

The Wednesday Word, September 11, 2019: You May be a Legalist If: ...Part 2

You may be a legalist if you are a professing Christian but suspect that your salvation has not been secured and guaranteed by Christ. If this is the case, you are likely trying to try to supplement your salvation by your own efforts and righteousness. That means you are a legalist and legalism wants you to focus anywhere and everywhere but on the Finished Work of Christ for your salvation.

The gospel, however, brings the death knell to legalism. As gospel believers, we learn to rest entirely in who Jesus is and on what He has accomplished for us in the Finished Work.

Shortly after the feeding of the 5,000, Christ was confronted by a group of eager legalists asking, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" (John 6:28). Christ's reply (verse 29) is very telling. He responds, "This is the work of God that you believe on him who He has sent." That is to say, to believe, (rest and trust) on Christ, is to do the work of God. In other words, it is not resting on our practices but resting on the doing, dying and rising again of the Lord Jesus. Only Christ's person and work can satisfy the Father.

The legalist tries to do good things in an attempt to earn and secure God's favour. That's how he understands life. He feels that somehow, he must continually turn God's heart towards him. These folks (in verse 28) wanted Jesus to give them a list of things to do. Legalists love lists. To the carnal mind, the thought of a free gift from God is nonsense. These folks wanted to do something.

It was the same with the rich young ruler: "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18):

Also, with the Jews on the day of Pentecost: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37).

It was the same with the Philippian jailer: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

And with the prodigal son — "Make me as one of thy hired servants" (one who works for what he receives).

But, here's the thing, our lists cannot gain us acceptance before God. On the contrary, the work of salvation is to rely upon the work of someone else to be saved.

The legalist has difficulty grasping the personal sufficiency of the atonement. He has trouble believing scriptures like:

"I, even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:25).

Or, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

The legalist struggles with the fact that God exercises His divine prerogative to forget our sins. So, let's not remember what God has forgotten.

In reality, legalists make works not only the evidence of salvation but salvation itself. This is an attack on the Lord Jesus! He has made peace by the blood of his Cross (Colossians 1:20). Peace

was not made when we added our two cents worth. Redemption was accomplished at Calvary. The work was and is finished.

If we are ultimately saved by Christ plus our works, then works become one of our mediators. But the Scripture asserts that there is but one mediator between God and man .. not two (see 1 Timothy 2:5).

If our works mediate for us, then they are partly responsible for our peace. But the scriptures know nothing of this. Peace has already been made by the shed blood of Calvary plus nothing. (Colossians 1:20).

There is one Mediator between God and man. There is one Peace-maker. We have been reconciled to God by Christ alone (2 Corinthians 5:18). And this is as it should be. What works of ours can compare to those of the Lord Christ? The best of our works are defiled by imperfections. Our works cannot make an atonement, but instead, they need one made for themselves.

I like what Daniel Miall of Portsea said as he reflected on man's wretched condition. He declared,
"If the Lord were to bring us within one step of heaven and leave us to take that last step alone, we would step into Hell."

And that's the Gospel Truth!