

GLEANINGS — March 15, A.D. 2015

Simon Says

This writer hasn't played it in a while. You know, the group game in which a leader pats his head, and cries out to those facing him "Simon says do this!" Then he swings his arm in a circle and calls out "Simon says do this!" Then he hops on one foot..."Simon says do this!" Finally he rubs his belly and says, "Do this!" Whoever fails to recognize that it wasn't Simon who commanded the abdominal rub is OUT! Lots of fun for kids up to age 90 plus, no electrical outlet or batteries required...

Some Christians think of keeping the Law of God as a twisted version of that game. They see God as a cruel and capricious "Simon," telling people to do this or do that; forbidding this and banning that, for no evident reason.

What a black sighted view of God! Is He the One Who so loved the world that He gave His only Son so that others might have eternal life? Or is His secret agenda to make sure His people are perpetually miserable? Perhaps those who think of God and the purpose of His law in this way have forgotten that Jesus said He came to give His sheep abundant life, John 10:10.

How different is the view of the Law taken by the godly Psalmist! "I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love...oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day...I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold...Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble." (Psalm 119:47, 97, 127, 165)

"...We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully," wrote the inspired apostle, (1 Timothy 1:8). This necessarily implies that it is possible to MISUSE the law. Legalism, the equally erroneous opposite of antinomianism, believes that by works of the law one can be justified before the thrice holy God. This flies in the face of Galatians 2:16, where the Holy Spirit tells us that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ. He goes on to instruct us that we who believe are justified by faith in Him (Christ) and not by the works of the law, and He ends with the emphatic pronouncement, **"for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."**

Often going hand in hand with legalism is the stifling hypocrisy with which Jesus charged the scribes and Pharisees: "...You pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:23,24).

This mockery of a holy and blessed life reduces it to external acts. It ignores that there is as much imperative force in Biblical expressions such as "Don't be afraid!" or "Rejoice!" or "...Be filled with the Spirit...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord!" as there is in the Ten Commandments. It forgets that Jesus summed up the whole Law in two commandments: Love God supremely and love your neighbor as you love yourself.

The corruption of sin makes us despise God's law, and leads us into wrongful ideas of what love is. Rightly keeping the law and expressing love are actually identical. Notice how in the Matthew 23 passage, Jesus identifies justice, mercy, and faith as "matters of the law." Romans 13:10 puts it succinctly: "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.**"

Bible says: "Do this!"