

LAW VERSUS GRACE (42)

QUESTION #41 – When we suggest that the Lord’s Day is not a legal day such as the Sabbath, are we saying it is a day in which anything goes?

The answer to this is No. **If believers do not use their right to worship God on Sunday, they could lose their right to worship God.**

Under Grace Age instruction, to persistently forsake oneself from gathering together with other believers is to live life in disobedience to the Word and will of God (**Heb. 10:25**). The truth is as we see the time of the Rapture drawing near, we should be stimulating and encouraging one another to be more faithful at church (**Heb. 10:24-25**). Sunday is an important day for New Testament believers.

(Importance #1) - Sunday is a day to live well-pleasing to the Lord.

(Importance #2) - Sunday is a day to worship God.

(Importance #3) - Sunday is a day to receive instruction from God’s Word.

(Importance #4) - Sunday is a day to fellowship with God’s people.

(Importance #5) - Sunday is not a day of inactivity; it is a day of activity and celebration.

(Importance #6) - Sunday is to be a day of joy.

(Importance #7) - Sunday is the busiest day of Christian activity, not a day of rest.

QUESTION #42 – What are some important theological points we must always keep in our minds on this issue?

Theological Point #1 - We must always remember that the Sabbath was not given to individual Gentiles, but to the nation Israel.

Theological Point #2 - We must always remember that the Ten Commandments and the Sabbath day were part of the O.T. law which was nailed to the cross.

Theological Point #3 - We must always remember that the Jewish Sabbath Day was not changed into the Lord’s Day.

Theological Point #4 - We must always remember that the Lord’s Day should not be viewed as or called the Christian Sabbath day.

Theological Point #5 - We must always remember that making up a new Sabbath Day/Lord’s Day is not pleasing to God for it adds to His Word, something clearly forbidden (**Rev. 22:18-19**).

Theological Point #6 - We must always remember that our job is not to get the lost world to observe the Lord’s Day, but to tell them about Jesus Christ.

When Paul wrote **Rom. 14:5** and **Col 2:16**, he never did so thinking that people would neglect the Lord’s Day. He never dreamed N.T. believers would ever want to skip church because even though it is not a legal Sabbath, it is a wonderful day to partake of the things of God.

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QUESTION #43 – What is the problem with legalism?

Legalism is the religious heresy that believes we are sanctified by religious rule and law-keeping. It is dangerous and demonic. Dr. Roy Aldrich said, “The most persistent and widespread and deadly error of all Bible history is legalism” (*Causes for Confusion of Law and Grace*, Bibliotheca Sacra, July-Sept., 1959, p. 221). Dr. S. Lewis Johnson said, “One of the most serious problems facing the orthodox Christian church today is the problem of legalism. One of the most serious problems facing the church in Paul’s day was the problem of legalism. In every day it is the same. Legalism wrenches the joy of the Lord from the Christian believer, and with the joy of the Lord goes the power for vital worship and vibrant service. Nothing is left but cramped, somber, dull and listless profession. The truth is betrayed and the glorious name of the Lord becomes a synonym for a gloomy killjoy. The Christian under law is a miserable parody of the real thing” (*The Paralysis of Legalism*, Bibliotheca Sacra, April-June, 1963, p. 109).

QUESTION #44 – What is cause of legalism?

The real cause of self-righteous legalism is Satan (II Cor. 11:14-15); but at the core of the legalist is always the same problem, satanic pride. It is a specific kind of pride that refuses to see oneself as a totally bankrupt sinner who must totally embrace free grace for salvation and for sanctification.

Again, we cite Dr. Johnson: “At the heart of the problem of legalism is pride; a pride that refuses to admit spiritual bankruptcy. That is why the doctrines of grace stir up so much animosity” (*Ibid.*, p. 109). God’s grace system is without money and without cost and the legalist hates that message (**Is. 55:1-2**). He does not want to humbly admit that we are God’s workmanship; the legalist wants to be his own workmanship (**Eph. 2:10**).

The real reason people struggle with law-versus-grace and the real reason for legalism is pride. This person views himself as better than others because of his legal convictions and does not really see him or herself as a wretched sinner whose works are as filthy rags. When one comes to faith in Jesus Christ, one is set free from the law; but **the legalist still has affections for it**. Those affections stifle his ability to grow in grace. **When one carefully studies and chooses to personally apply Col. 2:16-17 to his or her life, the Grace Age believer is obligated to be emancipated from all legalism and legalistic practices.**

This is true when it comes to justification and sanctification. As Dr. Johnson said, “If we have escaped the error of legalism in the realm of justification, it cannot be said that we have overcome it in the sphere of sanctification. It is still the attitude of many genuine Christians that we may expect to please God by a list of negatives. Thereby we bring back into Christianity a spirit of self-righteousness, namely, ‘These are the things that I do not do; God will now have to reward me for my achievements.’ But God will not be in debt to any man; He blesses only upon the principle of grace” (*Ibid.*, pp. 112-113). When you get right down to it, this becomes a matter of pride.

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This is not just a matter of one personal conviction as opposed to another; this is a matter of submission to the truth of New Testament grace found in Jesus Christ. You either govern your life in a shadow of legalism or you live it in the full substance of freedom in Christ.

QUESTION #45 – What are the two types of legalism?

Generally speaking, there are two types of legalism:

Type #1 - There is Pharisaical legalism.

This is a legalistic system which rejects or partially rejects salvation by faith and sets forth the demonic doctrine that man will only be right with God by his works. This kind of legalism invents its own rules and regulations as a means of being right with God.

Pharisaical legalism puts more emphasis on its own teachings and traditions rather than the Word of God (**i.e. Mark 7:5-13**).

Type #2 - There is Fundamentalist legalism.

This is a legalistic system which accepts salvation by faith, but makes spirituality a system of adhering to certain rules and regulations. When we are first saved, that proud old nature still has an affinity for some merit system. Dr. Aldrich said, “It is probably true that no believer is without some taint of legalism” (*Ibid.*, p. 221).

The common thread of all forms of legalism is a major emphasis on man-made rules and regulations and a major de-emphasis or disregard for the Word of God and the grace of God. In fact, if the Word of God says the opposite of a fundamentalist legalist, the legalist will not submit to the Word of God but will adhere to his own system of rules and regulations.

QUESTION #46 – Is there any Biblical support which would indicate God wants us legalistic?

To this we answer an emphatic No! In fact, there is great evidence in Scripture that would teach us that any form of legalism whatsoever is totally detestable to God (**Gal. 5:1-4; 11-12**).

QUESTION #47 – What are some of the traits of a legalist?

Trait #1 - A legalist will emphasize external conformity to his rules.

Trait #2 - A legalist will emphasize his own negative views and perspectives as if they are just as important as God’s Word.

Trait #3 - A legalist will motivate by an unbiblical fear and duty.

Trait #4 - A legalist is always hypercritical of those who do not conform to his rules.