

What Shall I Do? – Part 4

Legalism and the Christian Life

Luke 10:25-37; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; 7-2-17

Key Point: Because of our legal spirit, we can read truth and still believe lies about God and ourselves.

“In the best of the children of God here, there are such remains of the legal disposition and inclination of heart to the way of the covenant of works that as they are never quite free of it in their very best duties, so at times their services smell so rank of it as if they were alive to the law and dead to Christ.” – Thomas Boston

- **A legal spirit relates to God and others on the basis of law, not grace.**

And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test – Luke 10:25

Law lays down the rule with the benefits of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. The only question is whether you have kept the rule or not. No discussion.

- **A legal spirit thinks it must earn God’s acceptance and/or His blessings.**

saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” – Luke 10:25

Those who aren’t Christians always relate to God on the basis of law in trying to earn His acceptance.

Those who are Christians often relate to God on the basis of law in trying to earn His blessing.

- **A legal spirit can think it deserves God’s acceptance and/or blessing by using crafty legal maneuvers.**

But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” – Luke 10:29

It keeps the letter of the law, but ignores the spirit of the law. (Matthew 5:21-24)

It substitutes its own laws in place of God’s laws. (Mark 7:10-13)

It focuses on minor issues and ignores major issues. (Matthew 23:23-24)

Today’s Focus

A legal spirit reads the Bible in such a way that God is viewed as a demanding Law-Giver rather than a gracious Father and thinks it can obligate God to give His acceptance and/or blessing.

And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” – Luke 10:26

1. God is seen as unworthy of our trust and love because He appears to us as demanding and wrathful and selfish and reluctant, at best, to bless us.

How do you read the Ten Commandments? – Exodus 20:1-3

How do you read the death of Uzzah? – 2 Samuel 6:6-7

How do you read the parable of the talents? – Matthew 25:24-25

How do you read the story of the prodigal son? - Luke 15:29

The judgment of God in the OT is sparse compared to the innumerable moments in which God did not give someone what their sin deserved (Romans 6:23) but showed grace and blessed them in innumerable ways (Acts 14:17).

2. We see ourselves as worthy of what God has and more and that He is obligated to accept and bless us.

- We don't claim to be perfect but we put our sin in a different category. – Luke 18:11
- We believe that we can obligate God to bless us as much or more than others.

How do you read the parable of the vineyard workers? – Matthew 20:1-16

Do you keep score for yourself and others and evaluate the 'rewards' accordingly?

We have a problem with people getting what we don't think they've earned.

How do you read the story of the unworthy slave? – Luke 17:7-10

We have the faulty notion that we deserve special blessing for doing what we ought to do.

- A legal spirit affects how we read our Bibles. (26)
- We can read/answer rightly but think/believe wrongly. (28-29)
- It is true that there are things that must be done, but the question is who is going to do it. (28-29)
- A legal spirit does not love those that don't deserve it and thinks God is the same way. (30-35)
- A legal spirit is challenged by exposing our inability so that we will see the way of grace that was there all the time. (36-37)

3. The truth is that God is worthy of our trust and love and we are always, and will be forever, unworthy of His acceptance and blessings.