

# Legalism Exposed

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**Bible Text:** Matthew 15:1-20  
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## First Reformed Protestant Church

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We have this announcement from the Consistory. Beloved brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, in a combined meeting of the Consistories on April 20, '23, the Consistory of Second Reformed Protestant Church concurred with the Consistory of First RPC in the decision to depose Mr. Milmeier and Mr. Steven Dyke from the office of elder. The grounds for their deposition was the maintaining the false doctrine of legalism for faithless desertion of their office. According to Articles 79 and 80 of the Church Order, these are sins that make them worthy of deposition. As difficult as the deposition of an elder is for us as a congregation, we are reminded of our calling from Christ, the King of the church through his Apostle Paul, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Acts 20:28.

Let's call upon our God in congregational prayer.

*Our heavenly Father, who is like unto thee? To whom shouldst thou be compared? And who is thy equal? Who was there when thou didst call forth into the darkness and now hast established the frame of this present world? Who heard thee spoke so that the world was established? Who heard thee call forth the light out of the darkness? Who saw thee bring forth the firmament and set it in its place? Who heard thee call forth the dry land out of the sea and set bounds for the sea? Who witnessed thy ordination of the stars in the sky? Who has seen thee fix together the belt of Orion? And Father, who knows the goings of all the creatures of this world? Who sends forth the rain from the clouds to give waters to the places where man does not dwell? Who in wisdom declares that this place should be the place of the outpouring of thy heavens and this place should be dry in a desert wasteland? Who has sent forth the cold, the cold that no man can stand before and thy frost? Who calls forth the day and sends forth the sun in its course as a bridegroom eager to run a race? Who can take up the dry lands as in a balance and weigh out all the dust of the earth? Who can measure all the seas? Who can know the depths? Who can know the heights? Who can know the goings-on of thy world? Who can know thy wisdom and thy thoughts?*

*What is man who demands of thee to know thy doings? What is man to sit in judgment and to give his own opinions about thy doing? What is man? A grass and all his glory, all of his height, and as the flower of the grass that is trampled on by the foot and given*

*no account, yea thy Spirit blows and he withers away. What is man that thou art mindful of him and the Son of man that thou visitest him? Father, who are we that thou shouldst come down unto thy people and tabernacle among them in the Lord Jesus Christ? Who are we for whom thou didst send thy Son to be a servant and to be made in the likeness of men? Who are we for whom he should labor and toil and travail and as a Son become obedient, obedient unto sufferings, obedient to thy will perfectly, obedient even unto the death of the cross? Oh how he comes, oh how he comes, "Lo in the volume of the book it is written of me to do thy will, O Lord."*

*Father, who are we, those who are disgusting, those who are vile, those who are evil, born in sin to be drawn out of this world, out of our corruption, and out of the blackness of our existence and sin by thy just judgment against man's rebellion? Who are we to be called into thy holy sanctuary and to be drawn in thy bosom and be held dear unto thee and close unto thee, to hear thee speak that we are thy beloved, thy beloved from all eternity, that thou hast held us dear and precious and honorable, something to be delighted in from before the foundation of the world, that thou would show unto us the riches of thy grace in Jesus Christ, thou would show unto us the great heights of thy life in heaven by drawing us out of our misery and our sin by thy work alone, by thy power alone, by thy mercy alone, not by any willing and not by any doing, not by any other work on our part?*

*Who are we that we should hear the word of life, not a word that has no power, the gospel of our salvation, which is the power of our salvation, which declares unto us our righteousness, and that the just shall live by faith? Who are we who week after week after leaving thy glorious courts go forth in the world and sin and defile ourselves with the world only to come again and to be received of thee, to again have the declaration that we are righteous in our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are thy adopted sons and daughters, that thou hast determined in spite of ourselves to do us good, that thou dost give unto us even now the enjoyment of heavenly life, the peace of heaven, the joy of heaven, the rest of heaven, so that heaven breaks forth in the veil of this world and comes unto us and lifts us up and brings us up into thy throne and causes us to gaze upon thy truth and gives unto us thy word that we praise thee from the heart in love and adoration of our God?*

*Thou art God. Thy thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are thy ways, our ways, but thou art God. Thou hast determined to give thy people an expected end, and thou wilt not forsake the works of thy hands. Father, we are again troubled with difficulties and sins, tribulations of this present life. Oh, what a valley of death we dwell in. Always we dwell in a valley of death in this world, but sometimes those depths we experience in new and profound ways.*

*Father, remember our congregation in this time of her affliction, in this time of her travail, in this time of her mourning, where the Consistory has passed a righteous judgment. We have continual hardening against that judgment and now division in thy church, division which thy word does not cause but exposes and thy truth brings to light, for thy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, and where the truth is, there is thy Spirit, and where the truth is, there is thy fellowship with thy people, where the truth is, there is full assurance, there is confidence, there is rest and peace and joy. Father, give repentance*

*to those who continually walk in their rebellion, and in all this we pray, not our will but thy will be done, thy will which is only good. Be pleased to give us thy truth, only thy truth, thy pure truth. Be pleased to give it unto us by the proclamation of thy word, thy word which is a lamp unto our feet, a light unto our pathway, thy word which cannot ever lead astray, thy word which is the light of the risen Lord Jesus Christ shines forth in the gloom and draws thy people to an expected end. Do not deceive with the words of man, do not permit any words of man, but give thy truth. And for this we are utterly, utterly dependent upon thy Spirit, thy sanctifying Spirit which purifies the lips and the tongue of a man who speaks himself of the earth and sinful, thy Spirit which carries the word through the ears down to the heart and causes that word to dwell richly in thy people.*

*Father, be pleased to dwell among us by thy word and Spirit and sanctify our worship with the Spirit of our risen Lord Jesus Christ and strengthen us for a walk here below. Strengthen our feeble knees, cause us, pick us up, and carry us with thy word which is a power, a real spiritual power.*

*Father, remember those who mourn on the account of the death of the Laudermeir boy this past week. Again, thy ways are not our ways and thy thoughts not our thoughts. Thou dost work all things after the counsel of thine own will. Give unto thy people comfort in the words of their Lord Jesus Christ and the certainty that all those who die in the Lord Jesus Christ have nothing to fear as they enter into the grave and into death where Christ has made death a portal and a hallway, the place where he dost dwell in heaven.*

*Remember the congregation and all of her needs. Remember the congregation in our families and in our marriages. Remember the congregation in our work in the school and our laborers in the school. Remember our congregation and all of her labor in the world and her labor in the home. Remember the office bearers and strengthen them in their work. Father, do good to thy people to whom thou dost impute the perfect righteousness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All these things we pray for we have a high priest who is not left untouched with our own infirmities, who was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin. In him we pray. Amen.*

We worship the Lord with our offerings, first for the general fund, and secondly for benevolence.

Psalter 141. We sing the four stanzas of 141.

"Gracious God, my heart renew,  
Make my spirit right and true;  
Cast me not away from Thee,  
Let Thy Spirit dwell in me;  
Thy salvation's joy impart,  
Steadfast make my willing heart.

Sinners then shall learn from me  
And return, O God, to Thee;  
Saviour, all my guilt remove,

And my tongue shall sing Thy love;  
Touch my silent lips, O Lord,  
And my mouth shall praise accord.

Not the formal sacrifice  
Hath acceptance in Thy eyes;  
Broken hearts are in Thy sight  
More than sacrificial rite;  
Contrite spirit, pleading cries,  
Thou, O God, wilt not despise.

Prosper Zion in Thy grace  
And her broken walls replace;  
Then our righteous sacrifice  
Shall delight Thy holy eyes;  
Freewill offerings, gladly made,  
On Thy altar shall be laid."

Our reading from the word of God this morning comes from Matthew 15. We begin in chapter 14 with verse 34, we read through verse 20. Our text is verses 1 through 20 of chapter 15 which I will not re-read. This is the word of God.

34 And when they [that is, Jesus and his disciples] were gone over [the sea of Galilee], they came into the land of Gennesaret. 35 And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; 36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

1 Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. 3 But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. 5 But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; 6 And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. 7 Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. 10 And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: 11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. 12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly

Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. 15 Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. 16 And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? 17 Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.

Thus ends the reading of the holy and divine scriptures.

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, our text begins with the arrival of scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. Prior to our text, Jesus had performed many astounding wonders. He had fed 5,000 men besides women and children. In the verses that we read from chapter 14, many people came unto him so that they could simply touch the hem of his garment. They come burdened with legalism. They come to spy out the liberty that is in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I use that word deliberately, legalism. Legalism does not come up in the text but legalism is the accurate description of those men whose attention was arrested by their own laws and legalism is the charge that our Consistory has given to the doctrine that only exclusive psalmody is permissible for the worship of the church. The Consistory said to teach, that is, the congregation sings any versification of scripture other than the Psalms, then the congregation does not have God dwelling with them or experience his covenant fellowship through Jesus until man's laws is met is legalism. I use that term specifically. And where the gospel is, where God's goodness and grace is known freely through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, there will always be legalism. There will always be the coming of scribes and Pharisees burdened with their laws to spy out liberty, and the reason for that is our own flesh and deep, deep in your flesh is legalism. You can't get rid of it on this side of the grave. It won't go away from you until your body is laid down in the pit and that legalism first manifested itself in the garden, that legalism reared its ugly head when Satan came and tempted Eve and asked Eve rather cunningly, "Hath God said that ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And Eve responded with what God had said plus her own law, her own man-made rule. She said, "God said we could eat of every tree of the garden. That tree in the midst of the garden, God said ye shall not eat of it neither shall ye touch it." And that had all the appearance of something good, something wise, something plausible, Eve's commandment. What you need to see with that man-made law that Eve added on top of God's commandment is that by that she was doubting God's own goodness and liberality. God had not prohibited Adam and Eve from touching the fruit of that tree, but Eve needed to add her own law to know and to assure herself that God was good, and that legalism that manifested itself in the garden is a legalism that you have in your own flesh, and I have in mine, and wherever the gospel is proclaimed, there come, there comes the scribes and Pharisees, and therefore as long as God is

pleased to preserve his gospel among us according to his good pleasure, we will be continually fighting against legalism.

It's no surprise that in the short history of our churches, that is the battle and that is the front that we've had in our own churches. As soon as a church is started, we had those who are insisting that to join themselves with the public worship of God's people, they had to be within the confines of the sanctuary. To hear the lively preaching of the word, they had to be sitting in those pews. We had to defend, we had to fend off the charge of legalism when it came to the matter of the schools. On the basis of the creeds we said, "Here, the creeds say maintain the schools," and the charge of legalism came and we said, "No, the creeds say maintain the schools." And now again, there is a charge of legalism and that should not surprise us, we should expect it, for wherever the gospel is, then come the scribes and Pharisees, and the church may not countenance it for a minute.

She does not play nice when legalism comes into the church. She does not give it any room to stand. When legalism reared its ugly head with the actions of the Apostle Peter, Paul did not play nice, but he confronted Peter. He rebuked Peter. He did not stand for it for a moment. And not too long ago, when a parallel passage to this text was preached, it was told to you that if ever legalism comes off of this pulpit, that the church must condemn it, must not give any room for it. The pulpit may not allow that legalism to fester in the church. The office bearers may not allow that legalism to fester in the church. God's people may not allow that legalism to fester in the church. You give no place for it. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. And so it is taught that unless the church follows the law of only exclusive psalmody, that our worship is vile, disgusting, and repulsive to God, and when God's people offer it, he spews it out of his mouth, that is legalism that our text condemns. That is legalism that our text exposes.

Let's consider the text under the theme "Legalism Exposed." First, the fact. Secondly, the root. And thirdly, the instruction.

When the scribes and Pharisees came down from Jerusalem, they were appalled by the behavior of the disciples of this Nazarene teacher. They were appalled that these disciples would eat of bread without first washing their hands and so they come up to Jesus and they say unto him, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Now you have to understand that that word "tradition of the elders" was not some dirty word to them. The tradition of the elders was highly revered and honored by them. It was esteemed as if it was the very law of God itself. In fact, if you read through the Jewish rabbis, when they talk about their traditions of the elders, they give more esteem and more weight to their tradition than the very law of God itself. Respected, honored was the tradition of the elders and that because they saw now their washings as that which was needed for the right worship of God and that which was needed for fellowship of God.

If you did not have your washings, then you were unclean and you could not enter into the presence of God. That tradition was highly esteemed by them as if it was the law of God. They obeyed it as if it was the law of God. They esteemed it even above the law of God and it had all the appearance of wisdom. Their doctrine of washings was very

plausible. It had no fault, if you want to say that, that was observable on the surface. It made sense for God required washings. God had rules about washings in the law. God had ordained a laver in the tabernacle and in the temple where the priest would wash their hands and they would wash their feet, and there were washings that were prescribed in the law so that those who contracted some ceremonial uncleanness had to wash. And so by their saying you need washings, that seemed good. More washings, that must be very good for by more washings, you protect the law of God and you preserve the worship and fellowship of God's people with him in worship.

Very reasonable were these traditions but understand, it was simply that by these washings and through these washings, you had fellowship with God and you had your worship of God. Without your washings, these things were impossible. And Christ acknowledges that, not the doctrine, but he acknowledges we're dealing with the issue of worship when he speaks in verse 9, quoting Isaiah that, "in vain do they worship me." Their doctrines of washings had to pertain to the worship of God and their doctrines of washings pertain to the fellowship with God in worship for people, in verse 8, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips." Without your washings, you have no worship of God. Without your washings, you have no fellowship with God. Get washing.

And by this doctrine, by the addition of this man-made rule on the law of God, they troubled the consciences of God's people. When God's people thought of worship, they thought of washings, and the Jews troubled the consciences with all their laws that they prescribed about washings. Mark gets into that in the parallel account. Not only did you have to wash your hands before you ate bread, but you had to wash cups, you had to wash pots, you had to wash brazen vessels, you had to wash tables, and the result was you couldn't so much as lift a finger without contracting some sort of corruption or pollution or defilement. So all God's people could think was that, "I need to be cleansed. I need to be washed." And by that, their consciences were troubled for all they could think about is how they would contract pollution, and they were thinking about the pollution that they contracted and that they needed washings. Constantly they needed washings, more and more washings throughout the day. That's all they could think about and their worship was washings and that's not what God had with his law. God had indeed prescribed washings. He said wash, but his law was given in moderation for the washings themselves were not the focal point of worship. The washings were ceremonies and signs that pointed to the washing of Christ that was needed.

All the things that were prescribed in the law, they intended to point to Christ but now with their rules, they made the definition of worship in the mind of God's people washings and it ended up with all sorts of ridiculous superfluity. Always, always you were washing your hands and that was the legalism that Christ exposes. It had a show of goodness. It seemed like godliness but all it did was trouble God's people and trouble their consciences. And Christ points out what it is. He says unto them with a quote from Isaiah, "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

This made worship vain. These man-made laws made worship vain. Oh, you could wash your hands and you could draw nigh unto God with your mouth, and you could honor him with your lips but Christ says your worship is vain. You've made it vain by your washings and you've done that because you've made worship that which cannot happen by washings. You've made the essence, so to speak, of your worship washings. You've now defined the significance for the people as washings. Without your washings, you cannot approach God. Without your washings, you cannot worship God. And now you think, "I've done my washings. I can draw nigh unto God," and God says, "No. It's vain. It's empty. I do not receive it. It's despicable to me for worship is no longer what I have defined worship to be, but worship is all about your law."

That's the legalism that Christ exposes and I say that is no different than the rule that only exclusive psalmody is allowed in the church and let me be very clear what the issue is here: the issue is not whether God has commanded his church to sing Psalms. The issue is not whether the church may sing only Psalms. The church may sing only Psalms. The church may decide that it is for the edification of the body to sing only Psalms, but that's not the issue, nor is the issue that some wish to introduce new songs into the worship of the church. The issue is whether only exclusive psalmody is the law for the church in worship. And that has the appearance of something good. It's very plausible. There's nothing outright that blatantly shows this is contrary to the will of God. God says sing Psalms. God has seen to it that his church have a book written for her to sing with praise unto him. God inspired that. God gave that as a good gift to his church and God has seen to it that all the doctrines of scripture are contained in the Psalms, that it really is a miniature Bible. In all of his wisdom, he's seen to that. God has seen to it that the doctrine of Christ and all of the riches that are in Christ are contained in the Psalms and all of your salvation is expounded into the Psalms and God in his wisdom has seen to it that the whole experience of the believer in all of his religion is contained in the Psalms from the heights of heights to the depths of depths.

All that's needed for rebuke and for admonition and exhortation, it's all contained in the Psalms. Psalms are good. We love the Psalms. Throughout the week, the Psalms are in our soul and we sing them often with our lips. God says sing Psalms. And then you have the commandment, only Psalms in worship. It has the appearance of something good, something desirable. And then it's taught that Christ does not sing with the congregation if she does not sing the Psalms. We're touching here on worship. That's obvious. We're touching here on fellowship with God, for our fellowship with God is in Jesus Christ. And it is said that if you do not sing the Psalms then Christ does not sing with you. Listen to the scribes and Pharisees, "Don't you want to worship? Don't you want to worship God? Don't you want to have fellowship with God? Here, you cannot be unclean. Here, here are the washings." Or this, "Don't you want to assemble with the rest of the congregation in public worship? Don't you want to hear the lively preaching of the word of God? You need to be within the walls of the sanctuary." Or this, "Do you want to sing with Christ? Then you must sing the Psalms."

And there is a disjunction now made between the believer in Jesus Christ at the point of his singing. There is a disruption with the fellowship that God's people have as they sing songs at the point of what they sing. There's something insufficient with their worship.



It's something like this charge that I truly do publicly worship God when I'm sitting in the confines of the sanctuary, but if I'm behind the glass, or if I'm holding my sleeping child just around the corner in the narthex, then that's not true public worship and I'm not hearing the lively preaching of the word. Something less. It's private worship, or it's house worship but it's not the public assembling of God's people for worship.

There's something deficient about your singing when you do not sing the Psalms; a disjunction is made at the point of your fellowship with Jesus Christ with what you sing, with the content of what you sing, and that disjunction, or that disruption, it may not seem so significant at this point, it may not seem like a big deal, but that disjunction always develops. Hence laws are introduced, that disjunction that's made always increases. And I can illustrate that. I can illustrate that with what was cited in the new magazine that is among us from Reverend Stewart. Reverend Stewart had a debate about exclusive psalmody, defending exclusive psalmody, and that debate was transcribed and edited and is on his website, and this is what he says about fellowship and worship of God out of his doctrine of only exclusive psalmody. He says this, "By teaching and admonishing one another with God's own Psalms, the word of Christ dwells in us richly so that we enjoy covenant fellowship with the Holy Trinity." Do you see what was done there? How does your fellowship with God Triune, how does that come about? By singing the Psalms. There is no fellowship with the Holy Trinity outside of the Psalms. Or this, will the church be able to stand before God on the judgment day with their uninspired hymns and say, we sang the word of Christ? Never mind that false dichotomy that he's drawing between uninspired hymns and singing Psalms. That's a false dichotomy. It's a logical fallacy. There is alternative options. They're singing the word of Christ. But never mind that false dichotomy for now, this matter of exclusive psalmody is a matter that gets brought up in the final judgment as your righteousness. When God says, did you sing the words of Christ, and the believer does not respond, judge me in Christ, hold me in Christ. But I sang the Psalms.

There was a disjunction that was made between the believer and Jesus Christ when it says that, when it was taught that if you do not sing the Psalms, Christ does not sing with you, and that man-made law will only cause that distinction and that disruption to grow. And in addition to that, you end up with ridiculous superfluity. Christ does not sing with the church, it's said, unless they sing the Psalms. Christ does not sing with the church if they sing paraphrases of the Psalms. Christ does not sing with the church if they sing portions of the Psalms. And now you have to determine, someone has to determine, how close to the Psalm you have to be for Christ to sing with you. Someone's going to have to determine that and you have to make arbitrary distinctions, which scripture does not make, strong distinctions between singing and prayers and the minds of God's people are troubled when such a man-made law is introduced into the church. You cannot so much as lift up a note in praise to God without wondering, "Am I singing with Christ? Is he actually singing with me? Am I close enough to the Psalms that my voice is heard in heaven too, along with his?"

And what is the result of such a man-made law introduced into the church? What does Christ say about that? "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips but their

heart is far from me, but in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." What do you think of when you think of worship? When man's laws are introduced into the church, their attention is fixated upon their law, so that when they think of worship, they think of their law and that's because they need their law to know that they have fellowship, to know that they worship God. Or let's say they need to have their Psalms to know that they sing with Christ, that there is no disjunction between them and their Savior. And they've made the meaning of worship their law, their singing, their singing of the Psalms, and they're fixated on it. It's all that worship means for them now, and thus it's vain. You can draw nigh with your lips, with your mouth, you can honor the name of God with your tongue, but it's empty because you've made the significance of worship and fellowship with God your law.

That's not all Christ has to say about the folly of legalism. He goes on in verse 3, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother." What Christ was exposing there was that by their traditions, they made vain the law of God itself. God requires children to honor their parents, to provide for their parents, and when their parents have need, to make earnest effort to supply all that their parents stand in need of, but the Jews had invented their law that, let's say your parents are hungry, and you could feed them with an animal from your flock, you could say about that animal, "It's a gift. It's going now to the temple ministry for the support of the priest." And that was good. It was good to give something to the temple priest, for the priests in their service were supplied by that. That wasn't wrong. But now by their tradition of men, they violated God's law, and they made vain the whole law of God. By their legalism, and by their introduction of their own laws, they gave themselves liberty to sin. That always goes hand-in-hand when men introduce their laws into the church.

Fixated they are in keeping their laws, and so the whole law of God goes out the window. If you need your washings, then you don't need to keep your vows. If you need your washings, then it's easy to remove your children from the instruction of Catechism that's given in the church. If you need your washings, it's easy to revile and to reproach those whom God has placed over you. Hand-in-hand with the introduction of man's law and legalism is a liberty to sin, you're going to keep your law, you do away with the rest of all of God's law and that's what Christ exposes.

Now Christ goes on to get at the root of this legalism. What stands behind it? What explains it? What causes it to rear its head? That's instruction he gives when he calls the multitude unto them and says, "Hear and understand not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth. This defileth the man," and he's not there merely exposing the folly of the scribes and Pharisees so that he's saying, "Just look where the pollution goes. It just goes through your body and into the septic tank." But he's getting at the root of the introduction of their laws. Why did man need to introduce his law into the worship of the church? What's the root of that? And what Jesus is showing is your conscience is not cleansed. Consider the path of the food. That's not

what defiles a body. That leaves the body. It goes into the septic tank. But you have a septic tank of defilement in your own flesh from which comes all sorts of evils.

"For out of the mouth or out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false blasphemies." All those defilements like a great septic tank is in your flesh and you know that to be true. Your conscience bears witness of those defilements. You see them every day. Disgusting is your nature. And those that corrupt the conscience, defile the conscience so that the conscience is burdened by guilt. So what does man do? He gives himself a law, a law that seems good, a law that seems reasonable, a law that seems like godliness, a law he can keep, and then he's assured, "I have fellowship when I worship my God." The root of this that Christ exposes, "Your conscience is not cleansed. It's been defiled by your flesh. You need a cleansing and there's one who can give that cleansing. There's one who can simply speak a word and cleanse all the defilement of the flesh. He can purge away that septic tank that burdens your conscience. He needs but speak a word. He needs but declare, 'I forgive you,' and all of that guilt goes away. He needs but show himself in all of his glory, in all of his person, in all of his works and declare, 'I did this for you. I do not condemn you.' And all of that pollution is borne away." All he needs is to say to his people, "I am your righteousness in your worship before God, apart from any singing, apart from any washing, or from anything that you do."

So God says about your worship, lovely, and God accepts it for he is the one that gave that perfect service and worship to God as head, and he is the one who assures his people by that word that, "I have my Spirit dwell in you and I am at no times absent from you and nothing you can do can hinder or separate or create a disjunction between me and my Spirit and yourselves." It's all that God's people need. All they need is his word. All they need is his gospel. This introduction of only exclusive psalmody into the church is legalism. It burdens God's people. It burdens God's people because it proclaims because of what you sing now there's some sort of disjunction or interference between your singing and the singing of your Lord Jesus Christ, and then you go home and you feel heavy and you feel burdened. Repent of your man-made laws. There is one who can clean the defilement of the conscience. Believe in him. Stop troubling the churches.

Now this instruction the scribes and Pharisees did not like. "Then came the disciples and said unto him," verse 12, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" The Pharisees raged. The Pharisees were very angry. Their works had been taken away and they had been exposed and they did not have the cleansing of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that troubled the disciples. "They're offended. They're angry at you." And Christ did not go at great length to pacify them or to appease them. Rather, he turns to his disciples and he points them to God, points them to the truth of sovereign predestination. He says, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." "Don't trouble yourself with men. Don't be bothered by their angry faces and their rage. Look to God. Look to God who has decreed the end from the beginning. Look to God who has elected his people in sovereign grace. Look to God who by free adoption plants his people into Jesus Christ."

Don't worry about men. Let God worry about men. Men need their washings. Let them have their washings. They're blind leaders leading the blind and both shall fall into the ditch. Don't worry about men. Look to God for God has a Son of righteousness who shines forth into the darkness to those who grope about and who leads his people by his light in his word. Don't worry about men. Look to God. Amen.

*Our heavenly Father, we thank thee for thy word, a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Father, cause us to crucify all of us the works of the flesh and the legalism of our flesh. Let that rebuke of our Lord Jesus Christ, "ye hypocrites," humble us who are sinful and polluted by nature and who can do nothing but look to Christ for the cleansing that he gives. Forgive us of our sins in Jesus' name. Amen.*