



The Tri-Cities Edifier

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I Wanna or I Hafta

Fred Newman

As a young boy, I obeyed the rules that my parents set for us children, at least most of the time. I must confess that in the earlier years of my life that my obedience was based upon the motivation that “I hafta to do what mom and dad says.” There was a “rod of correction” awaiting those who dared to infringe on this set of rules. I did not enjoy being the recipient of this correction so I gave grudging obedience to my parents in order to avoid punishment. Thankfully, as the years passed and I began to mature and better understand my parents, their rules and their motivation, my attitude toward obedience gradually changed. My reason for following my parents’ rules underwent a metamorphosis from the viewpoint of “I hafta” to obey the rules to “I wanna do the things that please my parents.”

God gives us rules (commands) to follow as His children. People who are spiritually immature look at those commands and ask, “Do I hafta do that?” or “You mean I can’t do this?” When one has this disposition toward obedience to the Lord’s commands then the life of a disciple becomes a drudgery for this individual. God’s commandments become a weight that is chained to their spiritual ankle to be dragged along through life. The prohibitions contained in God’s word seem to keep this person from having a sense of freedom and fulfillment. Brethren with this perspective of the Christian walk often are the ones who conclude that “it just isn’t worth it,” throw away their faith, and return back into the world.

As I came to know and understand my parents better and their motivation for the rules that were set for us kids, my motivation for obedience was transformed from “I hafta” to “I wanna.”

It was their obvious love and sacrifice for the three of us children and their desire for us to be happy, responsible individuals which finally brought about this conversion in my heart. I no longer felt like obeying the rules was being forced upon me. My desire was now to follow these rules so that my parents would be pleased and honored through my obedience.

It is crucial that Christians grow in their spiritual understanding and perspective of God’s laws for His children today. God’s motive for giving man rules to live by is not to deprive him of the pleasures of life. Instead, His statutes are for our good. “And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day” (Deuteronomy 6:24).

As we grow in our understanding and love for God our rationale for obedience will change. Notice some things that Jesus had to say on this subject. “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23). The apostle John wrote, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3). Obedience to God’s law is not a burden for the child of God who is seeking to please and honor their Father.

Consider the principle described by the psalmist, “Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Psalms 37:4). This person actually derives pleasure from keeping His statutes because they delight in the Lord. When one loves God their priorities shift from that of self-gratification to attempting to gratify (please) the One who is worthy of our complete devotion.

Are you obeying God’s commands? If so, are you doing so because “you hafta or because you wanna?”

By Many or By Few

by Irvin Himmel

The situation look grim. Saul's men had dwindled to only about six hundred. The army of the Philistines numbered into the thousands. Saul's men were poorly armed. Since all the smiths were among the Philistines, Saul's soldiers had neither sword nor spear. There was much trembling among the Israelites. Some were hiding in caves, thickets, rocks, pits, and other out of the way places. Some had fled to the region east of Jordan (**1 Sam. 13**).

Jonathan, Saul's son, took his young armor bearer and approached the Philistine garrison. Saul was not informed of this movement. Jonathan said to the young man that bore his armor, "Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6).

The faith that Jonathan had in God brought reward. Despite their being terribly outnumbered and poorly equipped to fight, the Israelites were given victory over the Philistines. God turned seeming defeat into certain triumph.

Too often we suppose that we are defeated if outnumbered. Not so! God is able to save by many or by few. God can use a few faithful people to do great works in his sight. God is not swayed by numbers.

Servitude

Albert Dickson

Perhaps, many reject the gospel of Christ due to their view of being a servant as a negative relationship. With men yes, but with God it is vastly different. True, there are some challenges of being a servant of God as we deal with others. So, why should we be servants of God then?

Here is the GEM: the blessings of being a servant of God are tremendous: we have the attitude and heart of the our Savior; we are being obedient to our heavenly Father who loves us; we will be exalted with the Christ; God bestows upon us His name identifying us not only as a servant but His child; and we glorify our great and awesome God as we work out our salvation provided through the Christ. Being a servant of God is all about eternal life with Him. Now what do you think about being a servant of His?

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11