

Am I A Legalist?

Used in derogatory manner in most religious circles

Legalist - 1: an advocate or adherent of moral legalism 2: one that views things from a legal standpoint; especially: one that places primary emphasis on legal principles or on the formal structure of governmental institutions

Legalism - 1: strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code <the institutionalized legalism that restricts free choice> 2: a legal term or rule - Webster

Salvation by Works Alone Is Legalism

Jews sought salvation on the basis of law-keeping (works only)

Romans 9:30-33 *What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion A stone of stumbling and A rock of offense, And he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."*

Galatians 3:10-11 *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "The righteous man shall live by faith."*

Roman Catholicism - penance for sin, pay money, make pilgrimages, prayer, fastings, do good works. These were works of merit that men had devised

Martin Luther renounced this but went to opposite extreme "faith only," - man can do nothing to be saved
One tenant of Calvinism is imputed righteousness. It says that Christ's perfect righteousness is imputed to believers so that God does not see their sins

Explaining why Christ's righteousness was imputed, Calvin reasoned from legalism. He said we obtained righteousness through Christ's perfect obedience; i.e., through His perfect law-keeping

It is true Christ kept the Law perfectly, but one is not made righteous because of that. It is in His death that we are made free from sin.

Romans 6:5-7 *For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.*

Legalism - Makes Laws Where God Has Not, Binds Where God Has Not

The Pharisees were the perfect example. **Matthew 15:1-20**

First, Jesus rebukes them for their traditions. **vs 8-9**

Secondly, showed external things do not defile a person. **vs 10-11**

Still they don't understand; Jesus explains more fully. **vs 15-20**

Those who bind traditions and/or their own convictions become legalists.

Galatians 4:9-11 *But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.*

Romans 14:5-6 *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.*

Examples: Carnal warfare; one cup for Lord's Supper; church cannot use separate classes to teach the Bible.

Some think requiring works (laws) is like a Pharisee. Rely on misunderstanding of passages to back them up.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

They say, "Salvation is not of works." We must ask, "What kind of works are being considered here?"

The context shows that the source or origin of salvation is from the grace of God, not from the works of men. It is "not of yourselves" (**vs 8**); it is not from works that man can boast of (**vs 9**).

Romans 4:1-4 *What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due.*

If one were able to work perfectly (relying on works alone), salvation would be owed to him as a debt.

But one who does not work perfectly (does not rely on works alone), his faith is accounted for righteousness.

Does not mean Abraham did no works at all to be justified because **Hebrews 11:8** "By faith Abraham obeyed..."

Is Strict Adherence To God's Law Legalism?

Strict adherence to God's law is taught in OT & NT.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 *The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.*

1Corinthians 7:19 *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.*

1John 2:3-5 *By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected.*

We all must be "legalists" in sense of strict adherence to God's law.

People often ask, "How strict must I be?" In other words, don't want to be too strict lest they be "legalists."

With man's laws, we are not strict; speed limit 45, many drive 50

The speed-check-out counter says, "20 items or less." Can I get through with 21 items?

People reason the same way regarding God's laws:

"To steal something big is wrong, but to steal a very small thing is not bad." "To tell a little lie is not bad; everyone does it."

"To miss services on Wed. nights or Sun. nights is all right."

Our denominational friends reason the same way regarding truth: "It is not important to follow every little detail in God's word, after all, we don't want to be too picky."

With this attitude, after several years, what they are doing doesn't remotely resemble what God ordained.

When we transgress God's law, we sin.

1John 3:4 *Everyone who commits sin also breaks the law; sin is the breaking of law. (HCS)*

God does not think and operate like man.

Isaiah 55:8-9 *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."*

All transgression and disobedience will be punished.

Hebrews 2:2-3 *For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?*

Hebrews 10:28-29 *Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

If we abide not in doctrine, we don't have God.

2John 1:9 *Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.*

Galatians 1:6-9 *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!*

Am I A Legalist?

Ought to be in sense of obeying God.

John 15:14 *You are My friends if you do what I command you.*