

Officious Rex!

Luke 11:46

And He said, Woe to you also, Law experts!
For you load men with burdens
grievous to be carried,
and *you* yourselves do not lightly touch
the burdens with one of your fingers.

Tyrant of Standards: A Christian Tendency

Law experts (commonly translated "lawyers") were often named by Jesus alongside the Pharisees and were guilty of many of the same offenses. They were experts in Moses' Law, or the Old Testament in general. They had special duties in giving 'expert' advice in legal decisions. They also held school and taught promising students the Hebrew Scriptures and the common law that had developed around it .

Now who are the 'Bible experts' in *our* society? That's right- Christians. Christians usually figure out that they have greater understanding of the Scriptures than the 'man on the street'. They also tend to develop an attitude exactly like the one Jesus describes above.

Here is the great danger of sitting under Bible teaching. We read the Bible or hear it expounded and we agree with its teachings. We therefore assume that we ourselves are IN CONFORMITY with what is written *because of* our agreement. We do not think of how these principles ought to work themselves into our lives at the deepest levels, nor of which of our present habits they ought to oust. We only think that as we have come to *comprehend* the Scriptures (to our own standards, at least) we therefore *comply* with Scriptures. This fallacy in our thinking is furthered by the ardency of our agreement. We are *greatly* in agreement with God's perspective; how can our loyalty, then, be doubted?

One tell-tale sign of a false 'Bible expert' approach to life is when we use Bible knowledge to create personalized holiness categories. We categorize the BIBLE per our perceived expectations of ourselves, then we categorize PEOPLE per our thus-derived standards of holiness- standards which others either meet or don't meet.

We might be more or less 'evangelistic' with our approach, but we have subtly shifted the focus of the Scriptures from God to ourselves. We think, "This is what's expected of *me*; **therefore**, THIS IS WHAT'S EXPECTED OF *EVERYONE*." We never manage to get a real grip on men's accountability to God *independent* of us. There's a subtle combination of *envy* and *discontent* in us.

We don't see the *blessing* of holiness as much as we do its *expectation* laid on us. This burden on our con-

science makes us *discontent*. Then we *envy* other men their freedom from this burden. Rather than see the problem in ourselves, we see the solution in drawing all men under the burden with us. We assume that we are thereby doing God's work, enforcing His standard.

Thus becoming God's official standard-bearers, we find our place in life, at least in the realm of religion. Thus, we supposedly *fulfill* the standard by holding everyone *else* to the standard.

The moment we molded a precept of holiness in our own image, we almost necessarily perverted the *true* precept. We *did* certainly pervert our own consciences. The terrible paradox about the Bible expert is that he actually OBEYS the standard he teaches *less* than those who accept it from him! He "loads men with burdens grievous to be carried", while he himself does "not lightly touch the burdens with one of [his] fingers."

Hint, hint. This is a very natural human approach to Scriptures. The easiest path is always to lay a burden on *others* to help ease the burden on *ourselves**. The grander our scheme is, the more likely we are to eventually find ourselves 'following' it only as a supervisor of others.

* This may be the easiest tell-tale sign of a 'legalist'. God's commandments "are not burdensome" (1 Jn. 5:3). Therefore, when Scriptures are treated as a heavy load, they are automatically being mishandled.

