

# CHECKLIST BULLIES?

Joshua Welch

As I was scrolling through a popular social media group, I ran across a question asking its followers, "What was the problem of the Pharisees, and how can we avoid it?" Most of the answers I read were full of a lot of opinion and conjecture, but not a lot of textual or historical proof. This, in itself, is dangerous because often what we call "Pharisaism" is a caricature we have created over time and not completely built on what Jesus was attacking in the first century. Yet, one of the comments which drew my attention was one who referred to the Pharisees as "checklist bullies." This is a fairly new way to phrase some in religious circles to me. I've seen it used recently by a couple of preachers towards preachers when one insists upon following Scripture with regard to topics like women's roles, the church's work and worship, or even the qualifications of elders. It catches my attention because, for one, such a description is fairly vacuous and flimsy. What exactly is a "checklist guy?" Just like some people are not good at pinning down the meaning of "Pharisaism," I am also lost in understanding what some refer to when they call someone a "checklist bully." What "checklist" is it the Pharisees were "bullying" people about?

Clearly, in Scripture, the "checklist" Jesus criticized from the Pharisees was their manmade traditions which put them in opposition to God's will (see Matthew 15:1-2, 7-9). Yet, I fear, what some people may mean or interpret from the phrase "checklist bullies" is similar to what some think of when they hear the term "legalism." Some are not thinking of the keeping of "the tradition of the elders" but the keeping of God's Word entirely! Some do not like the Christian's citation and insistence upon the inspired Scriptures as our authority! If insisting on keeping God's commandments is meant, then I firmly believe Jesus, and His apostles were "checklist" guys to some degree.

Think about it. Was Jesus not creating a "checklist" of character traits which ought to be found in the kingdom when He spoke the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)? Should we not insist one seeking true fulfillment in the kingdom be poor in spirit, meek, merciful, etc.? Would we be wrong to add this to our character checklist?

Was Jesus not creating a "checklist" of morality He insisted upon when He spoke the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)? Should we not hold ourselves and others accountable when guilty of hate, illicit lust,

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dishonesty, covetousness, and selfish motives? Is this sermon not a point-by-point checklist of moral expectations from King Jesus?

Was Paul's list of the "*fruit of the Spirit*" and the "*works of the flesh*" (Galatians 5:19-25) not based on some of the same things Jesus Himself had already taught? Was he being a "checklist bully" when He insisted upon those things and warned of the eternal danger of thinking one could mock God and get away with it (Galatians 6:7-8)?

What about the other things in Scripture? Are we wrong to insist upon anything that is taught in our New Testaments as needful and necessary in the life of a Christian? Are we being a "checklist bully" if we insist upon the New Testament's plan of salvation and its inclusion of baptism as we walk through the conversions, for example, in the book of Acts (cf. Mark 16:15-16)? Does showing people how God has ordered a New Testament worship assembly including the limitation placed upon tongue-speaking and women speaking make us a "checklist bully" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34)? If we show people not anybody can serve as an elder or deacon but only those who meet the qualifications God already laid down (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5, 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3, Titus 1) are we "checklist bullies" for merely citing the inspired and revealed word of God? When we insist upon New Testament morality and marriage and refuse to accept open immorality or adultery are we "checklist bullies?" Is this attack just another way of calling someone a "Bible thumper?"

Brothers and sisters, let us be unashamed to stand for "*the gospel of Christ*" (Romans 1:16). Let us realize true faith "*comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17). Let us help people be prepared to stand before God in judgment by sharing with them the truth for "*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*" (John 12:48). Let's realize "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17). The "*word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword*" so sometimes it will cut us to the heart (Hebrews 4:12-13). May we use the word of God to "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves*" (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 13:5). When God's Word is brought to us, thank those who preach it and avoid slandering them with name-calling for when we do so we reveal the true "bullies."

**"WHAT MUST I DO  
TO BE SAVED?"**

**ACTS 16:30**

**LEARN THE GOSPEL**

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

**BELIEVE IN CHRIST**

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

**CONFESS CHRIST**

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

**REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 3:19; 17:30

**BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

**REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF  
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

**HEBREWS 10:24-25**

**SUNDAY**

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

**WEDNESDAY**

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belén, New Mexico

Seekers Welcome.

Members Expected.

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN  
ANY TRESPASS...  
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

**GALATIANS 6:1**

**CONFESS TRESPASSES**

James 5:16; 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:9

**REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 8:22

**PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS**

Acts 8:22

**REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS  
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN  
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

**PROVERBS 25:11**

"The Christian must have 'won't power' as well as willpower."

– Michael Palm

**"WHOLE COUNSEL"**

**ACTS 20:27**

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**BETTER THAN ZOZOBRA**

Bryan Matthew Dockens

As a newcomer to New Mexico, I was only recently made aware of the annual burning of Zozobra in Santa Fe. Since 1712, the Fiestas de Santa Fe have celebrated the 1692 Spanish reconquest following the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. A novelty was added to the yearly event in 1924 by artist William Howard Shuster, Jr. and it has been a major part of the celebrations since. Zozobra, Spanish for "anxiety," is a fifty-foot tall papier-mâché effigy that participants stuff with their written worries: divorce documents, paid-off mortgages, parking tickets, and the like, before lighting the whole thing aflame. To relieve stress, some people hit a punching bag or chop wood, while others, 60,000 of them, set a five-story marionette on fire.

The celebration seems harmless, but it is important to keep in mind that we have one better than Zozobra. Our Lord invites us to cast our anxieties on Him! It is written, "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:6-7). There is no need to wait until next Labor Day weekend to rid yourself of the anxieties that weigh you down. Give them to Jesus, who welcomes the weary and troubled. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). He bears our griefs and carries our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4). Specifically, he bears our sins (Hebrews 9:28; 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:24)! Jesus is all we need.

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