

The Rise of
LAWLESSNESS



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The police had been to the home on domestic violence calls on several occasions but on February 10, 2018, tragedy struck when two Westerville police officers arrived at the home of Quentin Smith. Upon arrival, Smith opened fire on the two officers. One died instantly. The other died shortly after at a nearby hospital. As I read the news of this event on the internet, I continued to read past the news to the comments people were making below. Outside of an occasional RIP were a multitude of comments calling the police “domestic terrorists,” “pigs,” and horrible things that I can’t even repeat. As I read these things, I was astounded by the hatred towards these men and the law they protected, but it wasn’t entirely surprising. You see, the roots of this hatred go much deeper.

The hatred towards the law and its defenders originates with the “mystery of lawlessness” (2 Thes. 2:7). According to the Bible, this hatred towards the law and the defenders of the law originated with Satan. Satan is the originator of sin, and 1 John 3:4 says that “sin is lawlessness.” John 8:44 confirms that the devil “was a murderer from the beginning... he is a liar and the father of it.” According to the Bible, those who hate the law are following in the footsteps of the father of lies, the devil himself. Those who

applauded the death of the police officers have murder in their hearts and, according to Jesus, “shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt. 5:22). While God does not desire that any are lost, those who use such violent rhetoric cannot be permitted into heaven unless they repent.

Lawlessness in the Church

Still, what is even more disturbing is that this animosity against the law has entered into the Christian Church. The Bible predicted this long ago. Paul warned of a coming apostasy “in the temple of God,” which was led by “the lawless one,” adding, “The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan” (2 Thes. 2:4, 8, 9). While most Christians don’t outright say it, there is a growing enmity against any talk of obedience to the law of God, the Ten Commandments, even within the church! Today, many pastors have begun to tell their church members that keeping the law is not an actual requirement of getting into heaven, or that it is legalistic, but it is hard to escape the haunting words of Christ, “if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matt. 19:17).

Today, some pastors go so far as to suggest that people in the Old Testament were saved in a different way than we are saved under the New

Covenant. Of course, common sense tells us that would make God unfair. Certainly, there is a difference, but the difference was not on God's part, but on our part. We are still commanded to keep the same law that Israel was commanded to keep. The only difference is that the Israelites tried to keep the law by their own effort. We keep it through the power of Christ working in us. When Christ comes inside us, He promises, "I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). When we put our faith in Christ, He gives us power to obey the law. That means we are expected to keep the law once we are saved. While we give credit to God, Christians are required to obey the law through His power.

Like those verbal attacks responding to the law enforcers who died, similarly, when anyone speaks of obedience to God's law as a requirement to enter heaven, even some Christians start to get angry and attack them as "legalists." Still, it's difficult to avoid some of the clear Bible verses which plainly state that those who break the law and refuse to give up their sins—like drunkenness, fornication, hatred, adultery, and such—"will not inherit the kingdom of heaven" (Gal. 5:21). The necessity of obeying God's law is carried all the way down to the very last chapter of the Bible, where we are told, "Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right

to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14). In spite of what even some pastors today are saying, obedience to the law is still a requirement for getting into heaven.

Faulty Reasoning

What confuses many Christians is the fact that we are not saved by keeping the law. They conclude that if we are not saved by keeping the law, then we cannot be lost by breaking the law, but this is tragically faulty reasoning. It's true we cannot get saved by keeping the law. That's because we have no power to keep the law before we ask Jesus to come into our hearts. Jesus said, “without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Our best works are not good enough without Jesus, but once we ask Jesus into our hearts, He puts the law in our hearts and gives us power to obey the law. Jesus comes inside our hearts and helps us to obey so “that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom. 8:4). After we accept Christ, we must “work” and obey the law, but we do not take any credit for our good works because “it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Ironically, Satan tells those who have not accepted Jesus that they must make themselves good to be saved (as if they could keep God's law

without the power of Jesus). Tragically, once we accept Jesus and have the power of God working in us, which enables us to overcome sin, the devil then flips the tables and tells us that it is impossible to keep the law and that we don't have to. In this way, the devil has both believers and non-believers tripped up in a dangerous deception that may lead to ruin. While many flatter themselves that they are already saved and do not have to focus on obedience to the law as much as their relationship to Christ, Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). John then adds, "by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). Consistently keeping all the commandments is the evidence that we have Christ living in us and that we are walking by faith. This is true faith.

Getting the Victory

While there will be times when we slip and fall, there is a big difference between slipping into the mud and purposely jumping in the mud. Those who slip will repent of their sin, then get back up and determine to overcome that sin. They will keep working through the power of Christ until they get the victory over their sin, whatever it is. Those who do not strive to overcome, but say, "I'm just a sinner, and God will have to accept me the way I am," cannot

make it to heaven. The requirement for getting into heaven is what it has always been; strict obedience to the Ten Commandments. Those Christians who refuse to overcome their sins will one day approach Christ with the words, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name," only to hear the tragic words, "depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness;" you who continued to break the law, the Ten Commandments (Matt.7:23).

The good news is, there is still time. The Bible says, "a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again" (Prov. 24:16). It's okay if you fall at times, as long as you get back up and keep trying to get the victory. God is still offering forgiveness and giving the power to live in accordance with the commandments. Don't you want victory over sin? Aren't you tired of failing? If so, pray to God for power and keep striving until you get the victory. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). If you keep fighting on your knees in prayer, pleading for God's strength, He will give you the victory.

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