



Genesis 6:5

(5) Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

New King James Version

What would it be like to live in a human society in which there was no set standard or rules by which its members were expected to conduct their affairs? Life would be pretty chancy. God was so saddened by this state of affairs that He felt that the only thing He could do was to wipe it out and start over again.

In that kind of society, every excursion outside one's door would be a venture into a societal jungle in which pain, fear, violence, and possibly death lurked at virtually every step. Indeed, if everybody were "a law unto himself," one would not be safe even within his own home because the people there, too, would be living by their own rules. It does not sound as though life would be very fulfilling or enjoyable because only the strongest or the most clever would survive. This kind of life can only be described as a constant, fearful struggle. Community life under these conditions would be impossible because community is possible only when everyone adheres to the same rules. God is creating a Community, a Family, a Kingdom.

Now a second scenario: What would it be like to live in a human society in which there were set standards, but people abided by them only when they felt like it? This might be a definite improvement because people might feel like obeying the rules at least once in a while. There would be more chance for agreement and decidedly less conflict, anxiety, injury, or death.

A third scenario: What would it be like to live in a society in which there were set standards, and people generally agreed with them, and for a variety of reasons, many restrained themselves from breaking them, even when they did not feel like it? However, if a person or community really felt pressure - if one felt that his need or the community's need was great enough - then he or it would break those standards, even to the point of

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mass murder - war. Again, this is an improvement over both of the other two scenarios, as the chances of peace and stability are increasing.

A fourth scenario: What would it be like to live in society in which people or a community overwhelmingly agree on the standards and, for a variety of reasons, restrain themselves to obey them even when they did not feel like it? This scenario is downright Millennial.

A fifth and final scenario: What would it be like to live in a community where the standards were absolutely *engraved* in each person's character, and no one has even a thought of transgressing them? Every thought is for the well-being of each individual and the community. It is not difficult to choose which scenario would be the most pleasurable to live in and would produce the most and the best.

As things now are, we live in the third scenario. Which of these five will allow people to concentrate their creativity and energies into producing prosperity in every lawful and edifying field of endeavor - without ever having to be anxious or having their abilities or energies dissipated by conflicts with their fellows? It is easy to see that the fifth scenario fits best.

Of course, the standards are the basic laws of God regulating relationships between men and God and between men and other men. Yet, we are often told that we should obey God because we want to and because we love our fellow man. This is a statement that sounds good at first because it appeals to our vanity about what we think about ourselves and about God. We like to think that we love God and would never harbor any ill feelings toward Him or His rule in our life. We like to think that we do not really do wrong things - we are only misunderstood.

There are no offenders in prison, are there? Everybody in prison is "innocent." It was the fault of that dumb judge, who was prejudiced. Or, the evidence was twisted, causing the inmate to be unfairly convicted. Or, the witnesses lied. Convicts can come up with all kinds of reasons to justify their incarceration.

I Corinthians 3:3 should be considered in this light, because the Corinthian people were converted! They had repented, been baptized, and had received the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, the apostle's assessment, his judgment, of these people was, "For you are still carnal."

These converted people did not love one another very much, nor did they love God very much. They were not obeying God much, as the rest of the epistle plainly shows. The

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reality is that we do not always love God, and we do not always love those who belong to Him, our brothers in the [faith](#). We do not always *feel* kindly disposed either toward God or toward our brethren.

People have told me that they are angry with God. What they are really saying is, "I don't deserve all of this trouble. I don't deserve to be treated this way. I'm innocent!" Did Job feel kindly disposed toward God? Job acted carnally from time to time. There is a powerful lesson in the book of Job.

If we "obey God because we love Him," it might sound good, but in reality, we are in trouble because we will frequently wander off the way. We must discipline ourselves to obey Him and love our brethren - even when we do not *feel* like it. Our nature is so self-centered that God says in [Jeremiah 17:9](#) that it is *incurably sick*.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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