

Tearing Down the Stop Sign

Down the road at the intersection, there had always been a stop sign. Everyone had to stop at it before crossing the road.

That sign had been there as long as anyone could remember.

But, while some people said the old signpost was necessary to protect the people, others thought it was useless. "We would do just as well without it," they said. "Probably better."

In fact, many people began ignoring the signpost. Yet as they did, some noticed that the accident rate increased at that intersection.

But, when it was suggested that disobeying the sign might be the problem, that irritated some people.

Before long, the whole thing blossomed into a full-fledged controversy.

There were those who said the sign ought to be obeyed, while others said it ought to be gotten rid of. A campaign even began, to get enough people in favor of tearing it down.

But there were still many who were puzzled at the whole situation, and hardly knew what to think.

Some said all the fault was with the sign. "It is a nuisance," they declared. "Get rid of the sign, and then everything will be all right again."

But there were a few thoughtful ones who maintained that the problem was not the sign—but disobedience to it. That was what was causing the trouble. And trouble there was.

At this, some learned men, who had been trained in the sciences, stepped forward and tried to settle the matter, once and for all. They declared, "We have completed a research study. The difficulty at the intersection is not the traffic, but

the sign. It is just too hard to obey. Take down the sign and the problem will be solved."

Astounded, a few stood up and protested. "It is the sign which is saving lives, not disobedience to it."

Then two or three university philosophers announced their own profound findings: The trouble lay deeper than most realized. "The problem," said they, "is not the sign itself—but the rules that such signs stand for. If we just do away with the rules, everyone will live more peaceably and be happier."

Surely this must be true, thought many, since it comes from the wisest men in the land.

Not willing to be left out, the leading churchmen picked up the idea, and amplified on it in several deep theological treatises. When the preachers read those learned words, fearing to be thought old-fashioned, they immediately began preaching the good news from their pulpits. They called it "the Good News of Freedom from Law."

Under their influence, large numbers were gradually being won over to the idea. "It is true that God gave us the Ten Commandments," they said, "and those rules provide mankind with the best moral code it has ever had, but He does not want us to keep those rules. We can just keep sinning till the end of time."

Well, with messages like this—and coming from even the preachers—many of the people thought the atheists and liberals surely must be right after all. "Down with rules," they said, "for they only hurt us. Freedom to do as we like; that is what we want!"

The more people talked about it, the more people liked the idea. Even the politicians, always anxious to please, climbed onto the bandwagon.

The whole thing became a scoffer's holiday. "Let us get rid of the regulations requiring obedience. Did not the preachers tell us that even God no longer has rules governing anyone's conduct? Why should we obey man's rules either?"

Well, it surely looked as if peace and harmony was nearing. At last, the people felt they had solved the problem of the intersection. Tear down the sign, and then everyone will be happier when they go through that busy intersection.

Because of the atheists, preachers, and liberals, by this time large numbers of people were totally ignoring the old signpost anyway. Indeed, not only was the sign disobeyed, but the new teaching brought an end to other restraints as well. Drunken drivers, reckless speeders, and corrupt police who could be bribed. Everyone did what he wanted. Ambulances regularly hauled away the injured and dismembered to the hospital.

But this fact only increased the controversy, as a small number kept urging that people obey the law. While some said it was disobedience to the sign which caused the accidents, others theorized the accidents were caused because people were distracted by the words on the sign as they raced through the intersection.

"Can you not see," they cried, "it is *those rules* which cause all the problem?"

But there were still a few who doggedly replied, "The very existence of the busy intersection requires traffic rules and warning signs! If the people will just obey the signs, the accidents will cease!"

By this time, those who hated that old wooden marker and the rules behind it had become so angry—they said the problem was not

really just signs and rules; it was the people urging that the signs and rules be obeyed!

A meeting was held, and the leading men of the town led out. "All our troubles," they said, "are caused because the rules still exist, and because of those who tell us to obey them!" Then they passed a resolution, condemning the small company who urged that the laws be obeyed. They were denounced as legalists and troublemakers.

"If we can just get rid of the laws—and the troublemakers who demand their obedience—we can have peace and prosperity again," they cried.

By this time, most everyone was rallying to one or the other of the two sides. One side pled for law and order; the other demanded freedom from restraint.

A small group declared, "We want to do what is right. Self-control and obedience to law is the only way to really be happy."

But the larger number cried, "We want to do whatever we please. Freedom from all the rules is the most satisfying way to live!"

My friend, on which side do you stand?

The one leads into a broad road, along which is found grief, tragedy, and eternal loss. The other opens onto a narrow pathway which leads steadily upward to great reward.

In the beginning, God placed mankind under moral law—the Ten Commandments. Men and women have always been required to control themselves in order to have true happiness in this life. But God also offers grace—enabling strength through Jesus Christ—to obey those laws.

By their actions, everyone inevitably moves to one side or the other in this controversy.

Some people thank God for the empowering help, offered through the life, death, and mediation of Jesus Christ, and are willing to take hold of that strength. Thankful that God offers to redeem them, they

submit to His plan and, in His strength, they control themselves and spend their years trying to help others live happier lives. They are getting ready for heaven, for they have heaven in their hearts.

But there are others who want to live as they please. They care little for God's laws or for man's. All that matters is how they can advance their own selfish interests and pleasures.

On which side will you stand? Christ died so you could live a clean life, in obedience to God and in harmony with the Ten Commandments. Will you choose the high way or the low?

If you want the low way, just keep living heedlessly as you have probably been doing.

But if you hunger for something better for your life, then fall on your knees right now and plead with God for forgiveness. Confess your sins to Him and forsake them. Dedicate your life to Him. Give Him everything you are. He alone can make you into someone good and noble and true. He alone can lift you up and give you a new life. He is the only One who can give you a heart willing to obey the Ten Commandments. He is the One who can give you strength, day by day, to carry it through—as you study and seek to obey His Inspired Writings.

And the reward is great: a happier life down here, and an eternity with Christ beyond. Really, now, is it not worth it?

All it takes is a surrendered, obedient life, which He alone can help you fulfill.

On which side will you stand?

Will you stand with those who try to tear down God's Ten Commandments or with those who, in His strength, obey them?

There are the youth pastors who instruct the young people that it isn't necessary to stop sinning. "God doesn't ask for it," they say, "all you need is faith and you will be saved."

There are the ministers at camp

meeting who instruct the people that they were saved at the cross, and cannot now be lost—as long as they believe.

There are the church leaders, editors, and writers who extol the virtues of "only believe," and warn the flock to beware of trying to obey God's law, lest they become legalists.

In order to excuse their own sinning, they even declare that Jesus did not really become a full human being because, if He had, He could not have resisted sin either! What blasphemy!

And all the while, our youth and loved ones sink deeper into corruption, caused by a theological system which teaches that it is impossible to control one's self—with or without Christ—and resist temptation in this life.

The floodgates of iniquity are opening. And all the devils of hell are pouring in. Wine drinking, wild music, card playing, pre-marital sex and adultery, theater watching, worldly books and magazines. Anything goes; for now, the preacher says it is all right.

Yet it is not all right. There is a God in heaven, and He has given us Inspired Writings—and they condemn sin. Turn anywhere in them and read, for the message is clear.

The way may seem pleasing and right to the man, but the end thereof is the way of death.

There is no hope for anyone who does not resolutely turn from these worldly lures—and plead with Christ for help, study His Word as though life depended on it, and obey the plain teachings of Scripture.

Do not let your pastor fool you. There is only one safe path to heaven. It is obedience by faith, in Christ, to the Word of God.

— Vance Ferrell