

2148 - TOLSTOY & CHRIST - John 6:27-29

The crowds are *seeking Jesus* [24] They are **attracted** to Him - He has done **wonderful** things, He has made **searching** statements, He is exceptionally **kind**, and the people **love** Him. But they have a 1,000 **questions!** They are **puzzled** - He seems to be a follower of **Moses**, but they **don't understand** some things He is saying! So they ask the question *What must we do to be doing the works of God?* [28] The Jews are very much concerned about **doing** things in order to be **accepted** by God. They always **confused two things!**

(a) The '**way**' a person is **saved/accepted** by God in OT/NT! Ans: by **faith** in **God's Word**. God **had found a ransom** [Job33:24] God had found an **acceptable sacrifice!** Now **exemplified** in Jesus X, God's Son who died for our sins on the Cross! (b) the '**way**' God **wants** us to **live in** that faith! Ans:- we must **try to keep His law** - but if we **fail**, as we most certainly will, we do **not lose** our souls, because they are **already saved** by **faith** in Christ. The law of God is the '**way**' God **wants us to live** now that we **have been saved**. Many people, think the 'Law' is the 'way' to get us **into** heaven!! No, no!!

Leo Tolstoy was a **world famous** Russian novelist, and was an exceedingly **wealthy aristocrat** and writer. He was a great **thinker**. He wrote **War & Peace!** He read widely. He was a **lecherous** youth, but became **fascinated** with the person of Jesus and especially the things He said! In a sense Tolstoy was a **perfectionist**. He was particularly affected by Jesus' saying: *It is **easier** for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a **rich** man to enter into the kingdom of heaven* [Mat 19:24]. He thought **riches** was his problem!

So he **despised riches!** For Tolstoy, God demanded 100% perfection and he tried with all his heart to reach that! But he didn't manage! His friends had to hide all the ropes/guns around his home to **prevent** him from committing **suicide** because of his failure to live as he should. He had an **ambition** to reach **God's Ideal** - namely to attain to X's Sermon on the Mount! [**Read Dens Digest, pp2,3 marked**].

APP Challenge! Are you/I as **sincere** as Tolstoy to find truth?

Tolstoy was like the Jews, they thought **doing** things was the way of life and the way to heaven. Like Christ's disciples who asked on

another occasion, *Who then can be saved?*, and the Jews here who asked: *What must we do to do the works of God?*, Tolstoy was **blind** regarding the way of salvation. The answer to the Jews here of course, is in **verse 29!** *This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent!* Isn't that **music** to your ears? Tolstoy knew **nothing** of Christ's **pardon** and **forgiveness**. It was not in his vocabulary! Tolstoy knew about God's **Law**– he **feared** the Law of God, but knew **nothing** of God's **love/mercy**. Tolstoy did not know about salvation! Did he ever read about the Philippian Jailor? *What must I do to be saved?* Answer: **believe on the L J C...be saved!** **Did he read Romans?** *a righteousness from God apart from law is revealed...even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and for all who believe [R3:21] **Did he read Galatians?** *a man is not justified by observing the law but by faith in Jesus Christ [Gal 2:16]!* The answer is not in 'doing' but in **believing** and **trusting by faith** in the Person and work of Jesus Christ - God's Saviour for man, for **ON HIM** *God the Father has set His seal [27]**

What **Tolstoy did not understand** was that the complete law of God was kept **on our behalf** by Jesus Christ! Tolstoy thought that in order to **enter** the Kingdom of God we **personally** had to keep the law fully. He thought that was the way to heaven. No! But Christ kept the law **on behalf of those who believe** in Him. Tolstoy never realized **Christ died on behalf of sinners!** He did not know God's **mercy!**

***The Jews here did not understand** that Jesus was God's Son **sent** into the world **to keep** the law on behalf of sinners and **to die** for the sins of the world. Do **you** understand that? As Paul was later to write: *God demonstrates His own love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us [R5:8]* *Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us [1C5:7]* *God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us [2C5:21]!* *Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us [Gal 3:13]!* So.....

****So what about all the commands** to Christians to **keep** the law? Does God want us to **do** something **in return** for salvation? **Yes!** As Paul says in *So then brothers, we are debtors...* or as NIV 'We have an **obligation**' [Rom 8:12] - **not a law** - we might say it is a **moral obligation**. It is **not a repayment**, we **can't repay** a penny! All our

righteousness is **in X!** We're **nothing without X**, everything in Him!

What is the obligation? It is **not** to **live** according to the old **sinful nature** *the flesh* - for we **still have** within us, a sinful **tendency** to sin. But the Lord would have us (Xns), **put to death** *the deeds of the body* (Rom 8:13) Ie, we have an obligation to **stop sinning**, to attack sin, to make an **enemy** of sin. Sin is the **one thing** God wants us to stop.

Look: *your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God* [Isa 59:2] God **distances** Himself from us when we sin, won't hear our prayers, when we sin with **impunity**. So let us not **pretend** it doesn't matter if we sin after conversion! It does, although we **won't lose** our **souls!** If saved we **ought** to be able to **please Christ!**

We try to please Christ out of **gratitude** to God for His salvation – because we **really** believe **He** saved us. We want to **please God** – we want to **show our thankfulness** to Him for saving us, so we **take steps** to *put to death* those things in our lives that are sinful.

But there is also **another reason** why we **ought** to fight sin! *For if you live according to the flesh (sinful nature), you will die* (Ro 8:13) 'If you are not killing sin, sin is killing you! I've seen people whom sin is killing! They were **unable** to **stop** sin **eating away** their life!

Paul was saying: All true/real Xns, while they still sin, the **general tenor** of their lives **is** to **walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit** (R8:4c) Paul is therefore saying that if we do not fight sin in our lives we are probably not **true Xns**. Because true Xns are **led** by the **Spirit** and **function** through the **Spirit!** Look: *But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live!* (Rom 8:13) **Xns have** the Spirit of God within them, *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him* [R8:9] - and that Spirit **enables them** to **fight sin** in their lives.

So when **anger, jealousy, hatred, pride, discontentment, lust, lying, deceit**, comes into your hearts, and you **do not confess** it and you do not **call upon the Holy Spirit** for His forgiveness, we are **encouraging** God's wrath to come on us - because He **does punish** His people in **this life!** Paul's whole point is that Xns would **seek** to be **led** by the **Spirit's impulse** within them to **confess** their sin and **repent** of it and not just go away and **pretend** that everything is all

right - because everything is not right! God is not pleased *If Xns do not **employ** the Spirit in mortifying and conquering sin in their hearts, then they are obviously **controlled** by the sinful nature!

Paul says that if we have **faith** in Christ, then we have the Spirit of Christ in us and it is by **that same Spirit** Xns are able to put to death the sinful nature to **some degree**. *if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, **will also give life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you (11)!* Ie, God will give you life (**strength**) to **resist** sinful desires in some measure. All Xns have this Spirit within them which **helps** them overcome sin in their lives. What a **challenge**!

A lot of our problem has to do with our **mindset**! Look: *For those who live according to the flesh **set their minds** on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit **set their minds** on the things of the Spirit. For to **set the mind** on the flesh is death, but to **set the mind** on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is **hostile to God**, for it does **not submit** to God's law; indeed, it cannot (R8:5-7)!!*

Do you believe you are a Xn? Are you **trusting in what He did on the Cross? Is **that** your **only** hope facing death? Right then. You do not **enjoy** sinning then, do you? No, of course you don't! Do you **call on the Holy Spirit** to cleanse you from your sin **or**...do you **pretend** no great evil has been done and **walk away unaffected** that the Lord who **suffered** and **died** for you is **hurt** and **grieved** by your sin?

Summary: Tolstoy, the Jews, then and now, and many people, think the 'law of God' is the means of getting us to heaven! Oh, so wrong! The way to heaven is by **faith** in God's Word, and in His Son Jesus Christ's **atonement** on the Cross. The 'law of God' is the 'lifestyle' God wants us to live by, **in gratitude** for His salvation (which is a gift of God). Every Xn has the Spirit of Christ in them and **are able to some degree** to keep God's commandments - but not perfectly, for that is **impossible**! Xns are **motivated** by the **love** of Christ to them in dying for their sins! Unbelievers have **no** such motivation!!