

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Unclassified Topics

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Legalism

Christian groups preaching the need to keep the Almighty's Sabbath days are often accused of '**legalism.**' In other words, many suppose that we are preaching '**nothing but - law, law, law!**' It is a sad accusation and untrue in most cases; but that is how many Sabbath-breakers see Sabbath-keepers.

1. What is Legalism?

In the **16th**, **17th** and **18th** centuries when the Protestant reformation was unlocking the minds of millions of Roman Catholics to the truth about '**salvation through faith in Jesus Christ,**' the term '**salvation by works**' meant trying to earn salvation by acts such as:

- Doing penance to win forgiveness of sins.
- Paying the priesthood sums of money to pray for dead loved ones.
- Acts of self-torture: flagellation, (whipping one's self) kneeling for hours on end.
- Auricular Confession.
- Turning the rosary.
- And the vain repetition of prayers to **Mary** and other saints.

These manmade regulations were introduced by the **Roman Catholic church** and influenced the lives of countless millions of believers through the dark ages. The Protestant Reformers rightly exposed these practices as being **unscriptural** and absolutely worthless as far as salvation was concerned. The Protestant stand was - and still is - that according to Scripture '**salvation is available - free of charge - by faith in Jesus Christ;**' not by anything we could do, however worthy it may otherwise appear to be. This is what those early Protestant reformers meant when they accused the Catholic church of trying to obtain '**salvation by works.**'

2. Centuries passed

However, as time passed, and when the truth about the seventh day (Saturday) Sabbath became widely known, those who opposed **obedience to the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments** began accusing Sabbath-keepers of returning to '**salvation by works,**' of '**being legalistic**' of trying to '**earn salvation,**' of trying to '**work their way to heaven.**' It is a **foolish charge** when one stops to consider it. Because when we preach on the other commandments such as:

- The need to worship God alone "**Thou shalt have no other god's before me.**" (Exodus 20: 3)
- The worthlessness of idolatry "**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.**" (Exodus 20: 4-

- 6)
- Respect your parents **“Honour thy father and thy mother.”** (Exodus 20: 12)
 - Respect life **“Thou shalt not kill.”** (Exodus 20: 13)
 - Honesty
 - **“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”** (Exodus 20: 16) etc. no one in his/her right mind would accuse us of **‘legalism,’** or of preaching **‘salvation by works.’**

But the moment we mention the need to keep the **True Sabbath Day** as commanded in the **Decalogue (MP3)**, then a cry goes up: **‘You’re being legalistic!’ ‘You’re preaching salvation by works.’ ‘You’re forgetting that salvation is a free gift from God,’ ‘Don’t you know that salvation is by faith in Jesus?’** This is a monumental tragedy of wilful ignorance. If unchecked it will lead to a stand of determined and habitual disobedience which is iniquity. **Iniquity is a wilful determination to ignore and break a known command of Almighty God.**

It could well be that most of the folks who take that stand, do not want to obey the Sabbath commandment in the first place. To them it is a burden, an **inconvenience**, an **embarrassment**, a constant reminder that the church made a **colossal blunder** when it jettisoned the true Sabbath day of the Decalogue and adopted the **pagan rest day of Sunday**. Were you to preach the need to keep Sunday, there would be no charge of **‘legalism,’** no hands thrown up in horror. But the moment one preaches **‘obedience’** and the need to keep the **seventh day Sabbath** of the **Decalogue, (MP3)** there is an unholy uproar accompanied by wild accusations of **‘legalism.’** These folk ignore the Saviour's advice in:

Matthew 19: 17: *“And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: **but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.**”*
 18: *He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,*
 19: *Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

After reading the above statement, **who in his right mind would accuse the Master of being legalistic?** And yet we can plainly see that the Saviour was advocating **‘obedience to the commandments’ as a path to life!**

Here is another stunning statement by Jesus:

Matthew 5: 17: *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”*
 18: ***For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.***
 19: *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”*

In view of these texts our advice to you is that you ignore those who get hung up about **‘legalism.’** Let them alone and bear in mind these Biblical facts.

- **God’s law is a schoolmaster which brings us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** (Galatians 3: 24)
- **All God’s commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever...** (Psalm 111: 7-8)
- We have all sinned (**transgressed God’s law 1 John 3: 4**) and are under the death penalty. (Romans 6: 23)
- But if we accept the Almighty's free offer of salvation by putting our faith in His Son (John 3: 16) we are saved by **Grace**. That is, we are saved by the great love, compassion and mercy of God. This is the central theme of the **Everlasting Gospel**. Millions of true pastors and true ministers through the centuries have preached it; and it is still true.
- However, **after having accepted salvation**, a true believer must take steps to live an obedient life. In other words, he/she must give up sin. This means: no more **paganism, idolatry, cursing, adultery, lies, theft, deceit, covetousness and Sabbath-breaking.**
- Not that these acts of obedience can ever earn our salvation. **Oh no, because salvation, as mentioned above, is a free gift.** Salvation cannot be obtained in any way other than by faith in God and His Son.
- **But, and here is an awesome, frightening fact! Wilful disobedience after having received a knowledge of the truth will certainly keep a person out of the Kingdom of God; no matter what he/she may profess to believe! The Bible says:**

Hebrews 10: 26: “For if we sin **wilfully** after that we have received the **knowledge of the truth**, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,
27: But a certain **fearful** looking for of **judgment** and **fiery** indignation, which shall **devour** the adversaries.”

1 Corinthians 6: 9: “**Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. (homosexuals)**
10: **Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.**”

3. This is what the Scriptures teach

This is what the Scriptures teach concerning obedience and disobedience. Christians who ignore these plain facts are deceiving themselves and in the **Day of Judgment** they will be astonished beyond words to find out **how wrong they have been. Alas! many - to their utter consternation - will hear these words:**

Matthew 7: 22: “*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*
23: *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*”

For further study, see **A Voice In The Wilderness** files on: **Salvation Faith Works ... Are they Important?**

AMEN!

In the Son's Name — For the Father's glory.
Elder: *Max W. Mader*

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