

## Our Labors (23-28)

When a legalist or a Pharisee is wounded, they always argue upon their highest level of Christian achievement. You might hear them say, "Well, I'm a soulwinner!" "I've built a huge church!" "I read my Bible and pray every day!" "I gave \_\_\_\_\_ dollars to the church last year!" "I've been in church for 40 years."

The original sabbath was a sign of God's finished work. It marked the joy of completion. Yet, the Sabbath of Judaism became the hardest day of the week. It was a weekly reminder of striving, hardship, and Mosaic discipline. Its keeping was meritorious for salvation, not indicative of God's finished work.

The International Bible Encyclopedia notes that the Jews had 39 categories that constituted work on the Sabbath: carrying, burning, extinguishing, finishing, writings, erasing, cooking, washing, sewing, tearing, knotting, untying, shaping, plowing, planting, reaping, harvesting, threshing, winnowing, selecting, sifting, grinding, kneading, combing, spinning, dyeing, chain stitching, warping, weaving, unraveling, building, demolishing, trapping, shearing, slaughtering, skinning, tanning, smoothing, and marking.

1 Anointed as King	1 Rejected as King	Future
David	Saul	Saul refused to succumb to the anointing of David
Jesus	Pharisees	the Pharisees refused to submit to the authority of Jesus and the kingdom He came to establish

### Resources:

<sup>1</sup> <https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/162813/what-is-the-origin-of-the-phrase-a-mountain-im-willing-to-die-on>

<sup>2</sup> McCracken, Brett. *Gray Matters: Navigating the Space Between Legalism & Liberty*

<sup>3</sup> Swindoll, Charles. *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary of Mark*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 62.

<sup>4</sup> *Hastings' Dictionary of the New Testament*. Retrieved from <https://www.studydrive.net/dictionaries/hdn/r/receipt-of-custom.html>

<sup>5</sup> Telushkin, Joseph. 1991. Retrieved from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-oral-law-talmud-and-mishna>

<sup>6</sup> Segal, Marshall. Retrieved from [www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-making-of-a-modern-pharisee](http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-making-of-a-modern-pharisee) Ariel,

<sup>7</sup> David. *What Do Jews Believe?: The Spiritual Foundations of Judaism*



Notes by Pastor Daniel Cox  
SpaceCoastBaptistChurch.com

March 12, 2020

Things Worth Fighting For | Mark 2:13-28

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to walk among us, robed in flesh, He came to fight the *good fight*. His purpose was clear. His walk was circumspect. In His short window of humanity, He would not be pulled into unnecessary tussles. He would not fight other people's battles. He was not a proxy-warrior for lesser issues. He came to fight the enemies worth defeating.

Anton Bosch in a sermon entitled, "From Hamburger Hill to Calvary," notes that the value of the object won should match the expense for which it was purchased.<sup>1</sup> He stated,

*The Battle of Hamburger Hill was a battle of the Vietnam War that was fought by the United States and South Vietnam against North Vietnamese forces from May 10-20, 1969. Although the heavily fortified Hill 937 was of little strategic value, U.S. command ordered its capture by a frontal assault. The hill was finally taken at the cost of 72 Americans killed and 372 wounded. Losses on the North Vietnamese side are estimated at more than 630 dead.*

**What makes this battle so significant is that the hill was of little strategic value, which was proven by the fact that it was abandoned by the US forces two weeks later. But more significant is the fact that the fall-out from this battle back home forced the Nixon administration to order the end of major tactical ground operations in Vietnam. So in a sense the hill and the battle were won while at the same time losing the war!**

What, then, were the battles that our Savior deemed worthy to fight?

### Sinners (13-17)

Last week's text suggest that a tension between Jesus and the religious establishment was inevitable. It was inescapable that what the Lord Jesus had come to accomplish and how He intended to do so would be at odds with 1st Century Judaistic practice. For now, it was Jesus and the legalists.

The term "legalism" or "legalist" is not found in the Bible, but we should not be ignorant of its power in the absence of the word.

Brett McCracken defines it as, "a term Christians use to describe a doctrinal position emphasizing a system of rules and regulations for achieving both salvation and spiritual growth. Legalists believe in and demand a strict literal adherence to rules and regulations."<sup>2</sup>

We ought to make very careful use of this term. A legalist is not someone who has a higher standard than you. It is not, necessarily, someone who seeks to live a holy life, whether it be in matters of dress, food or drink, or entertainment standards. Therefore, a *legalist* is not the person to the right of you, any more than the person to the left of you being a *liberal*. In this regard, there is motive and intentionality. The question, then, becomes, "Why do you do the things you do? What is the motivation for your service?"

1. it serves up a steady diet of fear, intimidation, separation, and rejection
2. it feasts upon those who cannot handle the Word of life deftly and maturely
3. it sits in the seat of the scornful, using Moses and the Law as a club to beat the broken and a mallet that cripples the contrite

Charles Swindoll noted, "Legalism is an enemy. Legalism isn't a well-meaning but misguided friend, but rather an aggressive opponent to the life of joy the walk of faith, and the liberty in Christ. Legalism is a thief, stealing our freedom from us and robbing us of spontaneous joy. [It] is a bully, intimidating all those who don't know how to defend themselves. It is a grim-faced, guilt-giving, self-appointed judge who indicts and pronounces shame and condemnation on all those who refuse to obey its ridiculous lists of non biblical rules and man-made regulations."<sup>3</sup>

The litmus test, then, of legalists is an external set of rules and regulations. Who, then, determines orthodoxy and obedience? Man does! How? By the legalist's endless list of dos and don'ts, he mandates uniformity and becomes both the judge and the jury!

There was a man seated at the receipt of custom, one named *Matthew*, the son of Alphaeus. This "place of toll" was where export dues were paid by the Jews to Herod Antipas, ruler of the tetrarchy of Galilee.<sup>4</sup> Being nigh unto Capernaum and the cities' proximity to the Via Maris and other main roads, it was a bustling center of trade and commerce. Though Matthew was a Jew, he was hated by his own people. As a "tax farmer" he would exact Rome's fees, as well as his own. Enriching himself on behalf of the Roman government on the backs of his own people, made him a despised man. The word commonly used to reference his office was *publican*. Known for deception, harshness, and greed, all nations despised them.

Matthew had no doubt heard the preaching and teaching of Jesus. He had already seen the power of Jesus to heal and deliver, so when Jesus said *Follow Me*, the audible call to discipleship was met by the power of the Holy Spirit at work within him to follow Christ. By verse 15, Jesus is sitting at meat, presumably at Matthew's house, feasting with publicans and other sinners.

This enraged the legalists. Think of it: grace had a great appeal to Matthew and people like him, but God's free gift of salvation appalled the legalists.

How would you identify a legalist?

1. unbiblical or super-biblical teachings
2. a distrust of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life
3. a rejection of people based upon their behavior
4. the development of lists to clarify or outline godliness

### **Soul Liberty/Liberty of Conscience (18-22)**

What a contrast! Jesus was *feasting*: the Pharisees were *fasting*. To the Pharisees, fasting was a visible, physical, highly-public show of piety (addressed by Jesus in Matthew 6:16-18). According to Luke 18:12, the Pharisees fasted two times a week (Monday and Thursday)...by conviction.

It was what the Pharisees added to the law that became the object of Jesus' scorn. The five books of the Torah (Moses, Genesis-Deuteronomy) can be written out in 350 pages. The Talmud (the oral, rabbinical interpretations of Moses) is contained in 523 books printed in 22 volumes. Thus, Judaism consisted of 6,000 extra laws over the 613 commandments, and 1,500 of them specifically addressed Sabbath-keeping.<sup>5</sup>

This is what angered Jesus: they were the ones closest to the truth! The Sadducees denied the resurrection and sold themselves to Rome. The Essenes were monastic and apocalyptic, but the Pharisees had a modicum of truth, close to the meaning of Moses. Thus, we might say, "The lie that is most dangerous is the one that is closest to the truth!"

What, then, did the Pharisees believe?

1. **in holiness by comparison**- keep in mind, if the criteria is not thoroughly biblical, we have only man as the plumbline, not the perfect, inerrant Word of God. It is unwise to compare ourselves with one another!
2. **victory by consensus**- (2:16)
3. **religion without joy, fellowship, or relationship**  
The Healer is here! The groom is in the building! Celebrate now! If the Healer is here...if the Groom is among us...now is not the time for mourning, fasting, and sadness. It is a time of celebration!

Someone noted, "We are all born legalists, but we are made into Pharisees. Spurgeon once noted, "Beloved, the legalist [in us] is a great deal older than the Christian. If I were a legalist today, I should be some fifteen or sixteen years older than I am as a Christian. for we are all born legalists!"<sup>6</sup>