

# LEGALISM

*“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” —COLOSSIANS 2:8*

Paul founded the church in Colosse and was writing to them because they were in danger of replacing true spiritual life for a pseudo version. Though they were genuinely born of the Holy Spirit, their thinking and behaviours were becoming detached from Jesus, who is the Head of His church, and consequently, they began operating out of human strength and ingenuity.

We all need something that enables us to regulate our behaviour, measure how we're doing and have some kind of marker to encourage us, but when that ceases to be Christ, Himself, working from the inside out, our Christian living will inevitably consist of rules and regulations that operate from the outside in. This leads to legalism and legalism to judging others.

Legalism is expressed in two forms; one being that we believe treating biblical truths about conduct and behaviour involves regulations we are to keep by our own power and in keeping them, we earn God's favour. This serves as an expression of self-reliance and is the means by which we feel satisfied with ourselves. It is the logical behaviour of a Christian who has lost connection with the Head of the church. He is not living out of union and intimacy with Christ, but out of his own resources, superimposing a structure which he believes is pleasing to God.

The second form of legalism is in composing a list of specific requirements of conduct and behaviour, not only for ourselves, but by which we judge others. In the first instance, we are using human power to make ourselves moral; in the second instance, we are using human wisdom to make other people moral. Legalism and judgementalism are the two biggest temptations of evangelical Christianity because we love the Lord Jesus, and want to live according to His word, but end up applying carnal, worldly principles to spiritual living, which we cannot do.

However orthodox we might be in our belief and doctrine, if we live out of human resources, we have become detached from Jesus Christ. That's why, if there is not that intimacy with Christ and that conscious union with Him, we're going to have to prop up our Christian lives in some other way, and that usually ends up being a pseudo version in which Christ becomes redundant. The reality of Christian living is the enabling of "Christ in us" and drawing upon the unlimited resources we have in Him.

***PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, keep me from ever depending upon myself to live the Christian life. You are my enabler and I thank You for your indwelling Spirit.***

***TO REFLECT UPON: Do I find myself trying to please God under my own steam?***