

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Rules And Regulations”

By Larry Ray Hafley

“Keeping rules and regulations! That’s what your religion is all about,” a lady screeched recently. What shall we say to this?

1. **“Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God”** (1 Cor. 7:19). **“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love”** (Gal. 5:6). **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God”** (Gal. 6:15, 16).

Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other. You may have learned that maxim in math class. Apply it to the passages above. Observe that, **“keeping the commandments of God,” “faith which worketh by love,”** and **“a new creation (creature, a new man)”** are all related. One is a new creature, a new man in Christ, when his faith works in keeping the commandments of God. **“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation, new man), old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”** (2 Cor. 5:17). That is, once one is **“in Christ,”** having **“been baptized into Christ,”** he is then a new creation, a new creature, a new man (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). He then walks **“in newness of life”** (Rom. 6:4). That means, **“old things,”** his old manner of life, have been laid aside. **“All things,”** his present disposition and demeanor, are **“become new”;** that is, he is walking **“in newness of life.”** He has put aside the old man and has put on the new man. He has put off the former manner of living and is now living as a new, different man, as another person, as another creature or creation of God (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 2:10; 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10).

2. **“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample”** (Phil. 3:16, 17). This **“walk”** is patterned after an example of purity, and is contrasted with a carnal walk or life lived after the flesh — **“whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly (not spiritual) things”** (Phil. 3:19). There are, therefore, **“rules and regulations”** of moral behavior. Thus, **“our conversation (manner of life) must be lived as it becometh the gospel of Christ”** (Phil. 1:27). Our lives, our behavior must be that which will **“adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things”** (Tit. 2:5, 10). It follows a divine rule, plan or pattern.

That rule must be followed, adhered to, else one cannot be saved. **“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”** (Heb. 12:14; cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-15; 1 John 2:15-17). Why is that? **“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world”** (Tit. 2:11, 12). **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (2 Cor. 7:1).

3. All of our worship and service is to be guided and governed by rules and regulations — **“make all things according to the pattern”** (Heb. 8:5). Newly baptized disciples are to be taught to **“observe all things”** Christ has **“commanded”** (Matt. 28:20). Hence, heavenly new borns **“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine”** (Acts 2:42).

It is only by **“keeping rules and regulations”** that we can be known and identified as children of God. Do you doubt that statement? **“And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments”** (1 John 2:3). What about the fellow who says, **“I know Jesus as my Lord, but I don’t believe in keeping rules and regulations.”** **“He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby (in this way, in this manner) know we that we are in him”** (1 John 2:4, 5). One cannot know he is in Christ if he does not keep his commandments.

4. Some say, **“You claim righteousness through ‘rules and regulations,’ but I am righteous before God because I don’t depend on ‘keeping commandments.’”**

Who, then, are the righteous? Can one be righteous apart from “rules and regulations”? Can one be **“righteous before God”** without **“keeping commandments”**? **“What saith the Scripture?”** (a) The Psalmist said, **“All thy commandments are righteousness”** (119:172). Reflect on that. (b) Moses said, **“And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us”** (Deut. 6:25). Based upon the fact that Noah did **“according to all that God commanded him,”** the Lord said of him, **“thee have I seen righteous before me”** (Gen. 6:22; 7:1). (c) The parents of John the Baptist **“were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless”** (Luke 1:6). That they were righteous was seen in the fact that they kept **“all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.”** (d) **“Let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous”** (1 John 3:7). Read that verse and answer the question, “Who is a righteous man?” (e) Who shall be blessed on the day of Judgment? **“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city”** (Rev. 22:14; cf. Matt. 7:21).

Those who reject and repudiate the Scriptures above are the very ones who **“claim Jesus as Lord of (their) life.”** That same Lord Jesus said, **“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”** (Matt. 7:21). That same Lord Jesus asked, **“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say”** (Luke 6:46)? Jesus is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). Jesus said, **“If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death”** (John 8:51).

No such promise is made to those who refuse the Lord’s “rules and regulations.” Rather, **“he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life”** (John 3:36). Those who are disobedient and who **“do not obey the truth”** shall receive **“indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish”** (Rom. 2:8, 9; 2 Thess. 1:8).

5. Finally, is it a “rule” and a “regulation” that one must not keep “rules and regulations”? If this article upsets some, it must be because it violates their policies and principles, their “rules and regulations”! Otherwise, why oppose it? The moment one says he dislikes and disagrees with this article, that very moment he admits that he has a certain, fixed standard that he believes has been transgressed. Thus, I dare (yea, defy) any to show a single sign of disgust or disagreement with this essay! If they do, they will reveal that even they have their own little “rules and regulations” which must be “kept” and which must not be disobeyed! – *Truth Magazine*, February 1, 2001. ■

No Rules!

By Greg Gwin

The concept of ‘no rules’ seems initially appealing to many people. Just think – you can do whatever you want, whenever you want, wherever you want. Wonderful!

But, wait, if I can do whatever, whenever, wherever, then so can everyone else. That means that their actions may impact upon me. They might decide to take my car, burn my house, or steal my children. If there are ‘no rules,’ then they can do anything, and there is no basis to stop them.

Rules, we come to realize, are extremely necessary. My rights, my property, in fact my very existence depend upon rules. Without them, ‘civilization’ would come to an end. Religion is no different. Rules are clearly necessary. If allowed to do whatever we want, there is no end to the chaos that results. The confused and divided religious world of our day is a testimony against the misguided notion that man should do as he pleases when it comes to serving God.

How can we know what is right? How can we be assured that God is pleased? On what basis can we judge that certain religious deeds are proper and others are wrong? Surely these matters cannot be left to the subjective feelings of men. The ‘I’m OK, you’re OK’ approach is a proven failure. There must be something objective and certain that will direct us as we seek God.

The objective standard we seek is the inspired Word of God. It is a **“light to our path, and a lamp to our feet”** (Psa. 119:105). God’s word is the truth (Jn. 17:17) that can make us free (Jn. 8:32). With the divinely delivered ‘rule book’ in hand, we must respect it and comply with its regulations. This would include **“speaking where the Bible speaks, and being silent where the Bible is silent”** (1 Pet. 4:11), and demanding ‘book, chapter, and verse’ for everything we do (Col. 3:17). Anything less will lead to the anarchy of ‘no rules.’ – *Collegue church of Christ Bulletin*, October 27, 2019. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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