

Filthy Rags: The  
Counterfeit  
Righteousness of  
Legalism

# Four Types of Legalism

- 1) “Save Yourself” Legalism
- 2) “Falling Away” Legalism
- 3) “Joyless Obedience” Legalism
- 4) “Rules of Men” Legalism

# “Save Yourself” Legalism

- Mark 10:17-22, “And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’ And he said to him, ‘Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.’ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.’ Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”

# “Save Yourself” Legalism

- Rom. 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

# “Save Yourself” Legalism

- Eph. 2:8-9, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

# “Save Yourself” Legalism

- Rom. 10:9, “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”

# “Save Yourself” Legalism

- Is. 64:5-6, “You meet him who joyfully works righteousness, those who remember you in your ways. Behold, you were angry, and we sinned; in our sins we have been a long time, and shall we be saved? We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

# “Save Yourself” Legalism

- Gal. 3:1-3, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- John 6:37-39, “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- John 10:27-29, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- Rom. 8:38-39, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- “Satan could go to God's throne and lay out a formidable and increasingly longer list of the sins of John MacArthur. And the longer I live, the longer the list gets... And frankly, the accumulated list would be horrific and so would yours. For every one of us there is a staggering list of indictments. There is a staggering list of disqualifications. We continue to violate God's Law. We continue to be, to one degree or another, idolatrous. We continue to be wicked. And believe me, the list is sufficient to condemn us all. How could we ever keep our own salvation? The thought is absolutely ridiculous. And so I say, if I could lose my salvation, I would. And so would you.” -- Pastor John MacArthur

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- Rom. 6:1-2, “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- Heb. 12:7-11, “It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- 1 John 4:8, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

# “Falling Away” Legalism

- From “Pleasing God by Our Obedience: A Neglected New Testament Teaching” by Dr. Wayne Grudem
- 1. Presenting our bodies as a “living sacrifice” to God (Rom. 12:1).
- 2. Not being conformed to this world but being transformed by the renewal of our minds, and thereby learning by practice what the will of God is (Rom. 12:2).
- 3. Not putting a stumbling block in the way of a brother’s Christian life (Rom. 14:18).
- 4. Being holy in body and spirit (the implication of 1 Cor. 7:34 with verse 32).
- 5. Preaching the true gospel and not adding to it the requirement of circumcision (Gal. 1:10).
- 6. Sending a financial gift to support Paul’s ministry (Phil. 4:18).
- 7. Walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, and leading a life that bears fruit in every good work and increases in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).
- 8. Obeying one’s parents (Col. 3:20).
- 9. Speaking and teaching all of God’s truth faithfully (1 Thess. 2:4).
- 10. Having a pure heart before God in one’s ministry (1 Thess. 2:4).
- 11. Praying for civil government authorities (1 Tim. 2:3).
- 12. Supporting one’s own parents or grandparents who are in need (1 Tim. 5:4).
- 13. Believing that God exists and rewards those who seek him (Heb. 11:6).
- 14. Offering pleasing worship to God “with reverence and awe” (Heb. 12:28).
- 15. Doing good (Heb. 13:16).
- 16. Sharing what you have with others (Heb. 13:16).
- 17. Doing God’s will (Heb. 13:21).
- 18. Keeping his commandments (1 John 3:22).

# “Joyless Obedience” Legalism

- Matt. 23:25-28, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. So you, too, outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

# “Joyless Obedience” Legalism

- 2 Cor. 5:12-15, “We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised.”

# “Joyless Obedience” Legalism

- 1 Pet. 1:22-23, “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God”

# “Joyless Obedience” Legalism

- Gal. 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

# “Joyless Obedience” Legalism

- Phil. 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”
- 1 Thess. 5:16-18, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

# “Joyless Obedience” Legalism

- 1 John 5:3, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”
- John 15:10-11, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- 1 Tim. 2:9-10, “Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness -- with good works.”
- 1 Pet. 3:3-4, “Do not let your adorning be external -- the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear -- but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- 1 Cor. 4:5, “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.”
- 2 Cor. 5:16a, “From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- 2 Tim. 3:12, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Deut. 12:32, “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”
- Matt. 23:4, “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Rom. 14:1-4, “As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Rom. 14:3, “Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Rom. 14:23, “But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Rom. 14:5, “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- 1 Cor. 10:29b-30, “For why should my liberty be determined by someone else’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- 1 Cor. 8:7, “However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Col. 2:20-23, “If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) -- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Rom. 14:10-13a, “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.’ So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore...”

# “Rules of Men” Legalism

- Rom. 13:9-10, “The commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not covet, and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”