

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Legalism: The Un-Sin

Since the church began, the devil has concocted any number of diabolical schemes to ensnare God's people. One of his most successful gambits has been the invention of the pseudo-sin commonly called legalism. More people consider legalism to be a sin than consider 7-UP to be a cola, but they are all mistaken. Legalism is the UN-SIN.

Legalism is defined as "strict, literal or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code" (Webster's Dictionary). Simply put, a legalist follows the rules.

I was not there when the devil and his angels dreamed up this strategy for getting

Christians to commit more sin by convincing them that legalism is a sin. But I must say that it was a stroke of genius. Just think of it -- being able to actually convince people that not committing sin is a sin!

Satan must have noticed that early disciples "*continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine*" (Acts 2:42), and that they were expected to be "*obedient in all things*" (II Corinthians 2:9). At some point however, Satan also became aware that the apostles and prophets of Christ were teaching Jewish Christians that they could not rely on their obedience to the Law of Moses

for their salvation; it would do them no good to strictly follow the Law of Moses. And that's when Satan hatched his scheme. He knew that if he could convince Christians that the apostolic warnings against becoming "*entangled again with a yoke of bondage*" (Galatians 5:1) were talking about strictly keeping the commands of Jesus, then he could get them to stop being concerned with commandment keeping.

This is what has happened. Millions of people today who call themselves Christians believe that strict obedience to God is a sin called legalism. They believe that to be a faithful Christian one must not be too concerned with actually doing exactly what Jesus said to do. Their leaders write things like the following:

"Stringently striving to obey Christian rules and regulations doesn't enable the Spirit-filled walk; it often kills it (II Corinthians 3:6)." [Neil Anderson, *Freed from Legalism*].

Please note that in

the verse cited by this anti-legalist, the apostle Paul states that God "*made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*" What is "the letter" in this passage? Is it "Christian rules and regulations" as Mr. Anderson states? We don't have to guess, for Paul tells us in the next verse. The letter that kills is called "*the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones*" (II Corinthians 3:7). "The letter" is plainly the Law of Moses! It was written on tablets of stone.

Over and over again the apostles of Christ warn that striving to strictly follow the Law of Moses will lead to death, not life! But **nowhere** do they state that strictly following the commands of Christ will do the same.

The New Testament never condemns the strict keeping of the commandments of God. It always commends it. Even the hair-splitting, herb-tithing, commandment-

keeping Pharisees were not condemned for keeping God's commandments too well. They were condemned for keeping the small requirements while leaving off the big ones. Jesus told them that they should have kept **both!** *"These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone"* (Matthew 23:23).

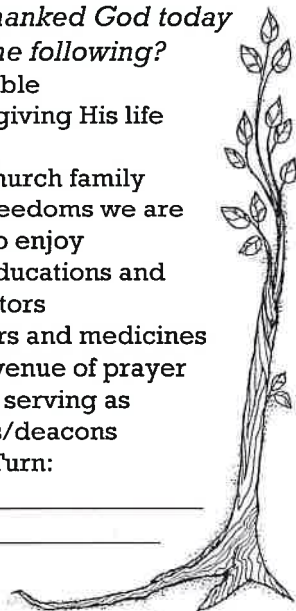
My friends, those who love God will keep His commandments. *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome"* (1 John 5:3). Those who don't keep God's commandments, don't really know Him. *"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him"* (1 John 2:3-4).

Steve Klein

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

Have you thanked God today for any of the following?

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: *Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.*

1) CREATE A PROSPECTIVE CHRISTIAN LIST

Mark 16:15 *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"*

Write down names of anyone you think might be open to contact and hand it to the elders, and provide contact information (e-mail, address, phone number, etc.), if available. Some of these interested people might be:

- a) church members' spouses who may not belong to our church
- b) people who have visited in the last 18 months
- c) people who have demonstrated any interest in our congregation
- d) parents of children who attend Sunday School
- e) people you work with or go to school with
- f) people at businesses you deal with on a day-to-day basis
- g) someone new to the neighborhood/new to work or school
- h) teammates
- i) people with similar hobbies as you
- j) members of other congregations (you would be surprised here, especially write down those who talk about God freely and proudly)
- k) anyone and everyone else you can think of

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Matthew 18:10-14

10 "See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

12 What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? **13** And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.

14 So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.