

CAFETERIA-STYLE RELIGION - JAS. 2:10

Introduction

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

I. THE POINT OF JAS. 2:10

- A. 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 — one inadvertent transgression makes one as unrighteous in God’s eyes as the worst sinner.
 - 1. A clear distinction is made in the NT between those who are honestly trying to serve God and those who are not - **Rom. 6:16-18**.
 - 2. No member of the church in Sardis was perfect, but the Lord distinguished between those who had “defiled their garments” and those who had not - **Rev. 3:4**.
- B. 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 trying to be “above the law,” being a judge of the law rather than one who is to be judged by the law.
 - 2. Cf. **Jas. 2:12; 4:11**.
- C. Perhaps we think that obedience in most things will compensate for disregard in a few — but no amount of “good works” will compensate for a lawless attitude - **Mt. 7:21-23**.
- D. We sometimes pass the instructions of God through a “filter” and throw away anything that does not make it through.
 - 1. Some of our filters are: preference, convenience, our own understanding, etc.
 - 2. Any filter, of course, may clog up so that *nothing* will get through!
- E. Consider Noah - **Gen. 6:13-22**.
 - 1. He was commanded to build the ark:
 - a. Of gopher wood.
 - b. With 3 decks having compartments.
 - c. With pitch inside and out.
 - d. 300 x 50 x 30 cubits.
 - e. With a window and a door.
 - 2. Noah did “according to all that God commanded him” (**6:22**), but suppose he had “filtered” God’s

instructions?

3. If he had kept 80% of God's instructions, would that have compensated for his disregard of the remaining 20%?
- F. 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.
- G. 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 own will*.
- H. 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" (**Jas. 2:11**), a lawbreaker, one who flouts the law — an outlaw.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF UNQUALIFIED OBEDIENCE TO GOD

- A. What we are asked to have is an attitude of unqualified, unreserved, no-strings-attached submission to all of God's will for us - **Mt. 22:37**. Cf. **Deut. 6:5**.
- B. Amaziah was said to have done "what was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a loyal heart" (**2 Chron. 25:2 NKJV**). "Whole heart" (ESV).
1. The word "loyal" here is a translation of *shalem* = finished, perfect, whole.
 2. Cf. "not with a perfect heart" (KJV), "not with a blameless heart" (RSV), "not wholeheartedly" (NIV), "not with an undivided mind" (Moffatt).
- C. It is possible to have a wholehearted devotion to God. In contrast to Amaziah, who had less than a wholehearted commitment to God's will, consider:
1. Joshua and Caleb - **Num. 32:11,12**.
 2. Josiah - **2 Kgs. 23:25**.
- D. This is a part of what it means to be "pure in heart" (**Mt. 5:8**): to be *single-minded* in our devotion to God and in our determination to do His will, to "love one thing." Cf. **Jas. 4:8**.

III. SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE PRINCIPLE

- A. Do we refuse to participate in some of the things God has commanded to be done in our public worship? Cf. **Col. 3:16**.
- B. Do we excuse ourselves from some aspects of the work of the congregation?
1. Do we think we can disregard evangelism? Edification? Benevolence?
 2. What about the various "support" activities that are required to make possible the worship and work of the congregation?
- C. Do we submit to civil authority (**Rom. 13:1-7**) and authority in the family (**Eph. 5:22-24; 6:1-3**), but disregard the authority God has instituted in the local congregation (**Hb. 13:17**)?
1. When our elders make a scriptural request of us in the course of implementing our work as a congregation, do we believe we have the option of complying or not?
 2. Do we do what our elders ask only when it "suits" us?
- D. Are we selective about which sins we will avoid. Cf. **Rom. 1:29-31; Gal. 5:19-21**.
1. Do we make exceptions for ourselves, or believe that the "sins" which we commit are more "respectable" than others'?

2. Regarding some sins as less offensive than others is the very point of the context of **Jas. 2:10,11**. Cf. **2:1-9!**

Conclusion

- A. Obedience to God is not a partial endeavor — the gospel aims to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (**2 Cor. 10:5**).
- B. God is God of all His will — we cannot disregard any of it *without disregarding God Himself!*
- C. We must live “as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (**Jas. 2:12**).
- D. We must truly “love the Lord (our) God with all (our) heart, with all (our) soul, and with all (our) mind” (**Mt. 22:37**).