

Lesson Outline

I The Blessings of Liberty

A. We Are Set Free From Sin By Christ.

B. We Are Set Free To Live For Christ.

II The Curse of Legalism

A. New Testament Legalism.

B. Present Day Legalism.

III The Folly Of License

A. Not Under the Law, But Not Lawless.

B. Liberty Is Not License.

Godless humanism, and the philosophy of moral relativism have worked to produce a strange concept of freedom in the minds of many today. It is a freedom to do whatever one wishes to do (provided, of course, it doesn't infringe upon the rights of others!). Indeed, the last one-third of the 20th century has witnessed the "rights" movement: civil rights, worker's right, women's rights, children's rights, 'gay' rights, - you name it! It seems just about everyone is clamoring for their rights.

Regrettably, this kind of thinking has also permeated Christian proprieties. Real liberty is being supplanted by an increasing resistance to Biblical standards and a man-centered goal of unrestricted personal enjoyment and fulfillment. Preaching has become more and more non-directive. As a result, much Christian conduct has sunk to the level of the world.

Baptists who preach against sins and who dare declare (and practice) what the Bible says Christians ought and ought not to do and are often labeled as "legalists." They are accused of robbing people of their joy by imposing on them their lists of "do's" and "don'ts."

Galatians 5:1 is undoubtedly the pivotal scripture here: ***liberty** wherewith Christ hath made us **free**, and be not **entangled** again with the yoke of **bondage**.*

Interpreting this verse (and its context) will go a long way toward understanding what Christian **liberty** really is – as well as **legalism**, the true and false.

This is what this lesson will study.

I The Blessings of Liberty

Does liberty or freedom mean we have the right to do anything? Are there restraints to freedom? The Bible teaches there are TWO SIDES OF LIBERTY:

- Freedom FROM – a release
and
- Freedom TO – a responsibility

A. We Are Set Free From Sin By Christ.

1. The Servitude Of the Sinner:

- a. Read John 8:32-34 ³²*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. ³³They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? ³⁴Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.***
- b. Read Hebrews 2:14-15 ¹⁴*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*
Mankind is subject to bondage [to sin] through the fear of death [and going to Hell].
- c. Read Galatians 3:10 ¹⁰*For as many as are of the works of the law [When Saint Paul speaks of the “works of the law,” he refers to what we know as the six hundred and thirteen precepts of the Torah, such as Jewish prohibitions against eating pork, the mandate of*

circumcision, and the observance of Passover

*[<http://taylormarshall.com/2013/10/paul-mean-by-faith-and-works-of-the-law.html>)] are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. **The Law puts man under the curse.***

- d. Read James 2:10 ¹⁰*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. **Offending in just one point in God's holy Law makes a man guilty of all,***

2. The Rescue By the Redeemer [just read scripture]:

- a. Read John 8:32 ³²*And ye shall know the truth, **and the truth shall make you free.***
- b. Read John 14:6 ⁶*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth,** and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*
- c. Read John 8:36 ³⁶*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*
- d. Read Isaiah 61:1 ¹*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; **The Son was sent by the Father “to proclaim liberty to the captives [of sin].”***
- e. Read II Corinthians 3:17 ¹⁷*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*

- f. Read Romans 8:2 ²*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*

- g. Read Ephesians 2:15 ¹⁵*Having **abolished** in his flesh the enmity [feeling of hostility or ill will, antagonism], even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

- h. Read Colossians 2:14 ¹⁴*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

- i. Read Romans 6:17 ¹⁷*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.*

B. We Are Set Free To Live For Christ.

Read Romans 8:21 ²¹*Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*

Our Liberty in Christ is GLORIOUS. But does this liberty give us the right to now live as we please or choose? NO!

- 1. Read Romans 6:18b ¹⁸*Being then made free from sin, **ye became the servants of righteousness**.* According to this passage, the believer is now made free from sin to serve RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Also read I Peter 2:16 (from verses 15-18 for context) ¹⁵*For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:*

¹⁶*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. ¹⁷Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. ¹⁸Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not*

only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward [willfully contrary; not easily managed: obstinate, willful, disobedient, fractious, wayward, unmanageable, and difficult].

2. This freedom allows us to produce fruit unto holiness and everlasting life. Read Romans 6:22 (verses 20-23 for context) ²⁰*For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.* ²¹*What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death.* ²²*But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, **ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*** ²³*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

3. We are now free to **LIVE** unto Christ – read II Corinthians 5:15 ¹⁵*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him [Jesus] which died for them, and rose again.*

4. Read Titus 2:11-12 ¹¹*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,* ¹²*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;*
The grace of God teaches us to:
 - a. Deny ungodliness
 - b. Deny worldly lusts (a passionate or overmastering desire or craving)
 - c. Live soberly
 - d. Live righteously
 - e. Live godly

NOTE: We were saved by the grace of God. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:* ⁹*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

5. According to Titus 2:14 *14Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*, The Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us (“set us free”) from **ALL** iniquity that we might be:
- a. A **peculiar** people. [not usual but rather uncommon; unusual: distinctive in nature or character from others. belonging characteristically belonging exclusively to some person, group, or thing].
 - b. Who are zealous of **good works**
6. Read Psalm 119:45 *45And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.* Our liberty enables us to seek (and do) God’s precepts [commandments or direction given as a rule of action or conduct. an injunction as to moral conduct; maxim, truth, principle, a procedural directive or rule, law].
- a. Read Galatians 4:24 *24Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is [H]Agar.* The covenant received from the mount Sinai (i.e., the Law) gendereth to bondage.
 - b. **By contrast**, believers are now under the Law of Liberty. Read James 1:25 *25But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*
Also read James 2:12 *12So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*
 - (i) This is called the “royal law”, Read James 2:8 *8If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:***

- (ii) This law's commandments are not grievous. Read I John 5:2-3
*²By this we know that **we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.**³For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are **not grievous.***
- (iii) This law is a DELIGHT to the believer. Read Romans 7:22 *²²For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:*
7. Read Galatians 5:13 *¹³For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. **We are to use our liberty to serve one another by love.***
8. Read I Peter 2:16 *¹⁶As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. **Our freedom enables us to be the servant of God.***
9. Exodus 21:5-6 *⁵And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: ⁶Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever. **This scripture how service under the law of love is not bondage. We serve not because we have to, but because we want to!***
10. We are now under the "new creature rule" – Galatians 6:15-16 *¹⁵For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. ¹⁶And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. **WE ARE NOW UNDER THE NEW CREATURE RULE.***

True freedom (or liberty) then is not the right to do as we want or please, but the privilege to do what is right – something we could never do before we were saved. Read:

- Isaiah 64:6 *⁶But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.*
- Proverbs 15:8a *⁸The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.*
- Romans 8:3-4 ***³For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: ⁴That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.***

II The Curse of Legalism

The legalism spoken of in the New Testament is very different from what many label legalism today.

A. New Testament Legalism.

Legalism was **the first** doctrinal error to raise its head within Christendom.

1. This error is first expressed in Acts 15
 - a. *¹And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*
 - b. The TRUTH of the manner is stated in verse 11: *¹¹But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.*

2. These Judaizers of Acts 15 formed into some the early “Christian” sects during the apostolic days.
 - a. Nazarenes – orthodox Jewish Christians who also maintained a strict observance of the Law and Jewish customs.
 - b. Ebiomites – who reduced the plan of salvation to strict Law – keeping. They eventually came to teach that Jesus was only a man, who became the Messiah at His baptism and who was important because of His legal piety (not His suffering and death). They rejected the writings of Paul.
 - c. Elkesailites – speculative (platonic) Judaizers, who taught that Jesus was the ideal man. They held that circumcision and repeated wash was required.
3. The book of Galatians was written to counter the spread of this damnable heresy practiced by some early Christian sects. It was an error which:
 - a. Is a PERVERSION of the true Gospel. Read Galatians 1:7-9 ⁷*Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would **pervert** the gospel of Christ. ⁸But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, **let him be accursed.***
 - b. Was imposed by FALSE BREATHERN. Read Galatians 2:4 ⁴*And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. AND who TROUBLE the saints. Read*

Galatians 5:12 (AND MORE) ¹²I would they were even cut off which trouble you. ¹³For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. ¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

- c. Frustrates the grace of God. Read Galatians 2:21 ²¹*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*
- d. Is very bewitching (appealing). Read Galatians 3:1 ¹*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?*

Also...

- This appeals to **the flesh**. Read Galatians 6:12 ¹²*As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*
 - Read Romans 7:18a ¹⁸*For I know that in me (that is, **in my flesh,**) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*
- e. Proposes that salvation is made perfect by the flesh (i.e., works of the Law). Read Galatians 3:3 ³*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*
 - f. Causes believers to TURN again to the weak (incapable) and beggarly elements (of the Law). Read Galatians 4:9 ⁹*But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye*

again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

- g. Which only served to ENTANGLE believers and put them under the YOKE of bondage. Read Galatians 5:1 *1Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*
 - h. Which can only HINDER in the Christian race. Read Galatians 5:7 *7Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*
 - i. Is a dangerous, insidious LEAVEN which causes God's children to bite and devour one another.
 - Read Galatians 5:9 *9A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*
 - Read Galatians 5:15 *15But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*
4. Judaistic legalism was an attempt an attempt to “sew up the rent veil.” Today it is any teaching holding that:
- a. Works are necessary **for** salvation.
 - b. Works are necessary **to complete** salvation.
 - c. Works are necessary **to maintain** salvation.
5. Galatianism has presented itself in many forms since the days of Acts 15 [Acts 15:1-35 COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM TO DECIDE ON THE NECESSITY OF CIRCUMCISION FOR THE GENTILE CONVERTS]. It wasn't long before the word “circumcised” was being replaced by “baptized” – giving rise to the false doctrine of baptismal regeneration (or baptismal remission).

Any teaching that “salvation = grace +” is **damnable** – whether Sabbath keeping, tongue speaking, door knocking, mass attending, etc.

True salvation is by **GRACE ALONE**. Through **FAITH ALONE**, in **CHRIST ALONE** – plus or minus nothing!

Read

- Romans 11:6 ⁶*And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.*
- Ephesians 2:8-9 ⁸*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

The Law and Its Purpose

1. Read John 1:17 ¹⁷*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* The Law was given by Moses and contains 613 commandments.
2. Read Romans 7:12 ¹²*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* The Law is holy, just, and good. The Law is not faulty because of its inability to save men.

Also, Read I Timothy 1:8-10 ⁸*But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; ⁹Knowing this, that **the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, ¹⁰For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;***

3. Read Romans 3:20 ²⁰*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. **BY THE LAW COMES***

THE KNOWLEDGE OF SIN. Also, read Galatians 3:19 ¹⁹*Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.* **THE LAW DEFINES SIN.**

4. Read I Corinthians 15:56 ⁵⁶*The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* The strength of sin is the Law. [not that the law of God is sinful, or encourages sin: it forbids it under the severest penalty; **but was there no law there would be no sin, nor imputation of it**; sin is a transgression of the law: moreover, the strength of sin, its evil nature, and all the dreadful aggravations of it, and sad consequences upon it, are discovered and made known by the law; and also the strength of it is drawn out by it, through the corruption of human nature; which is irritated and provoked the more to sin, through the law's prohibition of it; and this is not the fault of the law, but is owing to the virtuosity (special knowledge or skill in a field) of nature;]
5. Read Galatians 3:24 ²⁴*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* The Law is a SCHOOLMASTER. It is designed by God bring us to Christ (by causing us to see our true condition before Him, and our need for Him).
6. Read Galatians 2:16 ¹⁶*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* **No one can or ever will be justified by the works of the Law.**
7. Read Galatians 3:10 ¹⁰*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Trying to keep the Law only brings a **curse.**
8. Read Colossians 2:13-15 ¹³*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;* ¹⁴*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;* ¹⁵*And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.* **We can only be saved through Jesus Christ, Who kept the law,**

fulfilled the Law, finished the Law, and paid the penalty on our behalf for every broken law.

9. Read Romans 10:4 *⁴For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Christ is the END of the Law to every believer.
10. Read Romans 6:14 *¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Believers are not under the Law, **but under grace.**

6. Legalism and Sanctification

The Law cannot justify, neither can it sanctify. The Law shows us we are unholy, but it cannot make us holy. The KEY to living the Christian life is found at Mount Calvary, not Mount Sinai – Read:

- Romans 6 – Summarized by the last two verses on the chapter: *²²But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. ²³For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
- Galatians 2:20 *²⁰I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

Read Colossians 2:6 *⁶As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

- Salvation – “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord.” (by faith!)
- Sanctification – “So walk ye in Him.” (in faith!)

B. Present Day Legalism.

The charge of “legalism” is commonly leveled against anyone today who might be zealous for doctrinal and personal purity. Churches requiring Biblical standards of conduct of their workers and for their activities are often labeled as ‘legalistic’.

The fact is this kind of charge is very subjective. Since most every Christian or church claiming to be Christian or church claiming to be Bible-believing has some standards, legalism becomes more than an issue of degree – i.e., when your standards and beliefs are stricter than mine, you’re a legalist!

1. Areas of Issue:

- Dress Code – Read I Timothy 2:9 *⁹In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;*
- Hair – Read I Corinthians 11:14-15 *¹⁴Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? ¹⁵But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*
- Music – Read Ephesians 5:19 *¹⁹Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;*
- Amusements – Read I John 2:15-17 *¹⁵Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*
- Television – Psalm 101:3 *³I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.*

- Bible versions – II Corinthians 2:17a *¹⁷For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.*

2. The Charge Of Pharisaism

Another term for legalism is “Pharisaism.” Bible-believing Baptists are often accused of being modern-day Pharisees by those who resent their “lists” of do’s and don’ts. This is patently unfair: there is a great difference between a real Bible believer and the Pharisees of Jesus’ day:

- a. The Pharisees loved TRADITION OVER TRUTH. Read Matthew 15:1-9 *¹Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, ²Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. ³But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ⁴For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. ⁵But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; ⁶And 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. ⁷Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, ⁸This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. ⁹But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

They were in fact Bible-rejecters. Read John 8:47 (Jesus speaking to the Pharisees) *⁴⁷He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

- b. They were SELF-RIGHTEOUS. Read Luke 18:9-14 ⁹And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. ¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.
- c. They were HYPOCRITES. Read Matthew 23:13-14 ¹³But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. ¹⁴Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.
- d. The Pharisees were zealous, but in their man-made religion. Read Matthew 23:23 ²³Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.
- e. The Pharisees were hell-bound sinners. Read Matthew 23:26-33 ²⁶Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷Woe unto you,

scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. ²⁹Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, ³⁰And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. ³¹Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. ³²Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. ³³Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

Read Philippians 3:4-7 *⁴Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: ⁵Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; ⁶Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

3. What About Those “Lists?”

It seems the most offensive aspect of the whole legalism issue is over the lists or standards a church may publish, preach, or require of its ministry workers. Several things must be said about this:

- a. Biblical Standards MUST be preached. Read: Titus 2:15 *¹⁵These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*
- b. Any and all so-called lists must be measured against the Word of God. The Bible is the authority, not man.

- c. While there will probably always be some differences over the content of any 'list', the Biblical mandate is that we abstain from ALL APPEARANCE of evil. Read I Thessalonians 5:22 ²²*Abstain from all appearance of evil.*
- d. True legalism is related to why IS RELATED TO WHY one should obey a list rather than to the righteousness or wrongness of what is on the list. If a believer thinks he will gain merit with God by keeping and following a list, **that** is legalism. Legalism has been defined as the flesh attempting to carry out the precepts [a commandment or direction given as a rule of action or conduct] of God. The flesh never/can never succeed.
- e. In some cases, the rejection of standards using the charge of legalism is an excuse for self-willed and sinful living. Read Galatians 5:13 ¹³*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*
- f. Even to the casual observer there has been a noticeable decline in general standards of Christian conduct over the last 50 years or so. (Read II Timothy 3:1-5 ¹*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. ²For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*) Practices which once were taboo to just about ALL Christians – dancing, social drinking, movies, dating, cards, etc. – are now common practice. It may well be that many of the old-fashioned Christians abstained for the WRONG REASONS (i.e. gain

favor with God). But, it cannot be argued that godliness has declined. Is the world churchy, or the Church worldly?

- g. Great care must be exercised to speak the truth in love. Read Ephesians 4:15 *¹⁵But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:* Bible-believers must not become censorious [severely critical; faultfinding] in their attitude toward other believers who does not see (or agree with) their understanding of the Word of God. However, it is also unfair to expect churches to accommodate these matters by lowering their standards for those who would serve in ministry capacities.(?)

- h. Remember: true freedom in Christ involves living obediently to the perfect law of liberty, encapsulated by LOVE – for Christ (Read John 14:15 *¹⁵If ye love me, keep my commandments.*) and each other (Read I John 4:7-21 *⁷Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. ⁸He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. ⁹In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. ¹⁰Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. ¹²No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*).

4. What Legalism Is NOT:

- a. Being obedient to specific commandments of the Lord is NOT legalism. Read I John 2:3-4 *³And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

- b. Living a holy life is NOT legalism. Read I Thessalonians 4:3-7 ³*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: ⁴That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; ⁵Not in the lust of concupiscence [sexual desire; lust. ardent, usually sensuous, longing], even as the Gentiles which know not God: ⁶That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. ⁷For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.*
- c. Refusing conformity to the world is NOT legalism. Read Romans 12:2 ²*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*
- d. Conforming one's life to certain standards when requested by godly pastors is NOT legalism. Read:
- (i) Acts 15:20-21 ²⁰*But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. ²¹For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.*
- (ii) Acts 15:29 ²⁹*That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.*
- (iii) Acts 15:37-38 ³⁷*And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. ³⁸But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work.*

- e. Forsaking personal rights out of deference to weaker brother in Christ is NOT legalism. Romans 14:21 ²¹*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

A common excuse for not preaching or expecting godly standards of Christian conduct is: “Well, I believe that is something God must do in each individual’s heart!” True enough, but how will God work in an individual’s heart? “Through His Spirit,” comes the reply. Well then, how does the Spirit work in our lives? “Through the Word.” Well, how shall they hear the Word without a PREACHER?

Read:

- II Timothy 4:2-4 ²*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.*
- Titus 2:15 ¹⁵*These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.*

III The Folly Of License

License is the attitude that I have the freedom to do as I please. It is the mentality that since I am saved, safe and secure in Christ, I can live my life any way I want to. In earlier times this error was known as “antinomianism” – “anti” (against) “nomos” (law) – “against the law.”

IT IS THE OTHER EXTREME TO JUDAISTIC LEAGALISM.

A. Not Under the Law, But Not Lawless.

1. Read Romans 6:14b *¹⁴For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* We are not under the Law, but UNDER GRACE.
2. Read Titus 2:11-12 *¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;* Many throw out this statement as an “answer” to what they see as legalism. But what does grace teach?... *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly*
3. Shall we continue in sin? Read romans 6:1 *¹What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?* (sarcastically)
4. Read I Corinthians 9:21 *²¹To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.* According to this scripture, a Christian is “not without law to God, but UNDER THE LAW OF CHRIST.” (This is the Royal Law)

B. Liberty Is Not License. [Put this in context of the time.]

1. I Peter 2:16 *¹⁶As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

2. Galatians 5:13 *¹³For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Memory Verses: Titus 2:11-15

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

¹⁵These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.