

RELIGION

I obey, therefore I'm accepted.

Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.

I obey God in order to get things from God.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job's friends that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.

When I am criticized I am furious or devastated because it is critical that I think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.

My prayer life consists largely of petition and only heats up when I am in a time of need. My main purpose in prayer is control of my environment.

My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to failing people. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel insecure, inadequate, and not confident. I feel like a failure.

My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, and so I must look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to "the other."

Since I look to my own pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my heart manufactures idols. It may be my talents, my moral record, my personal discipline, my social status, etc. I absolutely have to have them so they serve as my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, regardless of what I say I believe about God.

THE GOSPEL

I'm accepted, therefore I obey.

Motivation is based on grateful joy.

I obey God to get to God-to delight and resemble him.

When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle but I know all my punishment fell on Jesus and that while he may allow this for my training, he will exercise his Fatherly love within my trial.

When I am criticized, I can take it. I struggle, but it is not critical for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my record or my performance but on God's love for me in Christ. I can take criticism.

My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with God.

My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ I am "simul iustus et peccator"—simultaneously sinful and yet accepted in Christ. I am so bad he had to die for me and I am so loved he was glad to die for me. This leads me to deeper and deeper humility and confidence at the same time, neither swaggering nor sniveling.

My identity and self-worth are centered on the one who died for his enemies and who was excluded from the city for me. I am saved by sheer grace, so I can't look down on those who believe or practice something different from me. It is only by grace that I am what I am. I have no inner need to win arguments.

I have many good things in my life: family, work, spiritual disciplines, etc. But none of these good things is an ultimate end for me. None of them is something I absolutely have to have, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despondency such things can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.



THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGION AND GOSPEL
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