Are You A Legalist?

Tony Mauck · Hebrews 5:8–9

INTRODUCTION

- I want to ask you a question tonight, very simple. Are you a legalist?
- Religiously, that is a very negatively charged word. If you are guilty of legalism, that's a bad thing.

1 What Exactly Is a Legalist?

Hebrews 5:8–9; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 2:14

- The Pharisees were legalists, and since they were bad, we don't want to be that. But is that really what their problem was?
- The word was not even coined until 1645.
- Every Jew, including Jesus, Paul, the Pharisees, and the Judaizers, believed that a person's works, his deeds, his obedience to God was without doubt, a part of a right relationship with God.
- Jesus learned obedience by the things that he suffered, and he is the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey him.

2 Legalism Is Really a Straw Man

James 2:17; Ephesians 5:10; 2 Peter 3:16–17

- McClister argues that it's really this term, legalist or legalism, is really a straw man. It is a caricature designed to belittle the opponent rather than to really speak as God has spoken.
- But faith without works is dead, James 2 and verse 17.
- What biblical passage comforts the one who lives in open rebellion to the will of God, who defies and ignores and tramples his will, and yet encourages one to believe that such ingratitude toward God will still be rewarded.
- The untaught and the unstable take what Paul said and they distort it, they twist it, to their own destruction.

3 Outback Religion and the One Rule of Love

1 Corinthians 13:5–6; Acts 10:34–35; James 1:22–27

- Let's sort of go light on the rules so that everybody can have a good time.
- If you followed what he was teaching, you wouldn't be free in Christ, you would be free from Christ.
- Love does not rejoice with unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth.
- Be doers of the word. That's the whole of it. And not merely hearers who are self-deluded.

4 Was Jesus Himself a Legalist?

Matthew 5:19–20; Matthew 23:23; Jeremiah 17:9–10

- Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- But what they might overlook is that Jesus says, these things you should have done without neglecting the others.
- The pitfall of the Pharisees was overstressing external requirements to the neglect of internal requirements.
- The heart is more deceitful than all else.
- The heart and one's actions go together. And you can't separate the two. A right heart is going to be evident in the right ways and the right actions.

5 Rules Written for Our Well-Being, Not Our Misery

- Those rules are written for our well-being, not our misery.
- But my question is, who gets to decide which ones aren't important?
- Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things. Having a promise of the life that now is and the life that is to come.

6 The Lord's Rules Deserve Our Respect

Hebrews 2:2–3; 1 Corinthians 4:6; Romans 12:1

- The Lord's rules is that they deserve our respect. They issue from an all-wise God whose wisdom exceeds mine.
- So they deserve our respect, our careful attention, our attempts to comply, not our attempts to evade.
- Do not exceed what is written, 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 6. And so the Lord's rules matter. All of them.
- Their problem was they exalted tradition above God's rules. And they went the easy route.

THE CHALLENGE

I choose the Lord. I choose his will above my own. Are you ready to make that commitment tonight?

MY NOTES