"—called out from the world to be a separate, holy people, a holy Temple, a bride: *...not having a spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing...* (Eph. 5:27). Holy people are a moral people. And you ask: "What do such people look like?" They are persons who consistently do that which is holy, who have been delivered from the power of sin, the world and the flesh, and who seek nothing but the perfect will of God. If we are such a people, Jesus will add to us those who should be saved. In such a church, people will not be drawn in or coerced in by human methods or persuasion, but they will be drawn in by the Holy Spirit, **who only draws in those who are willing to surrender all** (John 6:44).

For example, Jesus did not draw the rich young ruler into His fellowship because this young man was not willing to give up all that he had and follow Jesus. We always know when somebody is drawn in by the Holy Spirit because he will show up at the next prayer meeting if at all possible. He has an "insatiable" hunger for the things of God. Such a person does not know how to stay away from a church where God is working or from the word of God. You do not have to convince him over and over again that he is saved; instead, he tries to convince others of their need to come to Christ. And my friend, if we cleanse the church of all of its idolatry and adultery, we shall see miracles happening like those in the early church. **But there is so much sin in our churches that it prevents the church from receiving the power of God.** Because we are lacking God's power, we try to use a lot of fancy programs and make a lot of noise to convince ourselves that we have something real.

Jesus rejected every man who was not willing to forsake all, every one of them: the rich young ruler, the one who first wanted to bury his father, the one who just got married, the ones who wanted to first try out the oxen or look at the land they had purchased (Matt. 8:21-22 and Luke 14:16-20). Every man who does not give his all for Jesus is rejected by Him until he pays the full price of discipleship. Jesus said the rich young ruler lacked only one thing (Mark 10:21). Most churches would be happy to receive any man who lacked only one thing. Not so with Jesus: it has to be all in all. This does not mean that Jesus does not love such people. It is out of His love that He died for them and that He gives them the truth. Jesus loved even Judas to the end. Yet there was no room for Judas in His new holy body, the church. Having chosen evil, he had to go.

Sadly, we keep forgetting that the church is His body and not a trash can for man's hypocrisy and licentiousness nor a house of entertainment for sinners. Jesus does not want any impurity in His holy body. If there was a problem of sin with someone in the church, He wanted it to be dealt with immediately (Matt. 18:15-17). **He did not shed His blood to cover sin but to remove sin.** And if a man does not want to be cleansed from sin by confessing and forsaking it, he should stay outside of the church until he is ready, for the church is not a playground for sinners but a haven of rest for the penitent who hunger and thirst for God. I once had a man who attended my church a couple of Sundays and afterwards he said: "I am not ready for such a commitment." He came back two years later, paid the price and became a faithful disciple until this very day. That is the way it should be (please read Acts 5:12-16).

Do not say as a Christian: "I can go anywhere I want to go and do anything I want to do because I am free in Christ." Nonsense! When you come to Christ, you give up all of your rights. If you have not made that decision, you are not one of His, no matter how religious you are otherwise. Jesus said: *If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be...* (John 12:26 emphasis added).

If you want fellowship with Jesus, remaining in His light and in the glory of His presence, you will do everything together with Him. Note these words of Scripture again: *where I am, there shall also my servant be.* This means you have relinquished your right to go to the theater, to a ball game, on vacation, etc., unless Jesus goes with you. You will not purchase a house or marry someone unless Jesus goes with you. Again, if you knowingly go where He does not want you to go, you will no longer belong to Him. You cross a line that takes you into immorality.

This is the message that we have lost in many of our churches: **we must give up our rights to be in fellowship with our Savior.** Anything less than that makes us unworthy to partake of Holy Communion, for Holy Communion is only for those who live in a state of holy communion, whose communion is not with the world but with Jesus. The Apostle Paul said: *Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this*

cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27).

We have millions of people worshiping God in our churches, singing hymns of praise, taking Holy Communion, giving financially, and doing a few good deeds, attempting to prove their Christianity to God and man, while consistently breaking through moral boundaries or worse—living on the other side of them altogether. They think that if they give God one hour of attention each Sunday morning, they deserve to spend eternity in heaven. Jude calls these “Christians” ungodly men, who turn God’s grace into lewdness (verse 4), declaring them *filthy dreamers* (verse 8), *...spots, ...clouds they are without water, ...twice dead, ...raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever* (12-13).

These people crowd into our churches and we feel good about it. Again, the reality is that these people, being in the majority of most churches, choke the life out of our churches, greatly or altogether diminishing the power of God from being able to operate in our midst, just as Jesus was limited in doing miracles in His hometown because of their unbelief. Jesus taught that: *...narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it* (Matt. 7:14). Today’s message in many churches is: the way to life is broad and there is room for everyone on it. The God of Gideon to whom God said: “you have too many” is still the same God today.

How did these people, who have no desire for holiness, get into the church to start with? Many of them have been introduced to the Christ with a simple phrase: **“All you have to do is...”** My friend, such a phrase is pregnant with trouble. Jesus was beaten into a bloody mess to save you! What makes you think you can get your salvation for less than giving your life to Him in return?

CONSEQUENCES OF A LAWLESS SOCIETY

A lawless society is an immoral society. Immorality is sin, of course, and all sin is a result of disobedience. It is because of disobedience that we need police, that we have prisons, wars, divorces and squabbles between husbands and wives, stealing, lying, sexual perversion, confusion, divisions and strife everywhere, including in our churches. Without laws, without boundaries, without morality—these three all go together—we have no authority to address iniquity. It is only as our conscience is perfectly lined up with God that we can speak with divine authority. And we need such voices desperately these days to prevent the church from drowning in its own vomit, causing it to become totally irrelevant to the world and nothing other than a laughingstock to them.

CONCLUSION AND CONFESSION

Beloved of God, I have just painted for you what I believe to be a picture of the ideal church, of a pure church, of the virgin church having *no spot, wrinkle or any such thing*. I believe every preacher must have this picture in his heart. The Apostle Peter saw such a church grow before him. How much God desires a pure church is beyond me to express. But just think of how severely the Holy Spirit dealt with the first sin of man in the church, the sin of lying. Ananias and Sapphira were physically killed by God for that sin (Acts 5:1-10). Woe, I say woe. Ananias and Sapphira are a replay of the first sin of Adam and Eve. As Adam and Eve polluted the first paradise, so Ananias and Sapphira polluted the second paradise that God created, the church which is Christ's own body. This lets us know with unquestionable authority that God does not want sin in the church.

But now coming to my confession: first of all, I want to declare my love for all ministers. I am reluctant to place a judgment over any of my brothers who have the same calling which is also upon me. I know the difficulty of the task of establishing a church that matches the ideal. I know of no calling in life more challenging and trying than the work of the ministry. For example, it took me about 15 years to get one of my churches to become a house of prayer. It took a lot of love, patience and thinning out, but it was worth it. I know the pressures and unreasonable expectations that all pastors face on a daily basis. That is why 50% of pastors quit the ministry in their first five years.

I have pastored for 40 years and I am still in the ministry, now a full-time writer. There are very few ministers who have ever seen a repeat of the life of the early church. In fact, even Paul, one of the greatest apostles, was unable to bring his churches up to that model that Peter saw in the very early days of the church. Paul died seeing almost every church he founded bogged down with carnality. In the end, he was ignored and rejected by the very people he loved so much. In the same way, my friend, I also failed to reach the ideal church in my ministry. But I have tried hard enough that I can say with Paul that: *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing* (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

And throughout this fight, I have maintained a spirit of praise and adoration to my Savior. So my advice, as an elder in reference to this article, to my younger brothers is: **Remember that no one has the right to call a church without prayer meetings a church.** The early church was a praying church for Jesus said: *My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer*. Twice, He violently drove people out of the temple because His house was no longer a house of prayer. Prayer meetings are to be the primary focus of His church. If there is no prayer meeting at your church, start one with just yourself and trust others to come in. God will honor this. Do not ever compromise the moral standards of the Lord. Do not promote a cheap Christianity

that will deceive people into thinking they can go to heaven with it. Be humble, be disciplined, walk with God and feed the sheep. Copy no one. Let the Holy Spirit lead you for every pastorate is different and every minister has different gifts and abilities. Do not judge your ministry by numbers but only by whether you have done the will of God. It is only in the middle of God's will where you can have fullness of joy in every circumstance.

Morality and Christianity go together. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

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