

## I Have To...Do You?

***My son, do not forget my teaching,  
But let your heart keep my command-  
ments.*** --Proverbs 3:1

For many people religion is a drudgery. Morality is a duty. Living right is a challenge. 'Church' is a weekend *requirement*.

As a result, Christianity is often perceived to be composed of confusing requirements, and do's and don't's that do not even make sense. Involvement in religion and religious activities ends up being something I "have to" do:

- "I have to go to church."
- "I have to put money in the offering plate."
- "I have to attend this church function."
- "I have to do good deeds."
- "I have to be moral (at least when parents or the preacher are around)."
- "I have to be obedient."

It is unfortunate that many Christians have perceived and taught the 'Old Law' in the Bible (The Law of Moses) as a burdensome 'duty-driven' law. In other words, it is presented as if, it was the duty of the ancient Israelites to robotically obey the rules of behavior to please God (though a difficult and burdensome task):

- Observe the feasts,
- Observe the required animal sacrifices,
- Observe the Sabbath,
- Observe the tithe requirement,
- Observe the food requirements, etc.

It is as if God had handed Israel a legal checklist. Yet, man is not a programmable machine.

Did God expect Israel to obey the laws and ordinances and precepts and commands in the Law of Moses? Yes! Of course; but not merely out of a sense of duty. His desire from the beginning

has been for mankind to respond to him from the heart. He desired His people to intend to please Him, adopt His will as their will, and invest emotionally and intellectually.

The Law of Moses revealed the character of God. When God's people honored Him by keeping the Law they would be like Him and also learn something about His divine nature.

Mechanical worship or robotic obedience is far from God's desire. In fact, a duty-driven approach to God will invalidate one's offering making it meaningless and unacceptable.

The wise Solomon captured the essence of God's desire as he instructed his son to obey, not through mere external behavior, but *from the heart*.

Today, God wants those who have a fellowship relationship with Him (Christians) to obey His instruction because they understand something about Him and His character; because they love Him and know His love and compassion for them; because they realize the true benefit of His instruction; because **they naturally want to please Him...because He is Creator!**

So, it should be that I am obedient...

...Not because, "I have to" ...an external response of duty;

...Not necessarily because "I want to" ...a response of love and devotion;

...But ideally because, "*I have to*" ...a changed nature...it is simply who I am.

***But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*** --2 Corinthians 3:18