

The Day of Worship, Chapter 9

"Legalism"

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Hopewell ARP, Culleoka, TN

Sabbath School lesson in Ryan McGraw's "The Day of Worship." In Chapter 9, we consider what legalism is and what legalism isn't.

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Good morning.

Everybody.

We're gonna tackle the next chapter in our book the day of worship this week this chapter chapter 9 is on legalism. Which may seem odd to have a chapter not only a chapter but a long chapter in a book on the Sabbath on legalism so this morning what I hope to do is just very quickly when we'll kind of follow Pastor McGraw's pattern, we're gonna look at the law real quickly in Scripture both old and New Testament we're gonna define what legalism is not.

And then we're going to look at what legalism is. Before we get any further though, again, why a chapter on legalism in a book on the Sabbath? Well. If you haven't already been confronted with this. As you progress in your Christian life, the more you strive for holiness the more you strive for obedience, you're going to be labeled with legalism and that's really particularly the the case when it deals with the Lord today.

When you seek to go against what the world says and set aside a day for worship. The charge of legalism is going to be levelled against you. So it's important to know what that means and to know what legalism is not and to know what legalism is. So I did a Google search for the word legalism and the definition that came up was.

Excessive adherence to law or formula. Don't think that applies here? Maybe in civil law perhaps, but but when you're talking to theology, I don't know and we'll look at this little in a little bit that you can necessarily have an excessive adherence to God's law. Is there a point at which you?

Go too far in being obedient and I don't think that's the case. So, what do we mean by legalism in a Christian theology context? Really? I think it comes down to either the misunderstanding the misuse or the misapplication of the law of God. So either a misunderstanding a misuse of or a misapplication of the law of God.

Well, Before we go any further. Pastor McGraw looks at the law in Scripture. It is is this idea of following the law something that we should still strive after being New Testament believers. I'm sure many of you've heard. I'm not under law. I'm under grace. That's actually kind of foolish if you think about that we just ask the simple question.

Is it okay to murder your brother? And if they say well, no, you can't do that. Well, then apparently they're still some law that you're under. Now we are under the grace of Christ, of course. But there's still a law to be obeyed. Pastor McGraw starts out in the chapter looking at three areas in Scripture where we see the law.

Now, he's he is he does point out that the law runs through the entire book of the Bible through all of Scripture, but he's. Sort of put up a pattern here of where we first see it. First, we see the law of God written on the heart of Adam and Eve.

That the law of God was in the beginning before the fall. And I didn't see the proof text coming that he used but but it does make sense. He looks to Romans chapter 2 verses 14 and 15 which say. For when Gentiles do not have the law intrinsically performed the requirements of the law, these are not having the law are a law to themselves.

In that that they show the work of the law written in their hearts their conscience testifying and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them. So if fallen people have a sense of the law the scripture tells us that the knowledge of God is written on all men's hearts and the fallen people have a sense of the law that has to come from someone.

And his argument was that the law of God was written on the hearts of Adam and Eve pre-fall. So we see the law there. Well, of course we have the fall. Which turns everything upside down. Now man does not have a good sense of the law, so the next area that we receive this is in the actual Ten Commandments don't happens.

God no longer the law of God written on man's heart is no longer sufficient. God needs to give us written reminders or testimonies to what his law is and he gives it in the Ten Commandments. Again back in Romans chapter three verse 19. Now, we know that whenever the law whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mountain may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God because of the works of the law none of mankind will be justified in his sights.

For through the law comes knowledge of sin. So we have the ten commandments. Law written stone, that is now.

What we are complete with all mankind is under. New Covenant. Because of Christ perfectly fulfilling the law. Now for those who believe in Jesus the law is written back on our hearts, not perfectly. At the moment of salvation we don't have the law perfectly written on our hearts but through the process of sanctification through our life the Holy Spirit is rewriting that law on our hearts.

Looking forward to the day winning glory, we will obey the law perfectly this kind of thing. Without Christ, according to Scripture the law is a millstone around our neck. It is a yoke that we cannot bear. It's oppressive because it is all encompassing. Get touches every aspect of our lives and it is unattainable by falling man.

However for the believer. The law now shows us the glory of God. In his righteousness and perfection and it gives us if you will a road map for our sanctification. As Christ perfectly modeled for us the law of God. We can see what we are to become in glory and how the direction we are to be pursuing now as believers.

So this point is that the law of God is. Author scripture. There's no place in the New Testament where you see that we're no longer under the law. So since the law still applies. We must obey the law. Now we get into okay discharge of legalism. What is it and what it is not?

All right. What legalism is not? Legalism is defined as an improper use of the law. And when levied against Sabbath keeping that that's pretty significant charge. Often legalism is brought up at the mirror mission of. Following the law of God. But usually that's dealing with personal preference when someone usually has an objection to the law of God's or following the law of God.

It's it's based on a personal preference that they there's something that they find too strict or too harsh about them. So legalism is not keeping the law of God. Obeying the law of God is not legalism. That is it obedience. First John chapter 3 verse 4 says everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness.

And sin is lawlessness. Romans 7. Verse 7 says, what shall we say then? Is the law sent far from it? On the contrary. I would not have come to no sin except through the law. Where I would not have known about coveting if the law had not said you shall not cut it.

Kids who remembers shorter catechism number 14? What is sin? Environment remember.

Sin is in the oh loop.

Right lock out of.

How can we know? The grace of God through Christ if we don't know the law. If you take away the law you take away the knowledge of sin. If you take away the knowledge of sin, then you cannot confess your sins therefore for no other reason the long must be applicable because we are called to confess our sins.

If you don't, If sin is law breaking then obedience must be law keeping. And how would we know what law breaking and law keeping are apart from the law of God. What other rule for righteous living? Is there other than the law of God. First Peter 1:16 says because it is written you shall be holy for I am holy.

How can we behold if we don't have the law of God? It's the law of God, that shows us the model. That ultimately Christ said before us but it's the model that we aren't to follow to be obedient. Does that make sense? If you don't have the law we would have no idea what sin is.

Or what obedience is. So because we have the law God gave us the law we know what obedience means we know what sin is therefore we must follow the law. They'd be a person yes, sir.

Because.

Right there is I think that if you're some understanding. Of correct if. Hypothetically the Lord never gave us a law. According to Romans chapter 2, we would still know. Some form of the law. It's how unbelievers know that you shouldn't steal that you shouldn't murder. You know, there's some sense there.

What the law shows us is very specifically the nature of God and and what his desires are for us. We see that very specifically in the Old Testament, of course in the New Testament Jesus expounds upon that and takes you know, this was his argument with the Pharisees that they they thought that they had perfectly obeyed the law because they were looking at the, Letter of the law.

I have not murdered. Jesus said yes, but you hold anger and your heart for your brother, it's the same thing the hatred is still the sin, so I think yes, we would have some sense. We have wherever right right the the native who of who is not heard the gospel is still without excuse right according to Romans, they have a knowledge but.

God did not leave us with that. The knowledge of the law that was left on our sinful hearts and nothing else as part of his mercy.

You know, often times when legalism is brought up it's because people think that God is too strict. Johnathan Edwards said the strictness of God's law is a principle cause of man's enmity against him. But can God be too strict. Is it possible for God's law to be too strict?

No. He is the creator. We are the creation right the Potter. Can not only make the pot for whatever use he wants but he can put whatever requirements he wants on that pocket. The pots only his duty is to obey what the potter made and maybe taken up and you get the idea God is the creator he is the Sonda he is the one that sets what the law is is not it is impossible for God's law to be too strict it is only possible for us not to be able to attain what he has set forth.

That makes sense. So legalism is not being obedient to the law of God as he has given it to us so so to bring it back to our Sabbath study when God says you were to take the one day and seven and keep it holy. Driving to keep it holy striving to put aside our worldly employments and recreations.

That in and of itself is not legalism that's trying to be obedient. To make sense on what legalism is not. Okay. Did you have thoughts? I have lots of thoughts and I'm waiting for you, okay? If you're going you will you had that look am I what's going to happen, okay?

Sir hey where you would mention, you know, anger and murder. Or whatnot difference in the in concept as to those folks who believe that we should be putting to death in every day, right? We are a mortifying anger of our brother right and lawful thoughts we do that with those why not also with people.

Right exactly if I were to go to it if I would go to any of the elders in the church and say, listen. There's something this other fellow has that I'm really want and all I can think about is how much I want that and I'm scheming ways to get it.

But I'm not actually going to take it. I'm not going to steal it so I'm good right they would say no because you're coveting and we need to deal with your heart so yes, the law is much bigger than just what was written in those Ten Commandments is the Lord shows us and so we're

constantly looking to be obedient and all forms of the law including the ones especially the ones that deal with our heart and the nature that Jesus showed us.

Tell somebody they're legalists for not wanting to lust after. I say somebody's illegal is 20 people working, right? Because we yeah because we live in a culture I think that has minimized the Lord's day it's much more acceptable even a Christian circles to minimize the Lord's day to be less obedient to the Lord's day because it's not really that big, you know, we're not murdering people we're not busting after people we're not coveting.

Pastor actually Jordan that's a good illustration of one of the reasons this discussion is so important because I was at a reform seven area and got called the legalist for saying that you shouldn't lust after your neighbor's wife and they reinterpreted three translated with Jesus said in Matthew five to not just look with lust but lustful intent so as long as he didn't intend on acting.

And that's why I think it's important that we know that legalism and antinomianism are hatred of the law are really the the same thing just the law without Christ yeah, right so if you view the law and the light of Christ then the law describes exactly what Jesus is like exactly what Jesus did on our behalf it describes his agenda for what he's doing to us as he makes us to be like himself it describes the end result of when he's done with us.

And so the more details that every level you find out about the law of God should make you rejoice if you know Jesus. So whenever I pastorally I'm in a conversation like that horrifying one that accepted sevenary or have been in many many conversations since then with someone who wants to use this legalism idea to talk about being too strict and sometimes what they mean is.

I don't see in the Bible God's law saying what you're saying? And that point it's not a strictness question it's a well how much do you understand the Bible a little bit better question but most people you know, when it comes to something that they want to do and you're telling them they can't go in with an assumption that they know a hundred percent of what they're says about that because they're flesh wants to do it that assumption allows them, don't to do it.

But so if you if you're not looking at it as this is what Christ did on my behalf, but this is what I'm going to do to make myself worthy, that's legalism. But if you're saying here's the set of standards in the Bible and here's the relaxed set of standards that feels better to me that's into know me as if that's also legalism because that's the law without Christ and it you're saying here's what Jesus is like and what he's aiming at in my life, but that feels a little too high so I'm going to aim at last I'm going to aim at what I think I can do a you can't even do what you think you can do and you're not supposed to do what you can do you're supposed to be doing to you yeah so whether or not you think you can do it.

Law without Christ. So usually it's the legalist who's accusing. Because he's thinking of the law without reference to Christ or who he is what he's done what he's doing in you what you will have done when he's done with you that's a lot of my sermon. I mean my summary and better better words, so if I run out of time we're just gonna remember back to Jay thank all right, so we've got legalism what what legalism is not what legalism is.

Pastor McGraw lays out three things that fall into the cat now legalism can be a million different things but he lays out three basic basic umbrellas where legalism falls the first is justification by works of the law. The second is adding to or taking away from the law and the third is sanctification by works of the law.

Justification by works of the law. This. This is where we see that we're guilty and we acknowledge our guilt and neither forgiveness but we operate on the principle that God is there for when we fail but all the other times it's really kind of bucking me. I can do it myself whenever we take any part of the law apart from the grace of God apart from Christ and we put it on our own shoulders.

That's legalism because you're taking that what God has said that only Christ can do you would say that you don't need Christ you can do it yourself. First John one eight tells us that if we have if we say we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

If we confess our sins, he has faithful and righteous. So that he will forgive us our sins and cleanses from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned we make him a liar and His word

is not in us. Romans 3 verse 20. Says it because of the works of the law none of mankind will be justified in his sight were through the law comes knowledge of sin.

In Galatians 5:4. Tells us that. You have been severed from Christ. You who are seeking to be justified by the law you have fallen from grace, which is extraordinarily frightening to think about. Romans 11:6 tells us but if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of words.

Since otherwise grace is no longer grace.

If it's of works. Then it's not of grace. It's it can't be both. Christ did not die to justify you halfway. He didn't die to justify your sins before you were believer, but now that your believer you're on your own. There's no. Set of requirements while we? Seek to obey the law that rests solely on our shoulders and when we look at it in those terms.

We are guilty of legalism because we're taking the law away from Christ and we're putting it on ourselves. Not to be confused with obedience, but our obedience must always be centered in Christ in Christ obedience and what He has done for us and we seek to obey not to gain our own justification.

But we seek to obey to be obedient out of love for Christ and to be more like him.

Try to type back to the Sabbath. Roman Catholicism has a lot of justification by works. I think that's something we can all kind of we know enough about to understand. There's a lot in there that they require that you do that's own you that is a part from the work of God.

So, When we look at our Sabbath or anything, but our Sabbath as needing to obey in order to earn justification. I have to be here all day long. Not because I love the Lord not because that's what he told me to do not because I want to know them better but I have to be here all day long because this is what earns me God's favor and we are guilty of justification by the works of the law and that is a form of legalism.

Does that make sense okay questions on that? The next one. Is also really pretty dangerous as well it's adding to or taking away from the law of God this usually happens when Christians are well-meaning. But they add to. What God has commanded Deuteronomy 4:2 tells us you shall not add to the word which I am commanding you nor take away from it so that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you.

And also in Deuteronomy in chapter 12 verse 32 the emphasis here is actually almost worship. Whatever I command you you shall be careful to do you shall not add or take anything away from you. Now an example that Pastor McGraw uses in a book and I think it's one that's also.

That we can relate to on some level we've been experienced with it or we've seen it is alcohol. Alcoholism you cannot drink period we've heard that for that one right your denominations, it's say that. But is that what God says. Kiddos, what was our Lord's first miracle. Water into wine no water into one what he what did he do after he turned the water into wine was that I mean it didn't stop at that trig, right?

He served it he was served. So to say that alcohol in and of itself was a sin what you're saying is that the Lord's first miracle was to send and then. Help other people distribute the sin into others, which sounds preposterous but it. Now to be clear and I don't want to make this a good thing about alcohol to be clear there's plenty of scripture about the evils of alcohol there's lots of wisdom and how you treat it there's lots of wisdom and times when you should avoid it.

Short-term, perhaps even long-term.

But the thing of itself is not the sin. And again it kind of comes probably from a well-meaning place seeing the effects of the abuse of this. Um, the ramifications that it can have when it's not used properly with good biblical wisdom and you just flat say it's a sin but what you're doing when you when you add when we add something to the law of God, that is not there we are saying that God did not go far enough.

With what he commanded.

Besides the out people demons right we are saying that sin is an apparent. Right, so the substance itself right when you drink it your drinking sin yeah. I mean, I can make an argument

could be made that you can drink a sinful amount of coffee. But that doesn't make coffee sin right and so to say because someone has abused coffee.

To say just say that coffee is the same we would do that. But but again the seven away from the alcohol issue just in larger aspect if we are not careful with the law of God if we add to what God has said. Then what we are saying is that God did not refer enough.

And likewise when we take away from the law of God when we say it's not it's the intent as long as the intent is okay. I mean don't intend to do anything wrong then you're good just stew on the phones when we're taking away from what God has said as the law then we are saying the God is too strict and doesn't have the right to demand that that he's too harsh in what we've been do's thirst.

Y yeah said originally for this umbrella was how scary it is of adding or taking away yeah yeah you go to the last few verses of the Bible revelation 22:18 through 19 before I just let anyone hear some words approximately this book if anyone adds to these things. I will add to him the plate got to written this book if anyone takes away from the words to the book of this prophecy should not take away his part from the book of life from the, City of books, you're just kidding which brings here yeah and so we have to stop and think whenever we're dealing with the law of God.

Is this truly what God says. And if it is we need to event if it is not what God has said we need to. To remove it from a law could be wisdom it could be good practice, but it can't be labeled as a law. God's law is perfect and it's completeness and it's entirety it does not need us to take away from any of it or remove anything from it, that is Peter went out.

Frightening with it since.

It makes you sour them to the day of no. Like here's your lip.

Do this and here's your list, no.

I think especially with our children can almost build a resentment, oh sure.

Hey.

You should list of stuff you cannot. Go in there. I put it really this is. Yeah. Right but going beyond this is what? They do yes. Right, so it's going beyond again what God has given us the scripture. Yes sir. I just share the trepidation there because the sword cuts both ways both specifying two will specifying too much.

I'll lay on someone else's conscious but it's not I'm not sure to be from the word of God right it's just the same is if I didn't do some something that was there to begin with yeah right now and that's where we must be very very careful. When we're talking to someone else.

Saying what you must and must not do we there's certainly time and occasion to say you must do this or must not do that but it needs to be in accord with the word of God and not something that we have taken away from or added to the word of God.

Now we have to be very very careful with that. Quickly the last sort of section of legalism that he pulls out is sanctification by the works of the law by the works of the law. This was an out not an amend section, he brings out the point that this is a sin that the only a sin of legalism that only believers can do it, it's subtle but what it says is that.

We're justified by faith in Christ. But our sanctification our holiness is all on us we have to do this better. We have to do it ourselves, it's our duty to make ourselves holy. You know, I don't I'm sure none of the rest of you have ever done this but you go three four five days without family devotions, so by golly we're doing it for an hour and a half tonight we're going to make up for the holiness gap the rest of the week.

Right? Well, I think often it comes from an acknowledgement of our sin and acknowledgment of the depth and the wickedness of our sin and it leads us to despair. And we want to do better and to be better. But we're striving apart from Christ. So, Think again about about that sin that that just nags at you you've been dealing with it for years, maybe your whole life.

You find yourself you fall into that sin again. What should we do? We should immediately run to Christ for forgiveness and repentance. What do we most often do we ignore? God hoping he did not see and we will go to God once we have made up for it by doing other good works.

All right. That is also instead of legalism because Pastor said we've removed Christ from the equation. Christ is the cause of our justification. He's also the cause of our sanctification. So when it comes to any aspect of the law and breaking the law. We must immediately follow Christ for his help because the only through him that we are being sent to God and are obeying.

The law.

Does that make sense? That's a oftentimes a very personal. Sin of legalism that we have that that doesn't usually show itself out but it's something that we do within our hearts. Thank you. Yes ma'am.

Yeah.

Right.

We.

So. You can't make coffee to sin. It's now maybe the abuse of it is the sin. Okay, so then you immediately go to Christ for forgiveness. Lord. I'm abusing a good gift that you have given to me forgive me for this and and show me the right way to use it.

And it may be for a period of time the right way to use it is just sort of stand. When we have the liberty in Christ to just walk away from something like that. You have brothers and sisters in the Lord that will help you encourage you but the root of getting over or through or beyond any sin.

And becoming more holy in our life using Christ. We can only find it and do it through Christ.

So in it and sometimes it's a very subtle difference. And the the subtle difference is. If you're doing this on your own power. Then that's the same. If you're doing it through Christ, you look seeking Him for help in this. Then that's probably wisdom and again availing themselves with the graces and mercies that God got has given you church families brothers and sisters who can help give wise counsel things like that, but but but the difference is up are we doing it on our own merit or are we striving to do it through the help of Christ knowing that he is the only one that is going to sanctify us.

If we're going to break that addiction that that issue it's only going to become. There's only going to come through the work of Christ in the Holy Spirit. Now, there's wisdom to be applied and how we act and and get over and move around but it's all it has to be rooted in Christ in all of it all of our efforts.

Yes, sir. I think there's doctrinal league legalisms. There's also practically legalism So even though we might be duck trially we got all our you know fees and cues. Yeah, right. Here's a way of practically talking about the gospel that might communicate to people that is all about or all about the law.

Yeah. If I started talking to someone about the Sabbath after sitting here for eight weeks or whatever it is. I have all this this understanding right? I've been to building upon building blocks and I start to talk about that without reference to Christ. It's going to sound like legalism and so I think that is The the point is we need to be subconscious.

Yeah, when we talk about things the rules yep to always go back and reference this is the image of a price, right? You've been a good job. Well, and we're that's how we avoid practical legalized, right? And that's the key and we're running out of time quick to the solution.

What is the solution? It's a what question with the who answered the solution is Jesus to say that that we don't want to be obedient to the law with Christ being. The perfect picture of the law for us it's like it's like saying I love the Lord but I don't want to be anything like it.

All right. I love the Lord but I don't want to know his character. We must keep Jesus at the center at the center of all this. So yes, as you're talking to somebody about what a proper

Sabbath looks like in Scripture. Hey, if you never mentioned Christ, it's legalism and nobody's ever gonna be able to attain it but if you detail what the Scriptures tell us about the Sabbath and you rooted in Christ and the only way I can delight in this is by Christ and through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

That's how you avoid legalism. And taking and taking seriously what God has said throughout all of his work. I just could say especially in our country because we work both a Christian nation so many people have a bad picture of Christ because they were in churches where those that were important were speaking and giving him these things that you don't do it.

Meredith said, you know, just listen and so that's an authority figure and it is distorted how we see description. Yeah. Which should all be seeking to be obedient but through Christ and by his help. So we're running a little late. I'm gonna pray any questions you have C. James afterwards.

Let's pray. Gracious. Heavenly. Father, thank you for this time that you have given us thank you for this study on such an important matter as your Lord's day. Help us all. Father to understand that any of our obedience is only through Christ. The mercy and the glory and the wonder of Christ set before us and that is our goal and that is our target and it is only possible by hand and through Him.

Help us as we move forward. Father in this Lord today that we may be attentive to your word may we sing with passion and pray with great fervor and listen intently and maybe we be edified in all of your goodness to us in this day, we pray. Amen.

Yes, you may need to. Bathrooms on your way.

Sorry.