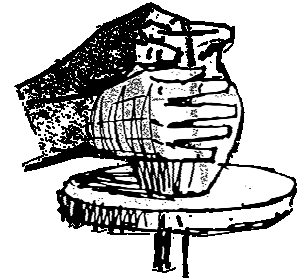


His Workmanship Westside

*"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ
Jesus for good works."*

—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Legalism, a term not used in the Bible, by David McClister

One of the more interesting issues in modern Biblical scholarship is the attempt to understand the Jews of the first century, the Jews with whom Jesus and Paul dealt. Despite these Jews being mentioned often in the New Testament, we simply do not know much about them. This is particularly true about the Pharisees. They themselves left no historical documents which explain or describe how they understood Judaism. It is true that their "descendants" (after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD) left many documents behind (which eventually became the *Mishnah*, the *Tosefta*, and the *Talmud*), but very little describes the beliefs and practices of the Jews who lived in the first century. In fact, the pedagogical descendants of the Pharisees did not even call themselves Pharisees.

Despite this shortage of actual historical documents, it has long been assumed that the Pharisees were legalists. But there is a major question that goes along with this. Just what is legalism in the first place? This question turns out to be difficult to answer.

It may surprise you to know that the English word *legalism* was not coined until 1645. Even more important, no Hebrew or Greek word in the Bible

means *legalism*. This is seldom appreciated. In all of the debates that Paul had with Judaizing teachers, in all the responses he had to their teachings, not once did he ever call them "legalists." Why not? Because of the simple reason that every Jew—including Jesus, Paul, the Pharisees, and the Judaizers—believed that a person's actions, his deeds, his obedience to God were without doubt part of a right relationship with God. Within Judaism, "works" were *never* at issue. No Jew in that day and age debated whether or not "works" were part of being right with God. *Everyone* agreed that they were.

It was only after Martin Luther came up with his doctrine of *faith only* (which he, mistakenly, attributed to the apostle Paul) that the modern idea of legalism was born. Ever since that time, it has been common to refer to people who emphasize obedience to God in deeds (works) which are demanded by God's word as "legalists." The current dictionary meaning of legalism is "strict adherence to the law, especially to the letter of the law rather than the spirit." It is used pejoratively to refer to an over-emphasis on discipline of conduct or legal ideas, usually implying an

allegation of misguided rigor, pride, superficiality, the neglect of mercy, and ignorance of God's grace. Legalism is alleged against any view that obedience to law, not reliance on grace and one's own faith only, is the pre-eminent principle of redemption. C.E.B. Cranfield commented that Paul's "statements, which at first sight seem to disparage the law, were really directed not against the law itself but against that misunderstanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology" (legalism). Thus, legalists are accused of failing to see the real purpose for law, which is to be our schoolmaster/tutor to bring us to Christ, Gal 3:24.

But in the days of Jesus and the apostles, whether or not people should actually obey God with deeds of righteousness was never an issue. One of the implications of this fact is that it is not accurate (it is, specifically, anachronistic) to describe Paul's debate with the Judaizers as a debate over legalism. It simply was not part of the problem. They didn't even have a word for it! Notwithstanding the non-Biblical origin of the term, the word "legalist" is still thrown around quite liberally in

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**“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”
—Romans 6:16**

religious discussions. Protestant evangelicals routinely refer to Roman Catholics as legalists. Liberal evangelicals routinely refer to conservative evangelicals as legalists. Some folks in denominational churches have called members of the Lord's body “legalists,” and even within our fellowship some Christians refer to other Christians as legalists. In each of these instances, the term “legalist” is applied simply because someone was emphasizing that we ought to be doing what God says we should do, to the chagrin of someone else.

Someone might say that legalism is the idea that a person can be right with God simply on the basis of obeying God's “rules.” Usually, this is said in some kind of context where faith is being presented as the only way to be right with God in the gospel. The legalist, therefore, is supposedly the person who believes that faith (“only”; defined as a mental activity) is not enough to save a person, but that such a person must also *do* certain things in order to be right with God. However, note this conversation:

“They [Jews] said to Him, ‘What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He has sent.’” Jn 6:28-29. Here Jesus said that having faith is doing what God requires (“working the works of God”). Faith is, if you will, one of God's “rules.” So, is the person who believes in God a legalist for believing? That's not what people who use the term “legalist” would say.

So what is legalism? Is legalism a matter of being “too strict” about God's demands? If so, where in the Bible is

the list of things we should be strict about and the things we can be lax about? Who decides when someone is being too strict? Or is legalism a failure to talk enough about the internal qualities a Christian must have, and talking too much about external obedience? If so, where in the Bible is the passage that tells me how much emphasis on external good deeds is too much? How can I measure when I have not emphasized the internal requirements of God enough? Am I a legalist simply because I don't say it to another's satisfaction? The fact is that both a right heart and good deeds are required before God. *“I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds,”* Jer 17:10.



Or is legalism the idea that “external” works, by themselves, will earn a person enough merit to get to heaven? It is never defined that way, and we could search the world over to find anyone who actually believes that. If no one defines it this way and no one believes it when stated that way, then the term “legalist” is nothing other than a straw-man, a caricature that has no correspondence to a real person or an actual doctrine.

One modern scholar wrote: “...the term only has meaning within the context of a prior decision as to the relationship between faith and human response. ...the meaning of legalism varies with the soteriology of the individual user and his/her tradition,” K. Yinger, “Defining Legalism,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 46 (2008) 91-108; at 96-97. In plain English: the term “legalism” is so imprecise that it means nothing. It means whatever the person who is using the term thinks it means or wants it to mean. But that's not how we communicate in real life. We communicate when all the speakers and hearers use words that we understand in the same way. When someone uses a word (like “legalism”) in a way that he alone defines, then he is not actually communicating anything.

Very often, the charge of legalism, when it is hurled, simply means “you think that a person has to do something to be right with God, something more than just believing in Jesus.” In other words, “legalism” often means “you do not believe in the denominational doctrine of ‘faith only.’” Even when Christians accuse each other of being legalists, the term turns out to be empty. Christians are sometimes accused (by other Christians) of legalism when they are doing nothing other than being conscientious about obedience, more so than the person who charges them with legalism. So the charge of legalism simply means “you pay more attention to that particular aspect of obedience than I do.” To put it plainly, when someone says “you're a legalist,” all it really means is “you do not conform to my idea of how Christ saves us.” I suppose, then, that I'm a legalist. Whatever that means.



Let your faith be seen in 2014
 "I rejoice to see your good order
 and the steadfastness of your faith
 in Christ."
 —Colossians 2:5

Do. Not. Doubt. Him, by Wilson Adams

There will always be Goliaths in your path. There will always be Jericho walls staring you in the face. There will be days when you will feel like Moses—between the devil and the deep Red Sea. And then God does something off-the-charts amazing.

I've seen it. I saw it yesterday. Details are not important. Our God lives and works His providence in ways I do not understand. But I don't have to understand. All I have to do is—stand in awe.

Early Christians prayed jail doors off their hinges and an empire off its foundation. Christians in the 1960s and 1970s prayed that God would bring down the Iron Curtain so the gospel could have free course. Parents fall to their knees and pray for their prodigals. Shepherds beseech God for an intervention in impossible situations. Saints from coast to coast lift up their eyes to the only One Who can soften hearts. Disciples the world over pray for justice in the Muslim world. God can do abundantly more than we ever ask or even think, Eph 3:20. Do you believe that?

I have no idea what you are facing today. Doesn't matter. Find your closet of prayer and **get.on.your.knees.** God still moves mountains and changes lives. Got any rivers that seem uncrossable? Got any mountains you cannot tunnel through? God specializes in things thought impossible.

He does what others cannot do.

Yes, He does!

Discipleship Here At Home

A young preacher, Eric Berlaug, with his wife Samantha, will visit with us next weekend Thurs, 5/22, to Tues, 5/27. Eric will preach next Sunday, and the church will gather to spend time with him Monday evening, 5/26, 5:30 pm, at the Reingrovers' house.

True Riches, anonymous

A tax assessor came one day to a poor gospel preacher to determine what taxes he would have to pay. "What do you own?" he questioned.

"Oh, I'm very wealthy," replied the preacher.

"List your possessions, please," the assessor instructed.

The man of God replied:

"First, I have everlasting life, Jn 3:16.

Second, I have a mansion prepared for me in heaven, Jn 14:2.

Third, I have peace that surpasses understanding, Phil 4:7.

Fourth, I have unspeakable joy, 1 Pet 1:8.

Fifth, I have divine love that never fails, 1 Cor 13:8.

Sixth, I have a faithful, virtuous (strong), godly wife, Pr 31:10.

Seventh, I have happy and obedient children, Ps 127:3-5; Eph 6:1-3.

Eighth, I have true, loyal friends, Pr 18:24.

Ninth, I have songs in the night, Ps 42:8.

Tenth, I have a crown of life awaiting me, Jas 1:12.

Eleventh, I have the Holy Spirit for help and comfort, Ax 9:31; 13:52, Rm 14:17.

Twelfth, I have Jesus Christ and His Father in me, 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 3:17."

The tax collector closed his book and said, "Truly, you are a very rich man, but your property is not subject to taxation!"

PRAY FOR healing, protection, help, and comfort here and away

Samantha Harrod—pneumonia

Emma Sangellino—recovering from pneumonia

Rocco Jr. and Giada Sangellino—influenza B

Ed Fink—prostate cancer; current treatment for brain tumors; **PRAISE:** improved blood count

Nell Free—anemic and dehydrated; some valve leakage in her heart her doc is tracking

Giles Free—seizure last month; confined at home

Amy Vander Kooi's mother, Sherry Graves—

rehab in TN recovering from broken hip

Forrest Corray, Jordan's brother—addiction

Kory Tope's uncle Kurt Schulz—successful angioplasty, 2 stents; another in near future

Randy Reames's mother, Una, in her 80s—

cancerous colon tumor removed recently

Sandra Perry's sister, Sharon Rupinen—upper GI tests; surgery expected; **Sandra's daughter's**

boyfriend—complications from foot amputation

Josh McDonald, friend of **Kory Tope,** and his

daughter **Casey**—unwanted divorce

Mark Campbell—in own apt

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr;

Addison Tope; Christian Harrod; Pat Wilkes—asthma

Bill Dennis—heart issues

Autumn Hadders—epilepsy; celiac disease

Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome

Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; needs quick meals to heat up, like soup

Menards—aging; **Lloyd,** diabetes, weak;

Virginia, macular degeneration; high BP

Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes

Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia

Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain

Judy Sartin—spinal stenosis; arthritis

Judy and Mike Strand—both beginning

treatment for hepatitis

Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung weakness

Job concerns Linda Szymanski

Travel DeWayne Howell will go to

Mont-real for work tomorrow through

Thursday. **Pat Campbell** will travel to AR

tomorrow to care for her father.

"Wash your face every morning in a bath of praise."

—Charles Spurgeon



Exposing current thoughts & trends

Atheists Call for Mockery to Public Prayers, by Matt Barber

In an unhinged response to last week's Supreme Court decision in *Greece v. Galloway*, which reaffirmed Americans' First Amendment right to include public prayer, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) announced its retaliatory "path forward" for Christ-haters. Saul Alinsky (progressivist author of Rules for Radicals) would be proud. On its website, FFRF posted an essay calling the High Court's decision "disastrous for state-church separation," and frantically warned, "This decision could be the equivalent of *Dred Scott* or *Plessy* for our [anti-Christian] cause."

The Supreme Court's infamous *Dred Scott* and *Plessy v. Ferguson* decisions upheld slavery and racial segregation respectively. This is richly ironic considering that groups like the FFRF, the ACLU, People for the American Way, etc., are simply anti-Christian segregationist organizations that exist for the sole purpose of segregating Christians and religion from any public forum.

The essay said, "In light of [the] dreadful ruling, we, and all activists, will have to fight harder and smarter. We will need to lodge more complaints, write more letters, conduct more protests, and bring more lawsuits. No matter how long it takes, *Greece v. Galloway* must be overturned." The essay brazenly called for "mockery" of God, summoning



atheists to infiltrate any public forum that might open in prayer, and then to "voice disapproval (e.g., by booing, making thumbs down gestures, blowing a raspberry, or by making other audible sounds signifying disapproval). ...Citizens may also abruptly walk out of government proceedings and then make an auspicious re-entry as soon as the prayer has ended," suggested the group. The stated goal? "Public mockery and ridicule" of Jesus Christ and all Christians. The FFRF post concluded: "If after the above actions have been taken, the government continues to insult atheists and/or religious minorities with sectarian prayers, activists may turn to public mockery and ridicule. One example is the 'prayer mockery hat.' Activists can easily make a brightly colored hat with large ear muffs and dark sunglasses. Wording on the cap could say: 'I OBJECT TO PRAYER!' Then, as soon as the pastor or chaplain has been introduced, activists can put on their 'prayer mockery hat' with exaggeration and then remain seated throughout the prayer, completely ignoring the pastor until finished. Activists can also mount a small GoPro-style camera to their cap to record the response for posting on Facebook or Youtube.com. In spite of the disastrous ruling, the fight is not over. We must not submit to this subjugation of our constitutional right to be free FROM unwanted religious intrusion by government. Indeed, 'Nothing Fails Like Prayer' so let us use reason and our constitutional rights of free speech, free association, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances to our full advantage."

Still think there's no left-wing war on Christians? Think again.



meets at
13789 W. 8th Avenue
Golden, Colorado 80401
720-295-4530

Pastors

Larry Campbell (303) 246-8810
DeWayne Howell (303) 973-7283

Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

info@thechurchingolden.com

Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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Sunday morning:

- **Adult Bible class, *Inside Out, Growing a Spirit of Service*, Lesson 5, "A Spirit of Commitment,"** Jeff Wilkes

- **Sermon, "How to Have Good Days,"** Jim Reingrover

Sunday afternoon theme for this term:

HISTORY OF THE LORD'S KINGDOM

- **"Differences in Priests, Pastors, and Bishops,"** Larry Campbell

Wednesday adult class for May-June:

Jeremiah and Lamentations: Warnings

This week: Jeremiah 30-33