Can Rules Make You a Better Person?

Dear Culture Contrarian,

Our current governmental administration believes that making rules and forcing people to follow them is the only way to govern. The general population cannot be trusted; only those more enlightened can make rules, and these rules don’t apply to them. Most religious systems agree with this line of thinking: we must say a memorized prayer several times a day, verses must be memorized— (best if you memorize whole books of the Bible) —church functions and activities are mandatory, and of course there are economic requirements—10% minimum entry fee.

But does following rules improve your standing before God?

Does following rules make you a better person?

Recently, I listened to Celtic Mythology by Philip Freeman. He teaches an advanced class at a secular university on this subject. He is one of the few living scholars able to speak and read Celtic, an older version of Gaelic still found in northern and western Great Britian. During the years preceding Christianity, Galatia was populated by Celts who, because of their fierce fighting skills, hired out as mercenaries to the highest bidders. The Druids served as priests and priestesses, human sacrifice occurred, and the mythical tales all seem to end with the wonderful warrior being seduced by the fair maiden. The Galatians were heathens and followed the golden rule: “pay us in gold and we will help you rule.”

They were a pagan and lawless bunch. Paul became like them: not pagan, but lawless, “Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you,” Galatians 4:12. Paul is commanding them to become like himself, namely free from rules and regulations, including the Mosaic law. Paul did not birth them to the Mosaic law; they believed the Gospel, the Spirit of God indwelt them, and they began to walk in the Spirit by faith. There is a better option for Believers than following rules or being antinomian: walking by the Spirit.

Jewish false teachers, however, convinced the Galatians that they needed more than faith in Christ. They needed to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic law. They swapped life in the Spirit for rules and regulations, promises and resolutions. These weak and beggarly elements (5:9) will return them to pagan bondage as sure as if they had never met the Lord. As they had sacrificed their children in worship of idols, they were now sacrificing their freedom in Christ to the simplistic, external, arbitrary, man-made systems of rules.

Do not allow cultural pressure to seduce you into thinking that our relationship with Christ consists of following protocols. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,” Galatians 5:1. The Lord wants us to walk by His Spirit; He rose from the dead so that He could impute righteousness to us that comes only by faith and never by human merit or effort.